

MAPPING OF POLICIES

The following document is a constantly evolving work that outlines the policies proposed by Volt Europa. This is not a political programme.

This fourth version (published on September 23, 2018) was written by around 200 team members from across the continent, with the input from a range of experts, and was drafted to provide guidelines for Volt's national chapters to craft programmes and ensure consistency.

The policy team has started a round of consultations with various stakeholders to hone our policies. This version was nevertheless released for transparency purposes and to enable us to receive valuable feedback, while showcasing what we stand for.

At the national level, the teams will develop specific policies based on this initial document by prioritizing issues, adapting them to national realities, translating the document, and assessing the financial validity in their specific national context.

This is a living document: our members are filing amendments and are continuously working to improve it. It will regularly be updated, so do not hesitate to check it once in a while, to see how we grow. For any feedback or input, please contact policy@volteuropa.org

The Policy Team of Volt

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WORK IN PROGRESS

Challenge 1 - Smart State

Vision

European citizens and residents expect their governments and public institutions to provide effective and efficient high-quality public services as well as transparent public administrations. Europe, over decades of integration, has set a standard of quality in public provision, allowing for an unprecedented high quality of life for citizens and a unique European social model.

However, in the wake of the economic crisis, growing inequality, and emerging technologies, trust in public institutions has disintegrated, while endemic corruption and inefficiency continue to plague public life.

For Volt, public service is intended to primarily benefit the citizens and residents of the State. We hold as core tenants the principles of management by objectives, transparency, accountability, citizen empowerment, and subsidiarity in allocation of competencies.

Volt will work to ensure that across Europe, public institutions in the member states of the European Union are reformed with state-of-the-art technology and new thinking to tackle years of economic crises, and in some cases, decades of neglect.

In times of transformation, governments must adapt to enable every citizen to fully participate in and contribute to society, and provide for maximal social inclusion and mobility. Smart States must adopt new tools to earn their citizens' trust through accountable, transparent, and efficient governance. Volt will invest in our common future, including not only innovative public services to cut waste, but also innovative education systems, quality healthcare, and effective justice to combat corruption. Together, we can use technology for common prosperity.

I. Administrative effectiveness to reduce waste and improve service quality

Digital technology affects nearly every aspect of our daily lives, and must start playing a key role in the way our countries are governed. Volt wants to digitise public services to reduce waste, cut inefficiencies and corruption, ensure transparency and security, and to make the State a true servant of its citizens.

A. Digital revolution

Make digital solutions the backbone of our administration, providing key tools to improve both internal processes (*back-end*) and external services (*front-end*), reducing inefficiencies, and strengthening relations between administrations and citizens. Digital tools must be embedded in every policy decisions as a means and not an end.

Use *proven and emerging technologies* to provide public services with a user-centric approach, facilitate and monitor transactions as well as citizens' data storage. Examples of innovative services are e-Taxation, digital ID, e-Voting, e-Health and e-Residency, which can be pursued through emerging technologies such as blockchain ledgers.

1. In Public Administration

- **Create paperless administration wherever they don't yet exist.** Volt will aim to create an infrastructure for completely paperless processes,¹ as well as harmonized information and communication technologies (ICT) standards² in order to reduce waste and to implement efficient services guaranteeing increasing interoperability between databases, platforms and applications. Each action pursuing this goal will take into account three elements: organization, tools (and the external supplier providing them), and the government-citizen relationship. New and improved services will be easily usable and accessible from different devices at the same time. Public entities will reengineer their internal processes, adapting them to new tools, organisations and applications. Finally, services will be inter-connected through the use of homogeneous standards.
- **Create safe and effective digital infrastructure to enable innovation.** Improvements in digital infrastructure will be prioritised to meet the future needs of the private sector and of the general public.
 - The introduction of fiber optic networks will be accelerated to boost internet speed; internet coverage will also be significantly improved.³
 - City sensors,⁴ community wi-fi and consolidated infrastructures will be implemented to achieve cost efficiency and guarantee service coverage. This will also enable a greater use of shared platforms to provide

¹ European Commission, Digital Public Services, available at
<https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/digital-public-services-scoreboard>

² European Commission, ICT standardisation, available at
http://ec.europa.eu/growth/industry/policy/ict-standardisation_en

³ For more details, see [Smart State, Guarantee Digital Rights and Freedom, Internet Access](#)

⁴ Smart Santander, Santander Facility, available at
<http://www.smartsantander.eu/index.php/testbeds/item/132-santander-summary>

- administrative services (i.e. HR and Financial management),⁵ as well as individual services like cloud usage.
- All new technologies will be vetted using a Proof of Concept⁶ model to test their usefulness before implementation.

2. In e-Governance

- **Foster the adoption of electronic identification and trust services** for electronic transactions and digital signatures,⁷ speeding up the processes such as signing electronic rent contracts, accessing confidential files, and submitting online taxation. Blockchain ledgers could foster the diffusion of digital identity across Europe, and their adoption is supported by use cases and pilot studies which have already taken place.⁸
 - Ensure all pilot studies include requirements of at least double authentication (e.g. through a PIN1, PIN2 system).
- **Diffuse the Estonian e-Residency model** to allow non-EU actors to establish businesses that can operate within the single market of the European Union.⁹
- **Use big data and predictive analytic systems** to better tailor policies and government services to citizens' needs.¹⁰ This data should be used during policy formulation for all policy, while at all times upholding the highest standards of privacy, data protection, and protecting fundamental rights.
- **Use open data to increase government transparency** and provide citizens and enterprises with information that either increases accountability and efficient governance or may be used for research interests. Organise hackathons where

⁵ Government of Canada, Shared Services Canada, available at <https://www.canada.ca/en/shared-services.html>; Department of Public Expenditure and Reform of the Government of the Republic of Ireland, An Examination of Shared Services in the Irish Public Service and Internationally, available at

https://www.google.de/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0ahUKEwjL3o_V5tPZAhUNa1AKHbZ6C04QFggsMAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.per.gov.ie%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2FExamination-of-Shared-Services-report-DPER-Nov-2015-LR.pdf&usg=AOvVaw0WrdHAy_Qupgeb_oooLEcW

⁶ To gain evidence that demonstrates that a business model or idea is feasible. See Investor Words, Web Finance, available at http://www.investorwords.com/3899/proof_of_concept.html

⁷ European Commission, Digital Single Market, available at <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/trust-services-and-eid>

⁸ OpenGovAsia, How the Dutch government is exploring blockchain use cases through many concurrent pilot projects, available at <https://www.opengovasia.com/articles/how-the-dutch-government-is-exploring-potential-uses-of-blockchain-through-many-concurrent-pilot-projects>; OpenGovAsia, Blockchain and the public sector - What happened in 2016, available at <https://www.opengovasia.com/articles/7274-blockchain-and-the-public-sector-developments-in-2016>

⁹ Start a Company, Republic of Estonia e-Residency, available at <https://e-resident.gov.ee/start-a-company/>

¹⁰ European Commission, Making Big Data work for Europe, available at <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/making-big-data-work-europe>

data is made available to allow developers to create innovative solutions and increase cyber security of public infrastructure.

3. In Healthcare

- **Diffuse e-healthcare practices at the national level**, ensuring patients' records¹¹ and their clinical histories can be easily shared among hospitals and general practitioners, and implement transnational e-prescription policies to ensure easy and secure access to prescribed medication for citizens that live, work or otherwise are abroad.¹² Emerging technologies such as blockchain ledgers can support the development of these digital services.¹³
- **Develop a public e-booking system for specialists** to reduce costly waiting lists, as it already exists for private healthcare insurance.

4. In the Law

- **Make legal proceedings more accessible.** Governments need to be accountable for each document that is produced with regards to legal proceedings, exploiting the emerging technologies to adequately store it and share it with all the involved stakeholders.¹⁴ Facilitating the right of access to documents or information held by public administrations will make the actions of public bodies transparent and guarantee the protection of legitimate interests and citizens' rights. Moreover, emerging technologies, such as blockchain ledgers, will facilitate the protection of documents and information such as sensitive data or information concerning public order. This would make it more difficult to deny an applicant's request to access in order to protect opaque interests.

5. In Security

- **Pursue the usage of blockchain ledgers**, such as the KSI Blockchain, to make data manipulation impossible, making donations to public actors transparent and traceable.¹⁵

¹¹ e-Estonia, e-health records, available at

<https://e-estonia.com/solutions/healthcare/e-health-record/>

¹² e-Estonia, e-Prescription, available at <https://e-estonia.com/solutions/healthcare/e-prescription/>

¹³ OpenGovAsia, Blockchain and the public sector - What happened in 2016, available at

<https://www.opengovasia.com/articles/7274-blockchain-and-the-public-sector-developments-in-2016>

¹⁴ OpenGovAsia, How the Dutch Government is exploring blockchain use cases through many concurrent pilot projects, available at

<https://www.opengovasia.com/articles/how-the-dutch-government-is-exploring-potential-uses-of-blockchain-through-many-concurrent-pilot-projects>

¹⁵ KSI Blockchain. See e-Estonia, available at

<https://e-estonia.com/solutions/security-and-safety/ksi-blockchain/>

B. Talent and Reputation

Revive, strengthen, and reward motivation and performance among civil servants to increase responsiveness to the changing environment and to citizens' needs. Foster an agile environment to stimulate civil servants' performance, their growth and career opportunities.

- **Set up innovation-teams¹⁶ within local and central administrations.** These "i-teams" will develop digital solutions to tackle the most pressing issues for their constituency, and then monitor their implementation. These teams will combine digital and service design competences, ensuring that new tools and services fit citizens' capabilities and needs.¹⁷ Public sector digitisation must be considered as a means, not an end.
- **Facilitate new skill learning in public sector jobs..** Public bodies will provide a wide range of training courses to their employees, enabling them to develop the project management and IT skills that are required in such a rapidly changing environment. All civil servants will have these competences certified. Civil servants can experience and learn from private sector dynamics by participating in "public-private sector exchanges".
- **Diffuse the position-based recruitment system in public administration¹⁸** across Europe to attract talent from all backgrounds and professions within ministries and public bodies: people from differing careers offer specific skills. Special entry points for young talent may include programs launching specific challenges aimed at hiring those that respond best to these tests.¹⁹
- **Introduce a management-by-objectives system** composed of financial and non-financial incentives to improve civil servant performance and accelerate career paths of strong professionals. Performance will be evaluated based on outcomes.
- **Introduce attractive, fair compensation for all civil servants** as well as high quality entry-level positions in the public sector.

¹⁶ Nesta, The teams and funds making innovation happen in governments around the world, available at https://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/i-teams_june_2014.pdf

¹⁷ The Behavioural Insight Team, Easy Attractive Social Timely, available at http://38r8om2xjhhI25mw24492dir.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/BIT-Publication-EAST_FA_WEB.pdf

¹⁸ OECD, Acquiring capacity, available at <http://www.oecd.org/gov/pem/acquiringcapacity.htm>; Eupan, Management and Employment in Europe, available at http://www.eupan.eu/files/repository/20170206084104_TopPublicManagersinEuropemainreport.pdf

¹⁹ Ministère du Budget, des Comptes Publics de la Fonction Publique, Administration and the Civil Service in the EU 27 Member States, available at https://www.fonction-publique.gouv.fr/files/files/publications/etudes_perspectives/Administration_and_the_Civil_service_in_the_27_EU_Member_states.pdf

C. Shared competences

Identify and avoid inefficient or ineffective duplication of shared competences at all levels of public administration to clarify accountability and decision-making processes. Decision makers must be accountable to their constituents for the use of public funds and their outcomes. Clear and demarcated competence allocation between bureaucracies at state, regional and local levels fosters greater accountability from political representatives.

- **Apply the subsidiarity principle** to ensure the most effective and efficient distribution of administrative and legal competences at the local, national, and EU level.

D. Glass state

Ensure full transparency in the use of public resources: how they are accounted, where they come from and how they are spent. Monitor tendering processes to make certain that public procurement delivers “best value for money” (BVM).²⁰ Competitive proposals for the delivery of public services ensures better outcomes for citizens while a transparent system limits fraud.

- **Exploit the role of the European Court of Auditors in the governance of National Audit Offices** for a better use of public finances, both at the European and national level, aiming to homogenize the public sector accounting standard²¹ and share best practices among countries²² (i.e. production of Whole of Government Accounts (WGA) at a national level).²³ The Court should guarantee public finances are used to correctly and efficiently implement policies, monitoring coherence between policy design and policy implementation.
- **Increase the power of National Audit Offices**²⁴ to review the activities, size, and objectives of public sector entities and public policy programmes without

²⁰ National Audit Office (NAO), Assessing value for money, available at <https://www.nao.org.uk/successful-commissioning/general-principles/value-for-money/assessing-value-for-money/>

²¹ EPSAS Standard, On the idea of introducing "EPSAS", available at <https://www.epsas.eu/en/epsas-the-idea.html>. Eurostat, Government finance statistics and EDP statistics - Government accounting, available at <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/government-finance-statistics/government-accounting>

²² European Court of Auditors, 2018 ECA Award for research on public sector auditing, available at <https://www.eca.europa.eu/en/Pages/ECA-Award-2018.aspx>

²³ National Audit Office (NAO), Whole of Government Accounts, available at <https://www.nao.org.uk/highlights/whole-of-government-accounts/>

²⁴ Overview, National Audit Office (NAO), available at <https://www.nao.org.uk/about-us/>

compromising on speed and quality of services. They should perform periodic independent assessments of all public property and enterprises to test their effectiveness and increase efficiency, and trial innovative public finance and budgeting techniques.

- **Centralize procurement processes** or use aggregation vehicles like framework agreements and consolidated contracts to gain from bigger scales. Integrate the existing central platform for public procurement (TED)²⁵ with national e-procurement platforms,²⁶ ensuring interoperability and data exchange to enable cross-national bids and weaken existing lock-in effects.
- **Improve market knowledge,**²⁷ for instance through research and Pre-Commercial Procurement practices, to better define public sector needs in multi-annual and annual procurement planning.
- **Foster better, more effective and transparent use of Public-Private Partnerships (PPP)** and results-based outsourcing only in cases of a clear benefit for citizens, when market externalities, such as environmental and societal impacts, accountability, and possible perverse incentives are accounted for. Carry out thorough impact assessments for important outsourcing initiatives with potentially large impact on public welfare. Public provision of services must also be evaluated on that same thorough basis as PPP.
- **Establish and expand the use of cooperatives and mutuals in the provision of public goods and services** in order to increase democratic accountability, citizen participation, and effective delivery and joint ownership.²⁸

II. Build an enabling education system for the future

Education is a force for fostering social mobility and inclusion, as well as the **foundation to unite people in a vibrant and dynamic democracy**, and of open pluralistic societies. Europe is facing extremely diverse regional education challenges. Volt will ensure that schools are the most inspiring, safe, attractive and stimulating workplaces. With the aim of creating **equal opportunities and access to high quality**

²⁵ EU, TED home, available at <http://ted.europa.eu/TED/main/HomePage.do>

²⁶ European Commission, E-Procurement, available at

http://ec.europa.eu/growth/single-market/public-procurement/e-procurement_en;

²⁷ European Commission, Public procurement - a study on administrative capacity in the EU, available at http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/how/improving-investment/public-procurement/study;

²⁸ European Parliament, European Parliament resolution of 15 June 2017 on a European Agenda for the collaborative economy (2017/2003(INI)), available at

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&language=EN&reference=P8-TA-2017-0271>,

Cooperatives Europe publication, Vision paper: A cooperative vision for the collaborative economy, available at <https://coopseurope.coop/vision-paper-cooperative-vision-collaborative-economy>

education, Volt aims to enable reflective and responsible development for every single child living in the European Union. Volt will also support extracurricular learning as well as informal and non-formal education. **Lifelong learning and vocational training** must be available to all throughout their professional and personal lives, in order to offer people opportunities regardless of age. There will be a strong emphasis on early-age education. Finally, there must be **greater investment in European higher education, along with research and development**. High-quality higher education must be accessible and available to everybody, irrespective of background. In order to enable every citizen to participate in and contribute to society, education must provide the necessary ingredients for rich personal development and create versatile opportunities for European citizens.

In order to build a system that empowers citizens to partake in and contribute to society, education requires major reforms to develop the basic skills for a participatory society, stimulate civic engagement, and foster and reward excellence. As it is Volt's founding principle to form policy based on best practice, we regard Finland's effective school reform as an example to emulate. Its key achievements include an emphasis on pre-primary education, providing resources for high-quality teacher training and adequate pay for teachers, short school hours, and a light homework load, in addition to providing free meals and free transport to school. Volt considers these the foundation for the future of learning. Let's work together to transform schools into a safe harbour for knowledge, inspiration and enlightenment for students and teachers alike.

A. Pre-primary Education

While public institutions will support and complement parents in a variety of ways, parents will always remain the primary entity responsible for the welfare of a child. The objectives of early childhood education are to support children's growth towards becoming ethically responsible members of society, to provide children with the knowledge and skills necessary in life, and to improve children's learning conditions. Therefore, there is a need to increase its quality and accessibility.

- **Ensure preschools and kindergartens are accessible to all children for free.²⁹**
- **Creative playful pre-primary education:** Volt will place a strong focus on early education, echoing the Finnish model.³⁰ Early childhood education and care programs (e.g. mentoring programs) such as those found in Finland provide positive role models and improve the development of children.³¹

²⁹ For more details see [Social Equality, Alleviate Poverty, Youth](#)

³⁰ For more details see <https://minedu.fi/en/early-childhood-education-and-care>

³¹ Denmark's forest pre-schools, developed by pedagogues and researchers are also a best practice. Besides a healthy development, they also aim at developing a responsible use of natural resources. See

- **Establish rehabilitation working groups made of representatives** from health care services, members of the voluntary and statutory sector, child guidance and family counselling and the school sector. These groups exist to organise daycare for children in need of special care and education, to support the monitoring of growth and learning.³²
- **Ensure access to programmes for children** under 6 years old such as speech therapy courses and support from child psychologists.
- **Guarantee a high Europe-wide standard of parental, paternity, and maternity leave.** After the period of maternity and paternity leave, either one or both of the parents may take parental leave. The duration of parental leave should be a minimum of 26 weeks and may be taken in a continuous period, which an employer cannot refuse, or in a discontinuous period, which the employer can refuse. Similar to maternity and paternity allowance, parental allowance is equivalent to income earned.³³

B. Primary and Secondary Education

Primary and secondary education require special attention because they are a key determinant for social inequality. Volt aims to develop a truly comprehensive system that will generate more informed, involved and empowered citizens to close the inequality gap.

1. Citizens Basics

- **Provide free, healthy, daily school meals** to all students to break the cycle of hunger and child poverty. Access to free meals has nutritional, learning, and health benefits, and supports productivity and educational success.³⁴
- **Ensure that high quality internet connection access and connectivity to technology,**³⁵ in terms of the fastest available mobile network connections and wifi, reach rural areas and other marginalised communities as soon as possible. This is absolutely vital for children's education, as it provides quick access to

Denmark.dk, Early Nature Lessons in Denmark's Forest Preschools, available at

<http://denmark.dk/en/meet-the-danes/forest-preschools>

³² OECD, Early Childhood Education and Care Policy in Finland, available at

<http://www.oecd.org/finland/2476019.pdf>

³³ For more details, see [End discrimination against groups and minorities, End discrimination against women, In the workplace](#)

³⁴ Journal of School Health, Nutrition and Student Performance at School, available at

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1746-1561.2005.00025.x>

³⁵ For more details see [Guarantee Digital Rights and Freedom, Digital rights](#).

information from a wide variety of sources, which must go hand in hand with critical thinking skills.

- **Strengthen the educational system by expanding the funding of public schools** in urban and rural areas. Give every child the possibility to attend a well-developed school.
- **Create special programs of integration for migrant children** to help them adjust to a new culture, language, and environment

2. Innovative approach and techniques

Make education effective & accessible for a wider range of student abilities and talents. Investigate long term trends and regularly update curricula to be in line with our changing societies, support the development of new tools and education parameters.

- **Invest in research to find better and more creative ways to teach**, like phenomenon-based learning: teaching by topic,³⁶ peer-to-peer learning, more experimental approaches, value-based education, and competence thinking to facilitate creativity and imagination. Empower every child to build on strengths, while securing minimum standards, and encourage children to learn through leadership, participation and civic awareness.³⁷
- **Introduce new approaches to measure the success of schools**, such as student enrollment/dropout rates; staff retention and professional development; and school connectivity via funding raised from philanthropy, parent engagement and community satisfaction metrics. Aim to have no more than 20 pupils per teacher at all schools.
- **Incentivise the development of digital skills**, both in early education and in preparation for the professional realm (coding classes etc.).
- **Strengthen the educational system through improved online courses** and make the best education available for everyone, especially for students living in remote areas.
- **Review neuroscientific and biological research papers on learning**, attention and concentration, eg concerning class times, exam times etc and experiment with new structures of class times.³⁸

³⁶ Phenomenal Education, Phenomen based learning, available at <http://www.phenomenaleducation.info/phenomenon-based-learning.html>

³⁷ Cats Forum, Children as Actors Transforming Society, available at catsconference.com/

³⁸ UC Berkeley, Poor grades tied to class times that don't match our biological clocks, available at <http://news.berkeley.edu/2018/03/29/social-jetlag/>

3. Curriculum reform

- **Ensure English fluency**, as English is the undisputed lingua franca in international communication. Simultaneously put a greater focus on the mastery of the native language to allow for adequate public engagement within local communities.
- **Emphasise STEAM³⁹** subjects, that will be offered in English, and actively connected to arts and creativity (STEAM).
- **Focus on citizenship education and how a political system works**, from the local council, to the national government and the European Union. Make citizenship education a priority.
- **Introduce a “life competences and responsibility” mandatory subject 1h per week** in the last two years of secondary school which will cover content such as economics and basic financial literacy, legal basics, social competences, sustainability, healthy lifestyle, as well as the cooperation of the schools with their local environment.
- **Reform educational programmes and curricula, so that they actively teach for tolerance and inter-cultural dialogue**, citizen engagement, and overcoming prejudices, and promoting democratic values. Prioritise courses for gender equality, overcoming gender stereotypes and discrimination as well as sex and relationship education.
- **Increase education on mental health and well-being** that must address the challenges that persons of all age groups face in a world of constant connectivity, socio-economic marginalisation and online bullying and harassment.
- **Introduce classes on media literacy** that explore creativity and empathy through film, drama and art.
- **Increase the emphasis on learning skills and competences**, e.g. oral communication, public speaking and written skills.

C. Teacher satisfaction

Attract more qualified people to become teachers that stay motivated in their job by raising the reputation of and compensation for this important profession.

³⁹ Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics

- **Support annual education summits** held by the European Union.⁴⁰
- **Reform teacher training by offering more practical experience**, reviewing the conditions of admission and supporting lateral entrants.
- **Extracurricular engagement and overtime** should be paid or compensated.
- **Invest in emotional support, counseling, psychological guidance and care** for teachers provided by specialized staff and in close collaboration with local medical facilities.
- **Prioritise investments in schools and teachers** in marginalised communities facing social exclusion.
- **Encourage and reward long term commitment** by teachers. Give teachers and education practitioners greater say and a voice in setting education policy.
- **Place an emphasis on teaching for and through creativity**, with new work structures, and working-environments. Introduce evaluation schemes based on 360° Feedback.

D. Buildings and Infrastructure

- **Turn education centres into community focal points** for exchange of ideas.
- **Invest in new or renovated facilities and buildings** that facilitate skill learning for modern markets, such as networking, within their architecture, when possible. Functional versions of these concepts already exist; we just have to spread them all over Europe. Orestad high school from Copenhagen is one such example.⁴¹

E. Higher and vocational education

In today's world, there is demand for highly skilled and socially engaged people. In the period up to 2025, half of all jobs are projected to require high-level qualifications.⁴² Driven by digital technology, jobs are becoming more flexible and complex. People are

⁴⁰ European Commission, First European Education Summit, available at https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-summit_en

⁴¹ To have a look at this amazing school building, see 3xn, Can a building help the education process?, available at <http://3xn.com/project/orestad-college>

⁴² European Commission Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions on a renewed EU agenda for higher education, available at

https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/he-com-2017-247_en.pdf

required to manage complex information, think autonomously and creatively, use resources, including digital ones, communicate effectively, and the ability to be resilient is more crucial than ever. Creativity, and the ability to create links between and across disciplines, is crucial to personal development and to solving social problems. Every citizen should always be able to advance to a higher level of education, regardless of the choices they made at different stages in life. Volt aims to revive tertiary education with innovative policies aimed to keep up with emerging trends.

- **Expand Erasmus+** by significantly increasing the budget and increase accessibility, outreach, and awareness of the opportunities it provides. Currently, the information dissemination of the program happens through DG EAC's⁴³ platform, but we want to ensure more collaboration with national and regional institutions to reach out to the places that would benefit the most from this exchange. Since the start of Erasmus+ in 2014, over 2 million people have participated in the programme.⁴⁴
- **Expand Erasmus Pro** for apprenticeships, and ensure it reaches people from all walks of life and all socioeconomic backgrounds in both educational and professional programmes. 30 years on, the Erasmus programme has proven itself, and expanding it is a worthwhile investment in Europe's future.
- **Facilitate intersectoral mobility** between universities and other higher education facilities on the one hand, and the private and third sector on the other. This would stimulate the exchange of different perspectives and allow highly skilled individuals to pursue a flexible career.
- **Establish an award for best teacher(s) in the EU.**
- **Open discussions on how to design the university of the future**, concerning topics such as open access for all residents of a given region, as well as through online lectures.
- **Enable the pursuit of education** by offering scholarship opportunities to post-baccalaureate and mature students who wish to return for further studies to foster lifelong learning.

F. Excellence

Create centers of excellence across selected universities and high schools to gain international recognition, attract talent, foster innovation, and create synergies with the

⁴³ Directorate -General for Education and Culture

⁴⁴ European Commission ERASMUS+The EU programme for education, training, youth and sport (2014-2020), available at

https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/documents/erasmus-general-factsheet_en

private sector, if relevant, while maintaining academic freedom and the integrity of the educational system.

- **Invest in universities located in economically disadvantaged areas** to attract students and resources.
- **Invest in education centers connected to local craftsmanship and excellence** (e.g. Napoli school for tailors/dairy producers).
- **Involve companies and civil society** in the design of selected classes and seminars in order to ensure that necessary skills are created, and achieve a greater degree of mobility between learning institutions.

III. Make high quality healthcare available for everyone

In line with the WHO, Volt defines health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being rather than merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Mental and physical diseases and disabilities need to be destigmatized in a mindful society. Volt believes that an efficient and sustainable healthcare system emphasizes prevention rather than treatment, reducing the human and financial cost of disease management.

Based on these principles, Volt seeks to create a first-rate healthcare system. Volt will invest in improving universal access to healthcare. Everywhere across the continent, it should be possible to see a GP or specialist within a few days and obtain timely treatment (and to reduce costs of waiting lists). In addition to this, access to mental healthcare needs to be improved. Effective e-health tools need to become an integral part of healthcare provision to increase access to care. Moreover, Volt will allocate more resources to preventive healthcare, with a particular focus on lifestyle diseases, as well as children's health and resilience. Volt wants to create an efficient healthcare system where caregivers are empowered to provide the best care to suit a patient's needs and desires. Overall, closer collaboration between medical professions concerning physical, mental and social health will be key to improve the quality and efficiency of healthcare.

A. Alignment of European healthcare systems

- **Ensure universal coverage and access to healthcare** for all European residents.
- **Develop European guidelines**, based on benchmarking and “best-in-class” performance, for **waiting times, diagnostics, and treatments** to improve the quality of healthcare. To this end, Volt proposes to implement a system of yearly

public healthcare reviews incorporated into the European Semester (e.g. by cooperating with different research organisations like the Health Consumer Powerhouse).⁴⁵

- **Work towards an efficient and high-quality healthcare systems**, which requires continuous optimization of coordination and co-working between public institutions and healthcare providers and market players. Healthcare providers should not be (fully) run by (centralized) bureaucratic agencies, but need to be independent and empowered to deliver the highest quality of care with minimal involvement of governments, politicians and bureaucrats in operational decisions. Instead, a multitude of organizationally independent healthcare and insurance providers should enable high-quality healthcare, where operational decisions are primarily made by medical professionals with patient co-participation. The state(s) should provide the necessary conditions for healthcare and insurance providers to function to a high standard, and set in place the legal and regulatory framework for healthcare financing to result in adequate universal coverage with affordable health care for all (Bismarck style).⁴⁶ Given the multitude of healthcare systems across the continent, Volt is convinced that the optimal public-private coordination and division of tasks needs to be determined on a country-by-country and case-by-case basis.
- **Ensure Europe-wide coverage of health services** to facilitate the mobility of European citizens by expanding existing healthcare agreements (e.g. by enabling an EU-wide e-booking system of specialised healthcare using the European Health Insurance Card – EHIC). Our long-term vision is that the EHIC would give EU citizens access to all types of healthcare throughout the EU.
- **Ensure world-class healthcare by enforcing evidence-based guidelines across the EU.**
- **Introduce further harmonisation** of the prescription and use of medicine across countries through the European Medical Agency (EMA). For example, a first priority is to reduce the large inter-country variation in antibiotic consumption, as overuse of antibiotics is increasingly leading to pathogen resistance.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Each year, a document is published that compares the healthcare performance of every European country. Our national policy teams can adapt changes more easily with their different priorities and speed. See Health Consumer Powerhouse, Euro Health Consumer Index, available at

<https://healthpowerhouse.com/publications/>

⁴⁶ Especially for larger countries the Bismarck system consistently ranks better in performance than the Beveridge systems, as described in the Health Consumer Powerhouse, Euro Health Consumer Index 2017, available at <https://healthpowerhouse.com/media/EHCI-2017/EHCI-2017-report.pdf>

⁴⁷ European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, Summary of the latest data on antibiotics consumption in the European Union, available at

https://ecdc.europa.eu/sites/portal/files/documents/Final_2017_EAAD_ESAC-Net_Summary-edited%20-%20FINALwith%20erratum.pdf

B. Access to healthcare

- **Reduce waiting times through roll-out of e-booking system** for specialists, with investment in more specialists and facilities.
- **Create a multi-professional approach** by supporting the smart centralisation of specialised medical domains. Medical centers should provide a comprehensive point of contact for patients to consult physicians as well as psychiatrists, psychologists, social counselors, speech therapists, physiotherapists and other medical professionals. Patients' medical data needs to be shared easily but securely and confidentially across healthcare domains so that healthcare professionals can deliver the best care to an individual.
 - Physical centralisation is primarily necessary for rural areas; in cities, centralisation connects healthcare domains in a smart way through ICT.
 - Investments in tele-medicine and e-health are required in order to provide an efficient and patient-friendly comprehensive point of contact with healthcare professionals.
- **Set up a European Health Express** for rural areas or areas that don't have good access to healthcare, and invest in new ideas like mobile clinics⁴⁸ such as those used by the Red Cross or Lifeline Express.⁴⁹
- **Ensure the European wide provision of mental health care services.**
 - Patients should have quick access to mental healthcare professionals through their GPs.
 - Mental healthcare should increasingly also be offered via innovative e-health platforms, such as video consultations.
 - Governments should play an active role in promoting mental healthcare. This would lower the threshold for patients to seek mental healthcare and forward the destigmatization of mental health problems.
 - Work to eliminate stigma and mystification around of mental illnesses like depression, and provide both early and continued support as well as preventative measures. .
 - Take a holistic, "all of society approach" to mental health based on the WHO Action Plan.⁵⁰ State interventions regulating the occupational conditions with respect to worker dignity, work-life balance, working hours, vacation time, and the flexibility. Measures should be set in place to inform

⁴⁸ Mobile clinics in Ukraine to bring health services to people in need, WHO Europe, available at <http://www.euro.who.int/en/countries/ukraine/news/news/2014/12/mobile-clinics-in-ukraine-to-bring-health-services-to-people-in-need>

⁴⁹ The Story of Lifeline Express, The better India, available at <https://www.thebetterindia.com/125248/lifeline-express-world-first-hospital-train-indian-railways/>

⁵⁰ WHO, Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2020, available at http://www.who.int/mental_health/publications/action_plan/en/

the workforce, to give them support in cases of distress, and to monitor the enforcement of workplace guidelines.

- **Ensure sufficient coverage of general practitioners and primary care units** in economically challenged areas, especially in rural areas, by improving compensation for doctors in rural areas, facilitating medical services to difficult-to-reach areas through e-health, and other measures.

C. Focus on preventive healthcare

To deliver the best health outcomes and quality of life, Volt will focus on preventive healthcare. Many diseases are the result of long-term exposure to risk factors that can be partially controlled through better lifestyle choices, a cleaner living environment, and an increased focus on preventive healthcare, especially early in life. Volt believes that more resources need to be dedicated to preventive healthcare in the following domains:

1. Lifestyle choices and diseases

Throughout Europe, lifestyle choices are major contributors to the total burden of disease.⁵¹ Unhealthy lifestyle choices such as tobacco smoking, physical inactivity and poor diet are leading risk factors for ill-health, which can result in (chronic) conditions such as cancer, obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and premature death. Although people live longer, they do so with more disease, which negatively affects well-being and further drives increases in health expenditures. Therefore, a preventive lifestyle for both physical and mental/social well-being should be a focus in schools, companies, and in public awareness campaigns. Regardless of socioeconomic position, all European residents should have access to first-rate preventive healthcare over the entire life-cycle.⁵²

- **Promote a healthy lifestyle** by offering information on healthy lifestyle choices and regulating access to harmful and/or addictive substances. All European schools will provide up-to-date learning tools and practical classes on lifestyle choices. Additionally, they will offer sufficient time and facilities for physical activity.
- **Further restrict access to tobacco for minors** (i) by imposing an EU-wide prohibition on the legal purchase of tobacco products for those below 18 years

⁵¹ According to the Global Health Observatory by WHO, in 2015 6 out of the 7 top death motivations were due to non communicable diseases, where the world's biggest killer are ischaemic heart disease and stroke, accounting for 15 Million people, see WHO, Top 10 causes of death, available at http://www.who.int/gho/mortality_burden_disease/causes_death/top_10/en/; The Lancet, Life, death and disability in 2016, available at

[http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(17\)32465-0/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(17)32465-0/fulltext)

⁵² This includes having access to affordable healthy nutrition.

old and (ii) better enforcement of the purchase restrictions (e.g. through sales licences and fines for vendors and underage buyers).

- **Increase taxation of tobacco derived products to disincentivize consumption.** This is justified by the estimates that by 2020 tobacco would account for 10% of all deaths, and that smoking causes about 71% of lung cancer cases, 42% of chronic respiratory disease and nearly 10% of cardiovascular disease.⁵³
- **Increase taxes on alcohol,** in combination with further policy measures to discourage consumption. This is justified by the across the board negative health consequences of alcohol consumption, including violence when under the influence of alcohol.⁵⁴
- **Set European guidelines for physical activity** in schools and the workplace.⁵⁵
- **Explore and test tax reforms for a healthier diet,** including:
 - Increases in VAT on unhealthy foods including saturated fats, trans-fatty acids, and processed sugars.
 - Decreases in VAT on healthy vegetables and fruits.
- **Provide European guidelines to educate children in schools on healthy diets.**
- **Standardize or mandate vaccines for sexually transmitted infections** such as human papillomavirus and Hepatitis B virus in state-sponsored vaccinations programs.
- **Provide affordable and accessible STI testing facilities for all.**
- **Provide European guidelines for immunization programs for the elderly.**
- **Work towards controlled decriminalization or legalisation of drugs.** Portugal's progressive legislation and attitude towards drug addiction has shown that the current predominant model of a "war on drugs" has not and will not work. Volt intends to emulate Portugal's model and decriminalize all drug possession under a certain threshold. This will free up police resources to follow up on large

⁵³ WHO, Executive Summary on noncommunicable diseases, available at http://www.who.int/nmh/publications/ncd_report_summary_en.pdf

⁵⁴ The Lancet, Risk thresholds for alcohol consumption: combined analysis of individual-participant data for 599 912 current drinkers in 83 prospective studies, available at [http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(18\)30134-X/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(18)30134-X/fulltext)

⁵⁵ People who are insufficiently physically active have a 20% to 30% increased risk of all-cause mortality, where regular physical activity reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease including high blood pressure, diabetes. WHO Global Status Report 2010, available at http://www.who.int/nmh/publications/ncd_report_full_en.pdf

scale drug smuggling and buyer victimization. It will enable European societies to treat addiction as a medical and not a criminal problem.⁵⁶

2. Provide preventive healthcare programmes for minors

Monitoring health and development early in life enables effective interventions with long-term positive outcomes for health and well-being. Parents should receive support in making the best decisions for themselves during pregnancy and for their children concerning physical and mental healthcare, nutrition, exercise, and vaccinations. Research has shown the importance of early life interventions, and a comprehensive approach to early childhood development to improve long-term health and human capital outcomes for children has a high “return-on-investment.”⁵⁷

- **Implement and set EU-wide standards for high-quality preventive healthcare programs for minors.** Health care programs should monitor physical development as well as psychosocial, speech development, and socio-emotional skills through regular screenings. Through these programs, parents should get all the support needed to give their children the best possible start in life. Measures include:
- Providing prenatal care that ensures fair and safe conditions for newborns, conducting regular screening on mothers (e.g. examination of fetal karyotype, ultrasounds, education about substance abuse).
 - Providing EU-wide guidelines on (i) the timing of preventive screenings/examinations over the life-cycle and (ii) essential preventive procedures/check-ups for each screening/examination.
 - Smart targeting of at-risk minors for additional screenings.
 - Sharing best practices and data between countries to improve national programs based on best practices. Although preventive healthcare programs for minors are in place in most European countries, health outcomes and access to preventive health care varies considerably across Europe.⁵⁸
 - Standardizing obligatory childhood immunization programmes for minors, following European guidelines.
 - Providing the neonatal heel prick to detect genetic conditions among newborns (e.g. hypothyroidism, phenylketonuria, cystic fibrosis).
 - Increasing coverage of preventive healthcare for minors through measures such as home visiting programs during infancy and school visiting programs.

⁵⁶ Cata Institute, Drug Decriminalization Policy in Portugal, available at https://object.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/pubs/pdf/greenwald_whitepaper.pdf

⁵⁷ Heckman Equation, There's more to gain by taking a comprehensive approach to early childhood development, available at

https://heckmanequation.org/assets/2017/01/F_Heckman_CBAOnePager_120516.pdf

⁵⁸ NCBI, Preventive youth health care in 11 European countries: an exploratory analysis, available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3359454/>

- Providing prevention programs for depression and anxiety to teenagers, as research has shown this to be effective in the reduction of the symptoms of these conditions.⁵⁹

3. Reduce environmental risks

Global Climate Change, urban outdoor air pollution, and lead exposure account for nearly 2.4% of diseases and deaths globally.⁶⁰ In order to lower the negative impact of those causes, Volt wants to:

- **Publicly monitor key variables indicative of environmental quality** (e.g. air pollution using SO_x, NO_x and particulate matter levels, water quality (pH and harmful residual minerals such as limestone), in real-time to (1) inform citizens, (2) guide policy making, and (3) detect dangerous situations which might lead to diseases like thyroid carcinoma and mesotheliomas.
- **Take measures to improve air quality in cities**, e.g.:
 - Limit traffic on days when certain threshold values of air quality are exceeded, as is already done in Spain, Italy, and Denmark, where measures include (i) forbidding cars and/or trucks to enter the city or (ii) restricting access to even or odd numbered license plates;
 - Improve public transportation networks;
 - Support the development of shared means of transport (e.g. car-sharing);
 - Supply green alternatives for transportation, such as safe and extensive biking and walking infrastructure and bike-sharing.
 - Ensure affordability of public transportation for all.
- **Strengthen regulation and controls on the industry to minimize harmful emissions.**
- **Invest in research on air purification and targeted green space regeneration, as well as run pilot projects.**

4. Data-driven prevention

Volt believes that better use of data can be strong driver of innovation in healthcare, especially when it comes to preventive healthcare that is better tailored to the individual. Volt aims to:

- **Reinforce government agencies to monitor risk factors** based on the probability of occurrence of medical risk factors, such as diseases among

⁵⁹ NCBI, A Meta-Analytic Review of Depression Prevention Programs for Children and Adolescents, available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2758769/>

⁶⁰ WHO, Global Health Risks: Mortality and burden of disease attributable to selected major risks, available at http://www.who.int/healthinfo/global_burden_disease/GlobalHealthRisks_report_full.pdf?ua=1

patients, among geographic and demographic categories, to better target preventive healthcare to sub-populations at risk.

- **Use anonymized patient data to establish a trusted and secure Health Information System** where a citizen can opt-in to obtain “recommendation packages” based on individual characteristics to perform preventive tests.⁶¹ Calls for tests will be communicated through e-health platforms (via apps, smart devices, etc.). This will achieve the following benefits:
 - Improve health outcomes through individualized preventive healthcare
 - Provide forecasts for incoming test volumes to healthcare providers;
 - Reduce waiting time for patients;
 - Track patients’ test executions, reminding them to take them at the right moment.
- **Provide tax deductions to citizens for expenditures on preventive healthcare.**
- **Monitor (changes) in the prevalence of chronic diseases to guide policy making in preventive healthcare.**

D. Empowering and educating patients

- **Provide EU-wide coverage of urgent but non-life-threatening medical assistance through an on-call service** (phone number 116117).⁶² Callers would receive medical assistance or an appointment with a specialist over the phone. They could also receive advice on whether they should see a nearby primary care or emergency care unit. This would alleviate unnecessary pressure on emergency rooms and first care units.
- **Run an EU-level campaign to inform citizens of the existence** and services of the 116117 phone number.
- **Raise public awareness of the need for organ donations** in order to boost donation numbers (e.g. by sending letters for informed-based decision-making to every citizen turning 18 and by creating a transparent system). Explore a gradual

⁶¹ The Västerbotten Intervention Programme in Sweden demonstrates the value of individualized preventive healthcare for cardiovascular disease. The program consists of physical tests, analysis and one-one-one discussions of the results with a nurse, resulting in changes of lifestyle suggestion that improve the individual health condition. See BMC Public Health, A cost-effectiveness analysis of a community based CVD program in Sweden based on a retrospective register cohort, available at <https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-018-5339-3>

⁶² European Commission, 116117 - Non-emergency medical assistance, available at <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/116117-non-emergency-medical-assistance>

move to a system where organ donation is the default option at the time of death unless a patient actively chooses to opt-out.

- **Harmonise information and guidelines on lifestyle choices that lead to lifestyle diseases** based on state-of-the-art scientific insights.

E. Aging populations

A. Healthcare for the elderly

Across Europe, we need to find solutions for challenges posed by shifting demographics⁶³ in healthcare. As life expectancy increases, so too does the incidence of illness in elderly people, resulting in an increasing need for care and medical attention among this population. While many elderly individuals find support in assisted living facilities and nursing homes as they age, autonomy and agency, which remain key components of a decent quality of life, may still be compromised. Although advances in medical technology have led to spectacular increases in length of life, medical interventions frequently do not sufficiently take quality of life into account. Volt aims to:

- **Improve quality of life and (long-term) care for the elderly by making assisted living programs more widely available**, through community care programs such as Buurtzorg in the Netherlands, where self-governing teams flexibly produce the best care that fits for the individual patient, and other such programs.⁶⁴
- Educate and train medical students, medical specialists and other healthcare professionals to **facilitate decision making processes on possible treatments with patient co-participation** with the goal of improving or sustaining quality of life. This is particularly relevant for patients with complex co-morbidities and at the end of life.
- **Ensure the provision of palliative care** in the home environment at the end of life.

B. Supporting fertility and childcare

⁶³ European Commission, Population structure and ageing, available at http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Population_structure_and_aging

⁶⁴ The Guardian, Buurtzorg: the Dutch model of neighbourhood care that is going global, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/social-care-network/2017/may/09/buurtzorg-dutch-model-neighbourhood-care>; For further suggestions on how to improve long-term care for older people also see Interlinks, available at <http://interlinks.euro.centre.org/project>. These programmes are also meant to improve the situation of formal and informal caregivers, while taking into accounts gendered aspects of care.

Throughout Europe, there has been a steady trend of decreasing fertility. During the period from 1961–2015, the highest annual number of live births in the EU-28 was recorded in 1964, at 7.8 million. Since then, the number of live births in the EU-28 has declined, reaching a low of 5.0 million in 2002.⁶⁵

- **Ensure that parents have access to affordable childcare** so that it becomes easier to raise children while working.
- **Enable equally-paid maternity and paternity leave** for a specific period of time, and then extra time off that may be shared according to the parents' preferences. Heavily incentivize both parents to take parental leave.⁶⁶ The length of leave can be decided according to the countries' existing frameworks, but ensuring gender equality.⁶⁷

F. Innovation and research

- **Invest in e-health** programs to promote coverage of healthcare, flexibility and efficiency of healthcare provisions and research focusing on advanced analyses of medical data. Volt wants to:
 - Implement e-booking systems to avoid costly waiting lists.⁶⁸
 - Improve telemedical networks to improve access to (i) healthcare in remote areas and (ii) consultations with specialists. The latter should especially be provided for patients with complex diseases and high levels of comorbidity that may make travel difficult or result in sudden demand for contact with a medical specialist.
 - Use e-health to connect a patient's prescriptions to the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). Through the prescriptions loaded on the EHIC, it should be possible to obtain prescription drugs at any pharmacy in the EU, thereby improving access to medication.
 - Provide opt-in options to load (i) patient diagnoses and/or medical records, (ii) organ-donation preferences, and (iii) advance healthcare directives onto the EHIC to improve healthcare tailored to the individual.
 - Invest in standardized secure digital patient files (1) for data collection, to increase efficiency of healthcare provisions and (2) to enable innovative

⁶⁵ Eurostat, Fertility Statistics, available at http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Fertility_statistics

⁶⁶ This also applies to same-sex couples. Single parents can either choose to take the full time off (otherwise available to both parents) or to be awarded financial benefits.

⁶⁷ For more details see [End discrimination against groups and minorities](#), [End discrimination against women](#), [In the workplace](#)

⁶⁸ In 2014 Macedonia managed to almost eliminate its waiting lists by implementing a real-time e-booking system as described in the Euro Health Consumer Index 2017. See WHO Europe, Integrated health information system, available at

<http://www.euro.who.int/en/countries/the-former-yugoslav-republic-of-macedonia/news/news/2015/05/towards-an-integrated-health-information-system-in-the-former-yugoslav-republic-of-macedonia>

- big-data research based on anonymized patient records compliant to GDPR.
 - Provide increased funding for modernisation and digitisation, to facilitate medical workflow in hospitals and medical institutions.
- **Invest in medical research by:**
- Increasing funding for publicly-owned research organisations.
 - Promoting evidence-based research in experimental medicine, including herbal medicine and phage therapy.⁶⁹
 - Investing in customized medicine through DNA sequencing to better understand how we may improve both preventive and curative healthcare by leveraging individual predispositions. Key and critical points for the successful implementation of this technique include (1) ensuring absolute privacy and security of patient data; (2) reducing the cost of DNA sequencing technology; and (3) providing funding for long-running academic research projects and/or agendas relevant to DNA sequencing and medical applications thereof.
 - Incentivizing the publication of null-results, taking the wind out of the ‘publish or perish’ mentality and to reduce doubling of research projects.
- **Create regulations for more sustainable packaging** of medicine using renewable resources and less plastic.

G. Healthcare professionals

1. Nurses

- **Incentivise homecare networks** that link a patient’s existing community to a local team of nursing professionals, who then work with this community to tailor patient support to patient need, , following the example of Buurtzorg Netherlands.⁷⁰
- **Make nursing a more independent and attractive field** by promoting a small, self-managed team structure.
- **Introduce health-care assistants** who would assist patients in daily life in the hospital in addition to nurses who would take care of prescribed medical needs, as seen in the United States, United Kingdom, and Denmark.

⁶⁹ Phage therapy is an important alternative to antibiotics, especially in cases where antibiotics resistance occurs.

⁷⁰ For best practice for neighbourhood care see Buurtzorg Nederland, Humanity over bureaucracy, available at <https://www.buurtzorg.com/>

- **Encourage the unionisation of nurses and healthcare assistants** so their voices can be heard.

2. Doctors / general

- **Harmonise accreditation schemes across Europe** and review study entry requirements (e.g. reward social engagement skills and introduce special tests like in Austria⁷¹ to prevent high dropout rates and to attract the needed skills).
- **Incentivise and encourage participation in European exchange programs** during studies and work for all medical professionals.
- **Allow for flexible working hours**, part-time jobs, and family-friendly working environments.

3. Midwives

- **Review insurance costs for midwives.**
- **Support self-organised projects** designed to efficiently connect pregnant women to midwives, both pre- and postnatally (e.g. through apps with online chats during pregnancy and in the first months after birth)

H. Healthcare costs and efficiency

Over the past few decades, most countries have witnessed a steady increase in healthcare expenditures. Currently, expenditures range between 5% of GDP in Romania to 11.1% of GDP in France and Sweden.⁷² After the economic crises, direct out-of-pocket expenditures have risen more quickly than public spending on healthcare. This trend makes healthcare more expensive for consumers, and in the long run could pose a serious threat to affordable access to healthcare for all European citizens. Volt believes governments should keep healthcare affordable, and therefore should both avoid cuts to overall healthcare spending and increase funding to programs aimed to reduce overall costs of healthcare in general, such as preventive medicine initiatives. Volt also promotes the efficient use of resources and best-value-for-cost policies. To this end, Volt aims to:

- **Reduce costs by providing a legal and regulatory framework to empower healthcare professionals through self-governing small teams** that flexibly

⁷¹ Medical University of Vienna, Medicine and Dentistry Admission Test, available at <https://www.meduniwien.ac.at/web/en/studies-further-education/application-admission/medicine-and-dentistry-degree/admissions-test/>

⁷² OECD, Health at a glance: Europe 2016, available at <https://www.oecd.org/els/health-systems/Health-at-a-Glance-Europe-2016-CHARTSET.pdf>

provide the best care for an individual patient, e.g. based on the model of Buurtzorg in the Netherlands.⁷³

- **Ensure efficient and secure use and supply of medical drugs by:**
 - Providing medicine in individualized packages and quantities depending on patients' needs instead of standard packages, which often result in large quantities of unused medicine and waste.
 - Coordinating negotiations with the pharmaceutical industry at a European level to reduce costs
 - Reducing waste of drugs by improving the allocation of almost-expired drugs to regions where they are currently needed through a European-wide marketplace.
- **Incentivize doctors and medical professionals to increase the provision of preventive healthcare** that avoids "downstream costs." Incentive schemes need to be set on a country-by-country basis to adequately fit with a country's healthcare (financing) system.

I. Sexual and reproductive health and rights

- **Make abortion available and affordable for all women⁷⁴ and ensure that women have access to contraception.⁷⁵** Approach sexual and reproductive health and rights holistically, as a key issue of gender equality and health.
- **Ensure that schools introduce accurate mandatory classes on reproductive health and rights** so that there is a Europe standard for the curricula that schools comply with.

IV. Ensure a fair legal system, effective law enforcement, and anti-corruption legislation

Volt wants 'smart' European states to ensure **frictionless** access to **humane, fair, transparent, accountable** and **efficient** legal systems and law enforcement agencies.

⁷³ The Guardian, Buurtzorg: the Dutch model of neighbourhood care that is going global, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/social-care-network/2017/may/09/buurtzorg-dutch-model-neighbourhood-care>; Ernst & Young documented estimated savings of around 50% to healthcare services provided by Buurtzorg due to the implementation of community care programs that significantly reduced the required hours of care. See Buurtzorg, About Us, available at <https://www.buurtzorg.com/about-us/>

⁷⁴ For more details see [Own your body. Reproductive rights](#)

⁷⁵ Ibid.

Volt also has a **zero-tolerance policy** towards **corruption; state capture**, when private interests dictate state policy; **white collar crime**; and corporate **tax avoidance**. These behaviours are contrary to European values themselves and lead to significant losses of public and private resources.

Towards this goal, it is necessary, non-exhaustively, to: (1) overhaul and improve the judicial system; (2) act against white collar (corporate and financial) crime; and (3) regulate, protect, and incentivise whistleblowing. In addition, law enforcement needs to be improved and limited to regulate state-of-emergency extensions and end police violence (law enforcement and police operations), and prioritize non-prison sanctions.

If not addressed, corruption can become systemic and within Europe it is most often associated with illiberal models of state capture. Globally, corruption has become increasingly critical, as an endemic part of the structure of the global economy. Studies have found that there is anywhere between 21-32 trillion euros of unpaid taxes⁷⁶ hidden away in tax havens around the world. With growing inequalities leading to political instability and an urgent need to tackle other pressing global problems, ending both corruption and tax avoidance is absolutely critical.

A. Intelligent judicial systems

- **Reduce backlog of pending cases** by applying simple standards (e.g. focusing on first-in first-out and urgent cases).
- **Develop alternative routes to litigation**, such as mediation and negotiation, in areas such as family law.
- **Encourage the digitisation of proceedings** for civil lawsuits below a given claim sum and use digital means to help defendants keep up with their court dates, etc.
- **Expand legal aid services across Member States in order to enable effective access to justice**, particularly to the most vulnerable and marginalised populations.

B. Fighting corruption

- **Confer additional powers to the European anti-corruption office OLAF and the European Ombudsman, as well as the new European Public Prosecutor's Office.** European institutions are held to account by the Office Européen de Lutte Anti-Fraude ("OLAF") and Member States are self-controlled

⁷⁶ Tax Justice Network, The Scale of Tax Injustice, available at <https://www.taxjustice.net/the-scale-of-injustice/>

via their respective anti-corruption institutions. Corruption needs to be checked by an external actor to the government in question. This is why OLAF, as well as the newly created European Prosecutors Office, should be conferred additional powers to investigate cases of corruption in Member States, including the ability to access documents and conduct interviews in cooperation with the European Prosecutor, who is tasked with tackling corruption. OLAF should further have the right to bring cases to a national court, if necessary.

- **Expand the European Transparency Register**⁷⁷ to include all EU institutions, including the Commission and the Council, and make it mandatory for all lobbying and advocacy organisations to be listed therein. Apply the same register system at all levels of government in the Member States.
- **Effectively tackle the phenomenon of ‘revolving doors’** across governments and EU institutions, as per Transparency International’s recommendations.⁷⁸ Measures include substantial ‘cooling off’ periods for civil servants and elected officials in between leaving their positions and taking up any role that involves for-profit advocacy or lobbying for their former institutions. Institutional ethics committees must be established or reinforced, as well as empowered with credible, legally binding powers to prevent any conflict of interest after public service, following tougher ethics guidelines. The recent Barroso & Goldman Sachs scandal must not be allowed to be repeated.
- **Ensure the curbing of opportunities for abuse of power by governmental actors by obliging the publication of public spending.** We will promote the implementation of e-Governance and e-procurement initiatives to stop bureaucratic corruption. To accommodate this, there must be changes aimed at speeding up the digitisation of governmental institutions and the transparent publication of both decisions made by governmental institutions and interactions with the contractors they hire. Any decision that requires public spending must be made fully available for scrutiny by the press and the constituents of the respective Member State. To accommodate this, Volt proposes to:
 - Use digital infrastructure to streamline and promote transparency of decisions made by governmental institutions and their contractors to ensure accountability;
 - Oblige Member States to adhere to the digitalisation of their administration. In case of non-compliance, EU funding will be cut as an incentive to ensure this obligation is met;
 - Allocate EU funds to support laying the infrastructure for such initiatives and for retraining civil servants to work with e-Government tools.

⁷⁷ European Commission, Transparency Register, available at <http://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/public/homePage.do>

⁷⁸ TI report, Access All Areas, available at <http://transparency.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Access-all-areas.pdf>

- **Lead by example on the transparency of party financing.** Not only do individuals in government receive illicit funding, but so do political parties. This is why Volt will publish the identity of all its relevant donors and the donated sums online. We will also introduce a code of conduct that regulates what kind of donations are allowed to be accepted by Volt.
- **Introduce requirements of full disclosure of the office expenses and spending of elected officials** in carrying out their work, including Members of Parliament and Members of the European Parliament, along the lines already taken by certain groups of MEPs.⁷⁹
- **Expand implementation of Integrity Facts** and clean contracting in public procurement and public-private partnership, together with civil society, in line with Transparency International's recommended best practice.⁸⁰

C. Ending tax avoidance & evasion, increasing tax collection efficiency

- **Support the urgent implementation of the OECD/G20 Base Erosion Profit Shifting Actions (BEPS) project**, aimed at ensuring that profits are taxed in the region where economic activities generating the profits are performed and where value is created.⁸¹
- **Push for full adoption and implementation of the “Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base” (CCCTB) proposal**, which the European Parliament endorsed in March 2018.⁸² Multinational online companies must be taxed for their “digital presence” and value generated in a country.
- **Set up an EU tax authority to tackle cross border avoidance and evasion.**
 - Ban “letterbox”⁸³ companies, that allow multinationals to create empty registrations in countries for tax purposes, and prohibit ‘sweetheart’ discriminatory tax deals between governments and multinationals.
 - Shine a light and create transparency in company ownership structures by requiring the disclosure of personal details of owners and beneficiaries of companies on the public register.

⁷⁹ EPLP, Labour MEPs' transparency arrangements, available at www.eurolabour.org.uk/transparency

⁸⁰For more information see EU Reform chapter, security. Transparency International, Integrity Facts, available at https://www.transparency.org/whatwedo/tools/integrity_pacts/3

⁸¹ OECD, BEPS Actions, available at www.oecd.org/ctp/beps-actions.htm

⁸² European Parliament, MEPs approve tax plan, available at

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20180309IPR99422/meps-approve-new-eu-corporate-tax-plan-which-embraces-digital-presence>: European Parliament Research Service briefing, available at [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2017/599395/EPRI_BRI\(2017\)599395_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2017/599395/EPRI_BRI(2017)599395_EN.pdf)

⁸³ ETUC, Letterbox-type practices, available at

<https://www.etuc.org/press/letterbox-type-practices-avoiding-taxes-and-exploiting-workers-across-eu>

- **Push for administrative reforms across Europe at all levels of government to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of tax collection**, and abolish tax havens and tax loopholes within the EU.

D. Corporate social responsibility and accountability

Pursue political, corporate and financial crime thoroughly and support initiatives to expand corporate social responsibility, ensuring compliance and ethical standards. Strengthen protections for whistle-blowing and extend due diligence across value chains.

- **Reinforce the newly created European Public Prosecutors Office**, and encourage the development of **public prosecutors specialised in financial crime** in countries where they do not exist.
- **Support protection, anonymity and remuneration for whistleblowers** disclosing information for the public good.
- **Advocate for international standards on corporate responsibility**, including the UN Compact, and the new Binding Treaty on Business and Human Rights.
- **Put in place legislation that extends responsible practices** and due diligence throughout supply chains.

E. Law enforcement and police operations

- **Strengthen European police cooperation, define limits for state of emergencies**, and ensure that police forces operate in a fair and effective manner while minimising the level of violence and eliminating discriminatory practices.
- **Limit extension of state of emergencies**, ensure full and transparent monitoring of human rights during the period of a state of emergency, and create stricter review mechanisms to ensure that such measures are truly needed.
- **Encourage Europol and Eurojust's operation**, speed up and support integration, and ensure that human rights are always upheld.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ For more details see [Other provisions for good governance](#), [Military & non-military capabilities](#) and [Common security culture](#)

- **End ethnic profiling** during police identity checks and require officers to issue a stop form for every identity check.⁸⁵
- **Limit officer's discretionary authority** by requiring reasonable and specific suspicion for all checks and searches.⁸⁶
- **Work to end police violence** through training, accountability mechanisms, and monitoring.⁸⁷
- **Limit the use of military-style policing** for street-level protests and local conflicts.
- **Expand police force training on dealing with hate crimes.**⁸⁸

F. Prison reform

- **Ensure that prison conditions always comply with human rights and dignity regulations**, as laid out by Council of Europe standards, and that administrative powers are not used in a discriminatory way. Additionally, ensure that prisons are as closely modeled to the outside world as possible in order to make reintegration and inclusion easier.
- **Encourage research for alternatives to prisons that achieve the aim of keeping society safe**, as well as reintegrating individuals successfully into society, by encouraging classes and activities, and reintegration in society.
- **Prioritize alternative sanctions (other than prison, such as community service) for certain non-violent crimes.**
- **Offer psychological treatment and/or psychotherapy for prisoners**, especially for prisoners that suffer from ADHD in combination with substance abuse⁸⁹, including alternative treatments like meditation and mindfulness.
- **Ensure that juveniles are not detained with adults.**

⁸⁵ For more details see [End discrimination against groups and minorities. End discrimination based on ethnicity, national origin, descent and skin colour. In the law](#)

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ See, for example, Council of Europe, Policing Hate Crime against LGBTI persons: Training for a Professional Police Response, available at

<https://rm.coe.int/prems-030717-gbr-2575-hate-crimes-against-lgbt-web-a4/1680723b1d>

⁸⁹ Overall, 51.4% of male young adult offenders and 43.6% of female offenders had a child psychiatric history. The population-attributable risk of criminality from childhood disorders was 20.6% for young adult female participants and 15.3% for male participants. See NCBI, Childhood psychiatric disorders and young adult crime, available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17974931>

- **Develop an education system that serves both short- and long-term offenders.** The curriculum should be varied, with particular emphasis on supplementing .
- **Ensure that prisoners undergoing strip searches are searched by same sex prison officers.** For certain inmates who adhere to strict religious or cultural obligations all necessary precautions and measures must be adopted not to cross sensitive boundaries. Officers must anticipate these requests beforehand.
- **Provide cultural training for prison officers.** All officers should undergo training to learn techniques needed to work with incarcerated multi-ethnic communities. A basic program should be implemented across the board and, where higher concentrations of diverse prison populations exist, a more intense cultural education program could greatly enhance respect between inmates and officers.

V. Guarantee Digital rights and freedom

In a society that is shaped by technology and connectivity, our rights online are essential to our democracy. Volt will work to guarantee citizens' rights on the internet, and extend digital education and technological literacy. Our freedom of expression and our economic, social and cultural rights depend on our ability to engage with technology. Volt will create a new type of politics, forming the forum to debate our common future with emerging technologies.

A. Internet access

- **Push the European Union and European countries to invest more to ensure a high-quality internet connection across Europe.⁹⁰** This includes the fastest available mobile network connections and wifi in urban and in rural areas, that connect the most marginalised communities to the internet. The economic benefits of widespread connectivity should be encouraged, while ensuring that provision is equitable, fair, and universal as a merit good or public good.

B. Digital education

- **Increase the focus on digital technological literacy education for all ages, including coding.** Online education must begin at an early age and progress

⁹⁰ European Commission, Connectivity for a European Gigabit Society, available at <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/policies/improving-connectivity-and-access>

toward life-long learning and vocational training, including an emphasis on mental health and social well-being, given the effects of digital environments.

- **Push for investment in lifelong adult education programmes emphasising occupational literacy.** As more and more jobs are made redundant through automation, an increasing number of people will have to re-train repeatedly to work in new roles or to use new technologies. Digital literacy will therefore be of growing importance, and requires greater investment. Occupational literacy, or the idea that people should be able to develop their own interests given access to information and technology, should be part of a person's development throughout their lifespan.
- **Ensure that digital education includes an emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).** At the same time, encourage and foster creativity and the arts (STEAM - Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics), expand best-practice public and civil society initiatives like WISE (Women in Science and Engineering), who work to empower women and girls in the sector through mentorship and peer-to-peer networks.⁹¹ Tech education must be used as a tool of social and professional inclusion, enabling those who are under-represented or marginalised in the field to excel, particularly in closing the gender gap in STEM, or overcoming socio-economic obstacles.
- **Work to construct new political culture and vocabulary that is able to debate and address new issues as they arise.** As technological advances accelerate, we will soon find ourselves facing questions that we now consider far-fetched and unimaginable, as technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) and the Internet of Things develop.

C. Digital single market

- **Prioritise developing the digital single market,** enabling businesses and start-ups to make use of the 500 million consumers and the economies of scale that come with them, while working with the EU and other European countries. There must be accommodation for emerging online forms of organisations, as well as the potential of alternative business models such as cooperatives and mutuals.

D. Digital rights

⁹¹ WISE, Campaign for Gender Balance in Science, Technology and Engineering, available at <https://www.wisecampaign.org.uk/>

- **Push for a Digital Bill of Rights as a binding international legal instrument, based on existing internet governance norms.**⁹² As far as connectivity enables citizens to participate in society, this instrument would guarantee individual and social rights in an interconnected world, including the right to access the internet, and it will also protect related rights in the digital environment such as privacy; data protection; freedom of expression, information, and association online; and stakeholder-based internet governance. Principles of Net Neutrality and an open internet are at the core of an internet system that guarantees these rights. Volt will advocate for the EU to include digital rights and freedoms in its agreements with third countries.
- **Support and expand protections for privacy and data protection, building on General Data Protection Regulations.**⁹³ Encryption is key to ensuring online privacy. Volt will work to promote encryption of online communications. While providing effective protection against threats of terrorism and crime is crucial, citizens must never accept mass surveillance as a norm, by state or non-state actors.
- **Advance and protect cybersecurity and digital rights** as new revolutionary technologies emerge, in the coming era of the “Internet of Things”⁹⁴ where smart grids, smart roads, smart hospitals and even smart furniture determine crucial aspects of our lives.
- **Ensure that the principle of an open internet and freedoms of expression, access, and information is compatible with the rights of authors and creators.** We need to balance equitable rewards and incentives to individual creators, and sustainable creative industries, with widespread access for consumers. Writers, composers, and other creators must be fairly compensated for their work, without overly limiting users’ access and freedom of information on the internet.

E. Security and Safety

- **Ensure that the internet is made safe** by fighting organised crime and security threats online, and ensuring global resilience against cyber-attacks from non-state and state actors. This must be done through greater security

⁹² IGF, The Charter of Human Rights and Principles for the Internet, available at <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Opinion/Communications/InternetPrinciplesAndRightsCoalition.pdf>

⁹³ European Commission, 2018 Reform of Data Protection Rules, available at https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/justice-and-fundamental-rights/data-protection/2018-reform-eu-data-protection-rules_en

⁹⁴ The Guardian, Rise of the Machines, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/jun/06/internet-of-things-smart-home-smart-city>

cooperation between law enforcement authorities and online platforms, companies, and EU bodies such as EUROPOL and EUIPO.⁹⁵ Further measures must also be taken to combat online intimidation and harassment and its social implications, working together with online platforms and civil society groups.

- **Take on cyber-attacks, and campaigns of disinformation or media manipulation.**
- **Work with global tech and social media companies** (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) to fight extremism in all its forms.
- **Hold social media companies accountable to the propagation of misinformation** like any other media platform.
- **Ensure that EU citizens' data stored internationally is handled strictly in accordance to European standards** with full protections in place.
- **Bring together European efforts and resources on cyber-defense.** Shift some resources from traditional military expenditure - such as personnel - to research & development to develop European security know-how.⁹⁶
- **Modernise EU Strategic Communication campaigns** to be receptive to the changing technological environment in this age of information in order to effectively compete and defeat violent extremist propaganda campaigns.

F. Ethical approach

- **Commit to an ethical, inclusive, rights-based approach to technological development.** Technological advancement should progress according to a principle of fairness whereby an innovations' utility should be measured in terms of how much it benefits those that are most vulnerable as one important social metric.

VI. Support research

Research is the foundation of our current living standard, economic prosperity and political independence. To guarantee our future well-being and to master the environmental and social challenges of tomorrow, technical and scientific progress is

⁹⁵ European Observatory on Infringements of Intellectual Property Rights, available at <https://euiipo.europa.eu/ohimportal/en/web/observatory/about-us>

⁹⁶ For more details see [EU Reform, External security and defence policy reform, Military & non-military capabilities](#)

needed. Volt's science policy aims to create an even more innovative and competitive European research landscape that at the same time incorporates its core values such as freedom and sustainability.

The current scientific program of the EU (Horizon 2020) aims to spend 3% of EU-wide GDP on research by 2020. However, given past and current dynamics, we are far away from meeting this goal.⁹⁷ Particularly striking are the huge differences in national research spending across Europe.⁹⁸

In contrast, rising powers such as India and China show an impressive scientific development in international comparisons. This is shown not only through increasing numbers of scientific publications, but also through the fact that, for example, China reportedly lists more patent applications than all of the OECD countries combined. The OECD's latest numbers on research spending also reveal that the EU-average ranks below the US, China, and, even more alarmingly, behind the OECD average. This gives reason to intensify European research programs.⁹⁹

- **Meet and increase Horizon 2020 proposed spending targets** of 3% of EU-wide GDP on research. However, EU member states will most probably fail to reach that goal. Therefore, we aim even higher and propose that 4% of the EU-wide GDP is used for research purposes by 2025. This is to remain internationally competitive and to guarantee our vision of a prosperous European future. Furthermore, increased research spendings positively affect productivity and economic growth.¹⁰⁰
- **Facilitate and support versatile ways of research funding**, because we are convinced that this best guarantees the freedom of science while at the same time allowing public and private funding institutions to incentivise research in certain seminal topics. Therefore, we seek to involve not only governmental funding institutions, but also private foundations and companies. We aim to incentivise them to invest in research projects. Investments can either be of a general nature (like the German funding systems at universities), project-specific, or solution-based.
- **Support university-industry collaborations.** With respect to scientific approaches, strategies, funding, outcome exploitations, etc. both partners can

⁹⁷ OECD, Gross domestic spending on R&D, available at
<https://data.oecd.org/rd/gross-domestic-spending-on-r-d.htm>

⁹⁸ European Commission, Interim Evaluation of Horizon 2020, available at
https://ec.europa.eu/research/evaluations/pdf/book_interim_evaluation_horizon_2020.pdf

⁹⁹ The World Bank, patent application, available at
http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?Report_Name=patent-application&Id=d484ab34, For more details see [Relationship with other multilateral institutions](#)

¹⁰⁰ Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, The Fruits of R&D: Meta-analyses of the Effects of Research and Development on Productivity, available at <https://research.vu.nl/ws/portalfiles/portal/1403389>

learn and profit from one another.¹⁰¹ Ultimately, this will make research efforts more productive. Create a platform where companies and research groups can meet, exchange ideas, propose projects, consider research group publications,¹⁰² and develop trust and long-term relations.¹⁰³

- **Highlight innovative research focus areas**, such as a European satellite system or renewable energy solutions, and incentivising research in European clusters, with EU funding.¹⁰⁴
- **Incentivise and support European journals, conferences, academic interdisciplinary exchanges, and national and European academic societies.**
- **Found European research institutes** (like EMBL, European Union Security studies) and a European Informatics Laboratory.
- **Open tech incubators, or tech parks for technical startups.** Focus on technology transfer to make use of findings, translation, and central consultancy for patent issues.
- **Advocate for research and science in the public sphere**, create enthusiasm, and motivate people to participate in research. Recruit foreign talent and researchers based on free and independent ethical research and occupational stability.
- **Expand European databases and innovate uses of data** to stimulate new avenues of research.¹⁰⁵
- **Support worldwide research and innovation networks** and turn the EU into a global hub of cutting-edge research.
- **Put in place R&D tax exemptions across the EU.** Provide public funding to research through sustainable financial instruments (debt and equity).

¹⁰¹ Journal of Education and Work, Industry–University Collaboration for Continuing Professional Development, available at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/136390803200093058>

¹⁰² Universiteit Gent, Investigating the Factors That Diminish the Barriers to University–industry Collaboration, available at <https://biblio.ugent.be/publication/2051456>

¹⁰³ MIT Sloan Management Review, Best Practices for Industry-University Collaboration Greitzer, available at <https://osp.mit.edu/sites/osp/files/uploads/bestpractices.pdf>; Praxis Auril, Making industry-university partnerships work: Lessons from successful collaborations, available at <https://www.praxisunico.org.uk/resource/making-industry-university-partnerships-work-lessons-successful-collaborations>; PLOS one, Industry-university collaborations in Canada, Japan, the UK and USA-With emphasis on publication freedom and managing the intellectual property lock-up problem, available at <http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0090302>

¹⁰⁴ Science, Science of Science, available at <http://science.sciencemag.org/content/359/6379/eaao0185/tab-figures-data>

¹⁰⁵ For example, Zenodo, Recent upload, available at <https://zenodo.org>

Challenge 2 - Economic Renaissance

Vision

The future of a united Europe relies on solving current economic challenges. This includes the lingering effects of the 2008 crisis on the European economies; high unemployment, in particular youth unemployment; threats and opportunities arising from digitisation; and precarious sustainability in the budgets of Member States. The economic vision set by Volt Europa requires our societies to reduce inequalities between EU economies and face future economic challenges with informed, data-driven approaches.

Volt will address these challenges by:

- I. Unleashing the potential of entrepreneurs and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to enable them to be competitive and show the youth the potential of entrepreneurship.¹⁰⁶
- II. Reviving innovation in our economies and promoting the industries of the future.
- III. Actively shaping the future of work .
- IV. Ensuring social protection. Volt stands for a European approach to social development, with practical minimum standards of social protection and decent work and pay. Volt further seeks to enable a successful digital transformation, contributing to greater prosperity and better working conditions.
- V. Reducing imbalances. Volt envisions a European Union that increases its positive reach across the whole continent, not just within its most productive areas. Together with close vigilance on the use of funds, Volt believes it is time for broader, smarter, and more environmentally sustainable strategies, aimed at narrowing socioeconomic gaps and creating opportunities for every citizen.
- VI. Developing economically challenged areas with a new unified strategy, working in concert with social actors across the EU.
- VII. Harmonizing European corporate taxation to facilitate cross-border trade and curb aggressive tax planning, building in this way a stronger and fairer single market.
- VIII. Mobilizing Europe in a smart, safe, and sustainable way.

Volt supports a new way of shaping European economies, based on EU-wide cooperation to build an integrated, fair, and sustainable economic system.

¹⁰⁶ Europe's start-up ecosystem as a whole is still held back by several factors, among them talent (engineers are paid too little, and it takes too long for startups to hire them) and access to funding. See [Dispatches Europe, 2017 Global Startup Ecosystem Report: Europe still struggling to find funding and talent](#).

I. Develop and reform our economies

A. Unleash entrepreneurship and small businesses

- **Create a Digital One-Stop-Shop to set up a business, automate and simplify reporting, tax files, and all other government interactions.** Volt wants to cut red tape at the EU level to ensure that it is just as easy to do cross-border business as it is to do business in your home Member State. This way SMEs can benefit from the size of the single market and scale up quickly in order to ensure growth.
 - Increase the range of services of “Points of single contact”¹⁰⁷ provided to enterprises through digital platforms: simplify points of contact with public administration in national governments by creating adequate platforms that are easy to handle and offer solutions for companies operating on a national as well as cross-border level.
 - Increase the diffusion of a One-Stop-Shop system to facilitate and control taxation reporting. Push for digitization and automation of balance sheets and reporting systems, as well as all other government interactions.
 - The Digital One-Stop-Shop has a provision to support SMEs and entrepreneurs. This will include support to navigate government requirements and contacts of venture capitalists and startup incubators, partnerships with private companies that can offer discounted services to SMEs, etc.
- **Encourage harmonization of registration fees, times and processes for setting up a business across Europe** by making it possible to create a company for EUR 1 within 3 working days with an additional costs of max EUR 1,000 (for licences etc.) all over Europe. Establishing a company should be equally easy and affordable throughout EU Member States. All registration steps should be feasible online (see Digital One-Stop-Shop above), as per the best practices of economies with quick business startup times (such as New Zealand, Australia, Singapore, Canada, Portugal, Denmark and Estonia).¹⁰⁸ The legal status (Limited Liability Company, or LLC) obtained should require the entrepreneurs to slowly build up capital to ensure a higher credit rating.
 - As a further step, Volt endorses the development of an EU procedure to create EU-based companies. Especially for freelancers, there should be a very simple legal form that can be completed online in a short period of

¹⁰⁷ European Commission, Point of single contact, available at
http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/eu-go/index_en.htm#it

¹⁰⁸ Such as New Zealand, Australia, Singapore, Canada, Portugal, Denmark and Estonia. See World Bank, Starting a business - Good Practices, available at
<http://www.doingbusiness.org/data/exploretopics/startng-a-business/good-practices>

time (e.g. one day). The procedure can build on Societas Europaea¹⁰⁹ mixed with components of the Estonian model of e-residency and company registration.¹¹⁰

- **Make it possible to start a small business completely bureaucracy- and paper-free** (for micro-enterprises in sectors not needing a licence): an entrepreneur should be able to start a small business by simply notifying the authorities; permission should not be necessary, where legal requirements are complied with. For example, to open a coffee shop or hairdressing business, one should be able to open as soon as it is ready.
- **Implement a network of European incubators with advisory roles and matchmaking competencies.** This measure can build on the European Business and Innovation Centre Network¹¹¹ and the startup Europe Club.¹¹²
 - Incubators would provide knowledge sharing for SMEs and startups doing business both on a national level and across Europe (e.g. guides and assistance on regulations and procedures to start business activities, information concerning taxes and social security, and financial and legal advice). In addition, create tax-reduced or tax-free advisory roles for startups to foster the exchange of advice from older professionals and corporations. Corporations would be incentivized based on their level of participation.
 - Matchmaking should be facilitated between existing SMEs and startups. This can be achieved by proposing a network, supervised and created by the European Commission, to help companies across the EU communicate with each other.¹¹³
- **Create a truly efficient European Open Data Platform.**¹¹⁴ Improve the usability of the data available on the EU Open Data Portal, concerning areas such as mobility, smart cities, production, and tourism to encourage data-driven business and foster pan-European business models.¹¹⁵ To guarantee that data gathered is

¹⁰⁹ The European Company (also known by its Latin name *Societas Europaea* or SE) is a type of public limited-liability company regulated under EU law. See European Commission, The European Company – Your business opportunity?, available at

http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/company/societas-europaea/index_en.htm

¹¹⁰ E-residency, Start a company, available at <https://e-resident.gov.ee/start-a-company/>

¹¹¹ EBN, home, available at <https://ebn.eu/>

¹¹² European Commission, Startup Europe: EU funds and support, available at
<http://startupeuropeclub.eu/eu-funds-and-support/>

¹¹³ One national example of this is Enterprise Ireland. See Enterprise Ireland, Our services, available at <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/About-Us/Services/>

¹¹⁴ For more details see [Citizen Empowerment, Foster vibrant, pluralistic and accessible public spheres to enable citizens to take informed political decisions, Open public data](#)

¹¹⁵ One national is Finland with an open data initiative for smart cities. See DataBusiness.fi, available at <https://www.databusiness.fi/en/front-page/>

usable in different countries, a uniform privacy policy¹¹⁶ and a unified authority for data validation are needed.

- **Bridge Structural Funding Gaps.** States should thoroughly assess structural investment gaps in the economies' growth process, and find innovative means to bridge these gaps by creating incentives for investors (e.g. co-investment funds, a financial toolkit for startups, centralized platforms for funding, matching investors and startups, European Investment Bank investment, etc.).
- **Promote venture capital (VC) investments.** Set tax incentives to make venture capital investment and participation in business angel networks such as the EBAN (European Business Angel Network) or business angel funds more appealing for investors.¹¹⁷ Tax relief for capital gains or the provision of loss relief on a more favourable basis than the baseline tax system could support the reduction of risk of investment in young, growing, innovative businesses. Tax incentives should be regularly monitored and evaluated in order to reform them or to design further incentives.¹¹⁸
- **Set up a European database with accredited Angel investors, incubators and VC funds.** Inclusion in the database should be decided by an independent European network of people capable of evaluating investors, incubators and VC funds. Those investors, incubators and VC funds included in the database should also be monitored regularly for ensuring that they comply with the requirements set for the inclusion in the database. This database can build on and expand the members directory of EBAN.¹¹⁹
- **Give second chances to entrepreneurs.** Volt will encourage honest entrepreneurs who have undergone bankruptcy to fund another business so they can apply their previously acquired knowledge. Decisive distinction must be made between honest and dishonest bankruptcies, with special bankruptcy and discharge procedures for honest entrepreneurs (e.g. faster and less expensive bankruptcy procedures or a shorter duration of negative rating). On the other hand, creditors' interests must be protected and the bankruptcy process must be simple and as quick as possible for investors, making it easier and faster for a corporation to fail. The maximum duration of the insolvency should be 2 to 3 years, depending on the size of the corporation and on the assets that need to be

¹¹⁶ European Commission, Data protection, available at <http://ec.europa.eu/justice/data-protection/>

¹¹⁷ One national example of this is PIR in Italy. See Investment Europe, Italy's PIR funds: Capitalising on new instruments, available at

<http://www.investmenteurope.net/regions/italy/italys-pir-funds-capitalising-on-new-instruments/>

¹¹⁸ European Commission, Effectiveness of tax incentives for venture capital and business angels to foster the investment of SMEs and startups, available at

https://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/sites/taxation/files/final_report_2017_taxud_venture-capital_business-angels.pdf

¹¹⁹ EBAN is the European Trade Association for Business Angels, Seed Funds and Early Stage Market Players, available at <http://www.eban.org/>

sold (i.e. efficient secondary market or not). In this way the loss given default¹²⁰ decreases and thus the probability of receiving credit in the system increases.

- **Support direct additional funding to develop SMEs** in strategic industries and harmonize SME development among countries, regions and provinces.
- **Set tax incentives for SME owners** who re-invest surplus in their corporation or create jobs within the first 1-3 years of business.
- **Support employee stock option pools and other employee shares** when a company is not publicly listed via tax benefits to enhance employees entrepreneurial spirit as well as benefits from future returns (capital gains tax).

B. Profits-for-all mentality

Volt wants to incentivise and value social entrepreneurship. To do so, Volt will:

- **Create coherent and standardised legal forms for social entrepreneurs** and introduce public certification.
- **Relieve tax pressures on HR for social businesses.**¹²¹
- **Develop incentives schemes** for having corporations (including SMEs) adopt the best practices from other corporations, especially regarding continuous learning/training.
- **Ensure the presence of fiscal policies that proactively counter inequalities**, such as the introduction of a progressive inheritance tax to avoid the concentration of wealth.

C. Service mentality¹²²

Public administrations will be incentivized to offer effective and easily understood assistance to members of the private sector to ensure that processes are straightforward and regulations are easily followed. To pursue this objective, Volt will sustain policies that:

¹²⁰ Loss given default - A core metric used to evaluate the creditworthiness of a corporation

<https://www.investopedia.com/terms/l/lossgivendefault.asp>

¹²¹ A social business is a non-dividend company that is created to address and solve a social problem. See Social Business Earth, Yunus, What is a social business, available at

<http://socialbusinessearth.org/definition/>

¹²² For more details see [Administrative effectiveness to reduce waste and improve service quality](#)

- **Curb waiting times dramatically** by rewarding and evaluating offices on time-related measures.
- **Strengthen online services** and integrate data across the entire administration. A unique EU-wide digital ID would fast-track this process by reducing friction.
- **Work towards completely paperless processes and harmonized information and communication technology (ICT) standards** to allow for efficient services.
- **Introduce and monitor service-related key performance indicators (KPIs).**

II. Revive innovation in our economies and promote industries of the future

Innovation should be at the heart of long-term strategies for both corporations and governments. However, despite statements of intent and several good initiatives by the public sector, many European economies still struggle to create a favourable environment for innovation.

A. Idea generation and supportive infrastructure

Incentivise idea generation in our economies to stimulate growth and local knowledge generation in Europe. In order to achieve this, Volt proposes to take the following steps:

- **Ease and improve the flow of information and knowledge** obtained from academic institutions and their applied research to the private sector. Additionally, increase the application of research findings (e.g., via research institutes, corporate research funds, and public-private research centers).¹²³
- **Create and support shared research facilities** and innovation hubs, by for example concentrating administrative efforts on the introduction of fiber optic networks, public and free wifi, as well as public clouds with servers in each country. Additionally, introduce affiliated institutes to foster the collaboration between the academic and private sectors.
- **Support and finance pan-european research** in key research areas.¹²⁴ Volt supports EU policy in defining and funding key research areas. We propose to synchronize the processes in order to assign research funds on national and

¹²³ Einstein Centre for Digital Future, news, available at <https://www.digital-future.berlin>

¹²⁴ European Commission, What is Horizon, available at
<https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/what-horizon-2020>

European level, so as to democratize and align the choice of which research areas should be supported.¹²⁵

- **Increase the ease and attractiveness of obtaining an expert visa**, especially after absolving a university degree within a EU member state (e.g., after MINT Master), in order to attract talent (e.g. the US model, where a student visa automatically gives its bearer the right to work for one year).
- **Prioritise digital infrastructure improvements and define standards for open data** to meet future needs of both the private sector and general public.

B. Supportive regulation

Push state interventions to guide, foster, and protect European innovation. Volt will do so by promoting the following measures:

- **Strengthen the international enforcement of patent laws** by making them always applicable to international competition, and by penalising all imports of companies failing to comply with these standards anywhere in the world. A preliminary reasoning on specific sector differences should be made.
- **Reform patent law** by increasing transparency and specifying a patent expiration date to ensure that unused patents do not block new inventions, while ensuring profitability of innovation.
- **Set standards**, regulations, and guidelines to guide the development of transformational technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence.
- **Unlock innovative and disruptive startups** while still requiring these companies to abide by standards (e.g., contributions for healthcare, pension system, etc.).
- **Standardise contracts (if possible) across the EU** for different kinds of businesses and share best-practices (e.g., startup ownership contracts).
- **Review availability, necessity, and cost of notary services** and consider incentivizing the use of online legal services, such as online certification for legal papers in order to register company online or easier process for standardized contracts, to ease the burden on startups.

¹²⁵ For more information see [Support Research](#)

C. New markets and new energy

Support research & development in growing markets with strategic relevance, e.g., green energies and Industry 4.0 initiatives. Volt will support growth in these markets by taking the following steps:

- **Ensure long term political strategies to create investment security for companies.**
- **Use the "public weight" (standards, fiscal incentives) to support energy efficiency in domestic and industrial environments.**
- **Support an integrated strategy** across EU Member States by moving toward a single energy market & EU-wide schemes, in order to open up industries in the renewable energy sector.¹²⁶
- **Create "special research and testing innovation zones"**¹²⁷ for new technology, in order to allow regions to set up such zones for sandbox approaches with light regulation. These zones could be used by startups and tech companies in the field of autonomous driving, drones and similar areas where AI has to be trained in a physical environment.¹²⁸ To secure that the zones will benefit Europe as a whole, transferability of application to other EU countries has been ensured.

III. Foster a European Artificial Intelligence initiative

Artificial intelligence (AI) is poised to transform the economy, society, social and political systems across Europe and the world. The societal impact of artificial intelligence can be either very beneficial (such as safer roads, personalized healthcare, and efficient resource use) or lead to unfavorable outcomes (such as technological unemployment, widening inequality, or lethal autonomous weapons).

There is an urgency to act, as technological development and practical applications are advancing at a rapid pace.

¹²⁶ For more details, see [EU neighbourhood policy](#)

¹²⁷ Innovation zones are very successful in emerging economies such as Shanghai, or Shenzhen

¹²⁸ There are many "Ghost cities" in semi-urban Spain that would perfectly provide the space needed for these innovation zones without the danger or hurting actual people.

The debate has to be a societal, not a narrow technical one. AI directly affects not only business models, labor markets, and income distribution, but also raises fundamental ethical questions about human – machine interaction, the nature of work, privacy of citizens, and distribution of benefits.

Artificial Intelligence development calls for a **European approach**, to gain **critical mass to compete globally**, to ensure AI technology is built on **EU's Human Values**, and to build a '**Social Union' so no one is left behind**', as the undesirable effects of AI, such as involuntary unemployment, will reverberate through labor markets throughout Europe.

Volt stands for a European AI initiative to:

- A) build a European legal and ethical framework,
- B) build Europe's competence in AI Development, and
- C) prepare for addressing negative socio-economic consequences.

Member countries AI efforts are to be aligned with this European approach in accordance with countries' specific strengths.

A. Develop the ethical and Legal foundation and boundaries for AI development

1. Develop and adopt AI ethics guidelines

Volt welcomes all EU efforts to develop such guidelines and binding standards, e.g. through the European AI Alliance. Volt believes that these guidelines **should reflect, i.a. the following values:**

- Machines are instruments to enhance human welfare.
- AI should **be 'explainable'** and **black box** situations¹²⁹ should be avoided
- Citizens are clearly **owners** of their own data.
- **Fair taxation** of the Digital economy contributes to fair distribution of AI benefits.

¹²⁹ An Explainable AI or Transparent AI is an artificial intelligence (AI) whose actions and rationale can be easily understood by humans. It contrasts with "black box" AI whose inputs and outputs (and the relationships between them) are known, but whose internal structure or working is not well, or at all, understood and where even their designers cannot explain why the AI arrived at a specific decision. See Samek, Explainable Artificial Intelligence: Understanding, visualizing and interpreting deep learning models, available at: <https://arxiv.org/pdf/1708.08296.pdf> and Business Dictionary, What is Black Box?, available at <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/black-box.html>

2. Develop a legal and regulatory framework

A legal and regulatory framework for AI Development is needed, to ensure these core values are being applied in practice, including the following building blocks.

- **Establish a High Level Government AI Coordination Office.** Volt recommends to establish at the European Commission a High Level AI Coordination Office in the office of the President of the EC, and a similar office in each member state. These offices would have to have: i) the competence to guide AI development across diverse sectors, ii) the mandate to develop a coherent strategy, and iii) the legal authority to monitor, that the emerging legal and regulatory framework is coherent and conform with European values.
- **Develop a European Digital Bill of Rights** as an umbrella legal framework and binding international legal instrument to govern the internet in Europe. This instrument should guarantee individual and social rights in Europe, including the **right to access** to the internet, and **protection of basic rights** in the digital environment such as privacy, data protection, freedom of expression, information and association online, and stakeholder-based internet governance. Principles of Net Neutrality and an open internet are at the core of an internet system that guarantees these rights. Volt will advocate for the EU to include digital rights and freedoms in its agreements with third countries.¹³⁰
- **Ensure effective GDPR (EU General Data Protection Regulation) implementation.** Data protection agencies need to be adequately equipped: i) to ensure consistent implementation across the EU, so that companies do not migrate towards soft-protection havens; and ii) to help small and medium size organizations comply with the complex rules, so that this law does not inadvertently privilege large international operators.
- **Implement regulation requiring algorithms to be ‘explainable’** if used for decision making directly affecting citizens and consumers, in both the public and private sector. The regulation will spell out standards what constitutes

¹³⁰ See Volt, Let's Guarantee Digital Rights and Freedoms! available at https://www.volteuropa.org/let_s_guarantee_digital_rights_and_freedoms

'explainability', establish an European AI Auditing Institution, and set up a network of AI Certification Institutes which are licensed to certify that AI algorithms conform with 'explainability standards'.

- **Assure fair taxation in the digital economy.** Volt fully supports the EC proposal to levy a 3% tax on the turnover of large digital companies in the EU country where this turnover is being generated, to avoid tax evasion by shifting their net profits to tax havens.
- **Develop a common EU position on a Ban of Autonomous Weapons.** Start a debate on the risks of autonomous weapons using AI, that e.g. could make fire decision without any human intervention. As of now, EU countries have different positions on the topic and different strategies to approach it.¹³¹ Consider adoption of international legally binding instruments prohibiting the development, production and use of such weapons under the auspices of the UN.

B. Build Europe's Competence in AI Development

Volt supports a concerted European effort to build AI competence, with the following key building blocks: i) Research and Innovation, ii) Human Resources Education and Training, and iii) Infrastructure. The following proposed actions will contribute to this effort.

- **Invest EU wide in AI Research and Development.** Volt welcomes the EC announcement of an AI research and development initiative¹³², including a budget target of €20 bn per year by 2020 for supporting multi-national efforts. Research topics should include in addition to technical aspects, societal challenges and changes, including in the labor markets, and how to address them, without strangling AI innovation and development.
- **Scale up education in digital literacy** for all ages, starting at kindergarten. In a technology-driven society, education is key to fostering social inclusion, as well as awareness of the benefits and risks of technology uses. In addition to

¹³¹ Stepan Denk and Daan Kayser, Keeping Control: European Positions on Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems, available at <https://www.paxforpeace.nl/publications/all-publications/keeping-control>

¹³² European Commision, Communication Artificial Intelligence for Europe, available at <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/communication-artificial-intelligence-europe>

technical competence, such as coding, Volt advocates training in behaviors and skills that lead to a healthy and sustainable lifestyle and that preserve mental health and social well-being in a digital environment.¹³³

- **Develop a European "AI-on-demand platform".** AI development will require major investments to boost EU's technological and industrial capacity, from both the private and public sectors. A high priority is to make AI available and accessible to all, in order to spread its benefits widely. The platform will provide a **single access point for all users** to relevant **AI resources in the EU**, including knowledge, data repositories, computing power (cloud, high performance computing), tools and algorithms. It will offer services and provide support to potential users of the technology, analyze the business case behind AI in their specific circumstances and help them to integrate AI solutions in their processes, products and services. For implementation of the platform, the EC plans to build on the existing network of more than 400 Digital Innovation Hubs.
- **Provide access to 'Fast Internet'.** Allow for high speed data transmission and ensure broad access, including outside the urban centers, i.a. through minimum standards for speed, coverage, and inter-connectability at European level, regulated access to minimize discrimination of smaller users ('net neutrality'), or public-private co-investment, such as e.g. in Germany through the 'Gigabit Investment Fund' with an estimated €12 billion, financed in part from the proceeds of broadband licenses.
- **Attract private investments for AI Development.** Increase **European Investment Bank** support for AI investments from its tentative level of EUR 500 million in the period 2018-2020 to at least €1 bn/year after 2020, and roll out quickly the **Pan-European Venture Capital Funds-of-Funds** programme – Venture EU, a EUR 2.1 billion fund to boost investment in innovative startup and scale-up companies across Europe.

C. Prepare Society for AI Related Structural Changes – A three-pronged Approach

¹³³ See Volt, Let's Guarantee Digital Rights and Freedoms! available at https://www.volteuropa.org/let_s_guarantee_digital_rights_and_freedoms

Artificial Intelligence is **causing anxiety in many people. This anxiety needs to be taken seriously and needs to be addressed**, otherwise widespread anxiety may slow a necessary transformation and populists could use anxiety to spread divisiveness with false promises and simple solutions. This anxiety is very manifest in the labor market, in the form of a widespread fear about the loss in the number of jobs and in the quality of jobs, although predictions about the actual impact of AI vary widely. **Volt proposes a three pronged approach: secure – prepare – create.**¹³⁴

- **Secure Livelihood in case of Job Loss.** Set a EU wide standard for Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI) schemes, initially with at least a modest goal of converging on a minimum poverty threshold of 40% of the equivalent national median income (“extreme poverty”). To ensure fair and broad access to GMI, expand Social Security coverage to those working outside the traditional formal employment sector, such as platform workers, freelancers, self-employed and other forms of flexible work arrangements.
- **Prepare for a changing working environment.** Instead of waiting until jobs are lost, it is necessary to move ‘**from an Unemployment to an Employment Insurance**’ with a reorientation towards preventive schemes focused on maintaining lifelong employability. This includes **setting up a “Volta program” for Lifelong Learning**. The Volta program would become an umbrella for Europe-wide initiatives to prepare European workers for the future of work. It would include subsidized training programs for new tools and technologies and career counseling. It would target workers who are already affected, or are threatened to be affected in the near future, by technological change at their workplace. Priority would be given to people who do not have the economic means to train and re-train. Training activities should be accredited by recognized training and academic institutions and trainees would receive certifications recognized throughout Europe.
- **Create the future of work. Initiate a Work 4.0 public consultation process** at European Level, to explore changing basic values concerning work across Europe, and to inform policy formulation at EU and member country level. It can draw on practical experience from Germany’s multi-stakeholder Working 4.0 process¹³⁵ and from the Danish ‘flexicurity’ model, which combines generous

¹³⁴ See also Volt, Shape the Future of Work, available at https://www.volteuropa.org/the_future_of_work

¹³⁵ BMAS - German Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, “Weissbuch Working 4.0”, available at https://www.bmas.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/EN/PDF-Publikationen/a883-white-paper.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=3

public and social welfare benefits with flexible labor markets. Volt believes that there are two aspects, which deserve particular attention:

- **Develop a Working Time Choice Act¹³⁶ at European level**, that gives increased time-sovereignty to workers, and provides rules for negotiating working arrangements that balance workers' and companies' flexibility needs. Particular attention should be given to the growing number of self-employed, start-ups, crowd workers, which are not yet well represented politically nor collectively organized, and hence typically have less negotiation power.
- **Undertake large scale UBI (Universal basic income) pilot programs.** The prospect that AI related technologies might reduce overall demand for human labor and that structural unemployment will increase, calls for a new concept of social protection de-linked from traditional employment. Pilot programs should have a relevant size (eg. 10,000+ participants, 5+ years, in diverse settings and countries), accompanied with rigorous monitoring of results. The overall program should be steered at EU level, and implemented by member countries, with EU funding for an ongoing and consistent evaluation of the result. Key questions the programs will need to shed light on include: Does UBI effectively replace traditional social welfare systems? What are the costs? How is UBI financed? Which effects do they have on work attitudes? Which effects do they have on self-esteem?

¹³⁶ DJB – Deutscher Juristinnenbund, Konzeption eines Wahlarbeitszeitgesetzes, available at https://www.djb.de/themen/wahlarbeitszeit/wazg-konzept/#_ftn9

IV. Shape the future of work and tackle (youth) unemployment with innovative concepts

A. Future of work – new working schemes

Volt wants to introduce measures to curb unemployment and to promote new working schemes. We therefore need to increase the flexibility of our workforce, to better meet changing demands in changing economies. At the same time, we need to develop adequate legal and social frameworks and protections for these new situations. New technological possibilities enable new ways of working. Policies have to harness that potential by providing adequate frameworks for decentralised and more flexible working schemes.

- **Flexibility and work-life balance:** Volt supports a Working Time Choice Act and will become the recognized political voice for the growing number of startups; self-employed, crowd, and gig workers; and working parents/guardians. Many people leave the traditional 9-to-5 job routine and feel that autonomy is more empowering and satisfactory. Collaborative economies that operate across borders requires flexible working hours and offer opportunities for people who want to work more autonomously and for those who have fewer chances of finding a permanent job.¹³⁷ Furthermore, flexible working hours especially improve the work-life balance of working parents.¹³⁸ Any new policy to encourage and regulate work flexibility will have to balance at least three principles: (1) Enable more flexible, digital, mobile forms of working, while also (2) protecting workers' health, continuous employability, and base income during all life stages and (3) increasing the international competitiveness of companies.
 - Flexible legal and tax-related solutions need to be found for citizens working in one EU Member State and residing in another, or working in multiple Member States throughout the year. The current regime of double-taxation agreements is too rigid to reflect the reality of many EU citizens, and as a result can act as a deterrent to free movement within the EU.
- **Pilot more flexible “more-people-working-less” models.** The sharp rise in productivity has created an imbalance in the labour markets. A reduction in individual working hours would absorb much of the structural unemployment which has resulted.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ EPSC, 2016, The Future of Work - Skills and Resilience for a World of Change, available at http://ec.europa.eu/epsc/publications/strategic-notes/future-work_en#h-3

¹³⁸ OECD, 2016, Be Flexible, available at <https://www.oecd.org/els/family/Be-Flexible-Backgrounder-Workplace-Flexibility.pdf>

¹³⁹ Jean-Marie Perbost, Work more? Work less? What should be done so that we can all work and perform better?, p. 48, available at https://gef.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Work_more_work_less.pdf

- **Introduce measures to empower both women and men with children to have a successful career.** Volt will introduce the following measures that will benefit all types of parents (single men, women, heterosexual and homosexual couples etc).
 - **Implement Family Working Time following parental leave** to allow both parents to transition back to work starting part-time, with possible compensation of reduced income during specific life phases (e.g. during early infancy as foreseen in the German Parental Leave Act)¹⁴⁰ to better balance between parents' responsibilities for family, caregiving and generating income.¹⁴¹ Family Working Time would follow parental leave and last up to three years. Both parents would, for example, work 80% of full-time, and the loss of wages would be compensated with a digressive rate based on income level and duration.¹⁴²
 - **Enable equal paid maternity and paternity leave** for a specific period of time, and then extra time off that can be shared according to the parents' preferences. Heavily incentivize both parents to take their time off. The length of leave can be decided according to the countries' existing frameworks,¹⁴³ but equality shall prevail.
 - **Incentivize companies' internal nurseries and working modes**, enabling flexibility suited for each parent's needs.
- **Foster cooperatives**, as they are proven to be more resilient during financial crises, and allow for more economic democracy, citizen participation, greater corporate social responsibility, and efficient delivery of goods and services. Volt supports cooperatives (e.g. European cooperative societies) as an inherent European form of corporation with high working standards and revenue share.
- **Introduce temporary work reduction schemes** in crisis-stricken industries to protect workers by subsidizing a share of salaries. These schemes are work-share programmes where a company can reduce the working hours of people (and their salaries) or even temporarily lay them off. Subsidies cover a percentage of the salary. A maximum amount of time exists that these schemes may be applied. If successfully implemented, such schemes reduce the need to lay off employees during a crisis and rehire them afterwards. This is one of the key pillars for providing more flexibility to employers.

¹⁴⁰ BMFSFJ, Manuela Schwesig: Mütter und Väter wollen heute beides: Familie und Beruf, available at <https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/aktuelles/reden-und-interviews/manuela-schwesig--muetter-und-vaeter-wollen-heute-beides--familie-und-beruf/75720?view=DEFAULT>

¹⁴¹ OECD, Be Flexible! Background brief on how workplace flexibility can help European employees to balance work and family, available at

<https://www.oecd.org/els/family/Be-Flexible-Backgrounder-Workplace-Flexibility.pdf>

¹⁴² FES (Ed.), Müller, Neumann, Wrolich, Familienarbeitszeit, available at <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/dialog/10335.pdf>

¹⁴³ See Belle, Paternity and parental leave policies across the European Union, available at https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1666.html

- **Pilot programmes to reap the benefits of decentralised digital labor**, such as lending devices to low income and unemployed individuals, making use of existing online training platforms, or setting up wifi-enabled libraries with coaches to teach people how to find jobs and earn a living via distance work over the internet.
- **Design distance-working models especially for the elderly**, assuming that digital literacy will also soon increase for older citizens.
- **Incentivise part-time schemes**, e.g., with subsidies or tax cuts, introduce relocation benefits, and subsidize training on the job for long-term unemployed. We advocate for a telework policy such as in the Netherlands, where employers cannot refuse an employee's request to work remotely unless they can clearly explain why their presence in the workplace is essential.
- **Assess and implement a best practice scheme for dual vocational education and training** across Europe.
- **Introduce a paid, voluntary, one-year "Civic fellowship"**, allowing young people to support the state in various tasks, ranging from classical administrative jobs to military and social services. Combine this fellowship with geographical mobility schemes to encourage European exchange.

B. Preventive measures, targeted re-skilling and reintegration

According to recent Eurostat data, 3.722 million young persons (under 25) were unemployed in 2017 in the EU28, a decrease of 380,000 as compared with October 2016. The lowest youth unemployment rates were observed in Germany (6.6 %) and the Czech Republic (7.2 %), while the highest were recorded in Greece (40.2 % in August 2017), Spain (38.2 %) and Italy (34.7 %). Although these figures demonstrate progress, youth unemployment still remains high.

Despite attempts like the Youth Employment Initiative, Youth Guarantee and the European Solidarity Corps to mitigate youth unemployment, young people starting their careers continue to face challenging structural problems. The long practice of offering unpaid internships, poor protection services for young workers, and inconsistencies between the job market and skills cultivated throughout education persist. A better exchange of information between the teaching institutions, employers and employment services is necessary in order to enlarge the interface between education and available employment.

Volt wants to prepare the future workforce and the currently unemployed to be competitive in the job market. Special consideration should be given to hinder

unemployment by preventive measures. These could include reducing the number of pupils leaving school without any degree and reacting to job shortages before their occurrence.

- **Set up a “Volta programme:”** the Volta programme would become an umbrella for Europe-wide initiatives supported by a wide range of schools and institutions to prepare the European workforce for the future. It would include subsidized training programmes for new tools and technologies as well as career counseling.
It would target those who are already affected, or are threatened to be affected in the near future, by technological change at their workplace. Priority would be given to people who do not otherwise have the economic means to retrain. Training activities should be accredited by recognized training and academic institutions. Trainees would then receive certifications recognized throughout the European union .
 - **Lifelong learning for employability:** Volt supports a strategy to move ‘From an Unemployment to an Employment Insurance’, which is a preventive scheme focused on maintaining employability. Volt advocates for the immediate adoption of ‘Erasmus Pro’, an European mobility programme for young people to fund 200,000 two-year-long apprenticeships each year, with an estimated initial budget of €5 billion a year.¹⁴⁴ Volt supports Individual Long-Term Accounts that support lifelong education, boosted by a periodic Bonus for lifelong learning and retraining, to remain employable within a fast-changing labor market. For people near retirement, consideration must be given to either retraining or early retirement, based on personal welfare and wellbeing as well as government budget constraints (i.e., careful attention is given to the sustainability of the pension system over the long term).
 - **Retrain workers** in long-term shrinking sectors for promising industries, promote lifelong learning by making use of existing technology and digital offers such as MOOCs (massive open online courses). Subsidize on-the-job training and training programmes by companies who retrain people and hire a certain percentage of them.

- **Introduce a 'social year' or 'volunteering year' for all senior citizens reaching the age of 65** when they would usually retire.
- **Analyze the measures and data by the YEI (Youth Employment Initiative) in a standardized, transparent and coherent way and set up a best practice database for reintegrating measures** that can be used by all Member States.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ Notre Europe Jacques Delors Institute, Erasmus Pro: For a Million 'Young European Apprentices' by 2020, available at

<http://www.institutdelors.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/youthemployment-jdi-may15.pdf?pdf=ok>

¹⁴⁵ In Italy, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Handicrafts and Agriculture and Google developed a traineeship scheme called ‘Growing Digital’, which included online

Additionally, make sure that unemployed young people finish the measures they are supposed to do.

- **Invest in education centers connected to the artisanship excellences** of the region (e.g. Naples shall create more education paths for tailors/ dairy producers).
- **Support the development of young unemployed people's networks** by setting up a subsidized mentoring scheme with experienced people across all sectors.
- **Use pilot matching algorithms based on data analytics** to forecast and react to future job shortages on a geographic and sectoral level. This enables preventive measures to be tailored before job losses occur, and could also include data from external sources, such as social media.¹⁴⁶

C. Ease job seeking and create fluid job markets

Tear down barriers that slow down or block the match between job seekers and offers by making use of digital tools, platforms, data analytics, and targeted language courses and foster better cooperation with the private sector.

- **Create a European Labour Platform to match the labour force with jobs across Europe.** Volt wants to expand on the EURESa European Labour Platform to account for differences in needs across member states, to assess a EU-wide demand-supply gap for skills and competencies, and to incentivize balance. A unified digital European job portal would reduce skill mismatch. By taking into account real-time information on skill demand, it could also improve policymaking and worker exchanges between member states. With universities and research institutions involved, this could also help close the skill gap and promote transparency between academia, its graduates, and industry needs. The European job mobility portal EURES¹⁴⁷ and the Skills Panorama of Cedefop¹⁴⁸ would constitute building blocks of such an initiative (for jobs and internships).¹⁴⁹

training sessions, laboratory sessions and paid traineeships (6 months). Companies could receive incentives of up to €6,000 for the provision of internship places. 3,000 such traineeships were planned. See Google Europe Blog, Young and Digital: Google Signs the European Pact4Youth, available at <https://europe.googleblog.com/2015/11/young-and-digital-google-signs-european.html>; Crescere in Digitale, available at <http://www.crescereindigitale.it/>

¹⁴⁶ For more details see [Ease job seeking and create fluid job markets](#)

¹⁴⁷ European Commission, EURES, available at <https://ec.europa.eu/eures/public/en/homepage>

¹⁴⁸ Cedefop, European Commission, Skills Panorama, available at <http://skillspanorama.cedefop.europa.eu/en>

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Berger, T. & Frey, C.B., 2016, Digitalization, Jobs and Convergence in Europe: Strategies for closing the skills gap, Oxford Martin School, available at

https://www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/downloads/reports/SCALE_Digitalisation_Final.pdf

This, if properly matched with a “resettlement package” aimed at providing (1) an intensive language course and (2) financial support for relocation, could reduce overall unemployment by connecting already existing demand and supply.

- **Start the long-term unification process of labour markets by triggering negotiations to pilot a “European” contract**, a homogenous working agreement which takes national specificities into account (e.g., quality of life, cost of living). Volt stands for a European approach to Social Development, with practical minimum standards of social protection, decent work, and pay, enabling a successful digital transformation which contributes both to greater prosperity and better working conditions within the EU. Volt envisions universal social protection and an adequate income to be core pillars of EU Policy making.
- **Work in tandem with private sector teams to learn about and implement innovative and efficient methods for training**, retraining, and allocating of unemployed people.¹⁵⁰
- **Reward young people investing in acquiring language skills** which, combined with the willingness to geographically relocate, can help to incentivise balance of labour supply and demand (see European labour platform above).
- **Differentiate minimum guaranteed wages** by region (not by country) via the loosening of collective agreements. These guaranteed minimum wages must be equal or above a living wage, the wage rate based on what people need to live, in a given region.¹⁵¹
- **Encourage ‘codetermination laws’** to enhance cooperation between management and workers.
- **Harmonise qualifications** to reduce search costs for employers and allow job seekers to be competitive in markets other than their home market.
- **Reduce administrative burden for employees** when moving country (pension, income tax, health insurance requirements etc).

V. Social policies

- **Guarantee a minimum income above absolute poverty levels.** Volt envisions universal social protection and an adequate income to become core pillars of EU

¹⁵⁰ Crescere in Digitale, Crescere in Digitale Riparter, available at <http://www.crescereindigitale.it/>

¹⁵¹ Living wage foundation, What is the real living wage, available at <https://www.livingwage.org.uk/what-real-living-wage>

policy making. This requires a long-term perspective combined with short-term actions.

- Volt advocates for the strengthening of existing Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI) schemes across the EU, initially with at least a modest goal of converging on a minimum poverty threshold of 40% of the equivalent national median income (“extreme poverty”).
 - The schemes should be conditioned not only on a traditional job search, but also on the possible development of a new business or even an (unpaid) social activity.
 - Volt endorses the principles proposed by the Social Platform for a European Directive on minimum income. This includes, non-exhaustively, a set of common methodologies for defining adequacy, common approaches to coverage, avoiding exceptions and back doors, and efforts to ensure implementation and common information requirements. Furthermore, it should follow the principles of proactive granting of benefits and enabling gender mainstreaming, gender impact assessment, and gender budgeting, and should flexibly address the needs of particular groups (for example single parents, the long-term unemployed, older people, young people, etc.).¹⁵²
- **Assure minimum child benefits all over Europe.** Volt will harmonize child benefits to minimum standards¹⁵³ in the EU. Universal child benefits substantially reduce child poverty. Efficient family policies such as providing adequate child benefits lead to better chances to secure the work-life balance, and to protect children from social exclusion.¹⁵⁴
- **Venture into unconditional income:** Volt supports large scale experiments with unconditional basic income (UBI), in order to provide a solid knowledge basis to decide on the merits of this novel approach to social protection.
- **Start capital:** Volt endorses the idea of a start capital for every young person in the EU. Such start capital can be seen as a social inheritance that enables a young person to develop their talents, choose a career, or start up a business, independently of the social status and wealth of their parents. Everyone is eligible, but depending on their parents' income/wealth, it is either a grant (poor

¹⁵² Cf. European Parliament 2017, Minimum Income Policies in EU Member States, p. 40., available at http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/595365/IPOL_STU%282017%29595365_EN.pdf

¹⁵³ Linked to national median income

¹⁵⁴ STĂNESCU, NEMȚANU, 2015, Family benefits in member states of the European Union: A comparative perspective, available at

<https://www.degruyter.com/downloadpdf/j/eras.2015.8.issue-10/eras-2015-0004/eras-2015-0004.pdf>; For more details see [Social Equality, Alleviate poverty, Overall issues linked to poverty, Social benefits and healthcare](#)

parents) or a soft loan¹⁵⁵ (wealthy parents) with a possible graduation in between. The eligible expenditure includes a broad range and definition of life/profession-enhancing activities. Volt proposes large-scale experiments with unconditional start capital to learn how to best structure such a policy instrument.

- **Integrate the increasing number of on-demand workers** (Gig economy) in the social welfare system by providing a framework that allows for minimum standards and assures the accountability of employers.
 - **Extend Social Security Coverage to self-employed individuals (opt-in option).** Including self-employed individuals in the community of solidarity of the statutory pension insurance system would give them the same rights and obligations as all other insured persons. The statutory pension insurance obligation should apply primarily to younger people who enter self-employment after the obligation enters into force. There should also be greater scope to reduce contributions while setting up a new business and in periods with low earnings (e.g. by an EU fund that supports programmes that support entrepreneurs in early stages of their business). In addition, those who are already covered by an obligatory system, or other pre-existing voluntary arrangements for old age income, should be entitled to receive an exemption from the obligation of coverage by the statutory pension insurance system. This applies to, for example, farmers, freelancers, and lawyers who in many countries are covered by professional retirement schemes.
- **Rethink pension ages** and whether we need differentiated pension ages by sectors (allowing people to work for long in non physically straining areas).
- **Part-time working models for the elderly**, which could help mitigate the pension funding issues present in some member states. This may also assist more people staying in the labour market longer.

VI. Develop economically challenged areas and champion trade

Fight inequalities among European regions by allowing challenged areas to recover and/or invest in their future. Continue championing free, fair and sustainable trade across the globe while improving the enforcements of EU-standard for all imported goods. In particular, ensure that non-EU partners completely comply with our standards. Instead of only maximizing economic growth, modern societies should work to close

¹⁵⁵ A soft loan is a loan with no interest or a below-market rate of interest. See Investopedia, Soft Loan, available at <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/softloan.asp#ixzz5IWTw7Sq>

social gaps and guarantee a decent quality of life for everyone. Governments should not be evaluated on their economic performance, but on their success in creating cohesiveness among their citizens.

A. Develop Economically Challenged Areas

➤ **Create jobs by sponsoring smart and environmentally friendly structural investments in challenged regions.** After years of attempts, blind transfers have proved to be inefficient, and challenged regions are often isolated from the more productive areas of Europe. Europe needs a serious and coordinated plan for creating real and long-term value. Volt aims not only to create new jobs, but to do so while narrowing socioeconomic gaps between regions, as well as pushing for autonomous and greener power generation. This might be achieved by:

- Extending the European High Speed Railway.
- Investing in local, clean energy production sites or pollution-eating highways.¹⁵⁶
- Improving accessibility and connectivity for rural regions to suburban and urban areas.

Options are broad for obtaining the much-needed transformation of our societies toward more sustainable and integrative models. Volt proposes to:

- Create a more concerted common strategy between EU institutions and National Member States.¹⁵⁷
- Increment the portion of EU budget allocated to these projects. Some of the investments could also be financed through bond sales to the ECB.

Based on the example of Obama's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act,¹⁵⁸ it is believed this will lead to the creation of hundreds of thousands of new jobs distributed in challenged regions. Moreover, it will provide immediate opportunities to all Europeans who are currently excluded from the job market.

➤ **Create EU-wide digital platforms to ensure accountability and transparency in deploying EU funds.** Huge infrastructural projects can carry the risk of wasting significant resources through corruption, embezzlement, and

¹⁵⁶ Pollution-eating concrete is a paving material that actually eats pollution, which could soon become a crucial tool for improving air quality in urban areas. The new concrete is coated with titanium dioxide, which is a photocatalytic material, meaning it removes the nitrogen oxides and uses sunlight to convert them into harmless nitrate that is washed away by rain. See Ford,CNN, Could pollution-eating concrete clean up our urban jungles?, available at

<http://edition.cnn.com/2010/TECH/innovation/08/06/concrete.pollution.solution/index.html>

¹⁵⁷ Instead of merely and randomly distributing EU funds to proposed projects, without any comprehensive and long-term strategy.

¹⁵⁸ In 2009, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of the Obama Administration unleashed public work projects worth 1 billion dollars, creating 20,000 jobs and rejuvenating federal infrastructures. See The balance, ARRA: Details, Pros and Cons, available at

<https://www.thebalance.com/arra-details-3306299>

non-deployment.¹⁵⁹ Volt will create a monitoring body that provides transparency to ensure that all funds deployed in former and new projects directly reach those in need and are not hoarded through criminality and incompetence (cf. Obama's ARRA.)¹⁶⁰

- **Foster the transfer of knowledge and qualification to increase productivity and reduce imbalances.** Volt proposes to fund pan-European research programmes and initiatives in order to include lagging regions in high-standard production methods. The access to and diffusion of knowledge pushes the process of technological convergence. The programmes (research as well as concrete initiatives) should be focused on topics such as digital transformation for SMEs and micro-enterprises, the development of sustainable drive technology, and the production of clean energy from renewable energy sources.
- **Reorientate cohesion and structural funds towards education and training in economically challenged areas.** We have too often seen European funds being spent on unnecessarily large infrastructure projects that were not needed. For example, big motorways or airports have been funded in regions that don't have the economic activity needed to make the investment worthwhile. Furthermore, funds are sometimes spent in areas where no more infrastructure is required because there are no other projects in which to invest. Instead, such money and effort should be redirected to projects that are truly needed, such as updating poorly funded schools and universities, training unemployed or low-skilled people, and supporting young, innovative entrepreneurs. Sometimes the most deprived areas have modern facilities, yet lack investment in education and human capital. If these regions are to catch up with their counterparts, a smart balance between investments should be obtained.

B. Champion Trade¹⁶¹

- **Push for creating fair and sustainable free-trade deals with the fundamental drivers of growth** in the world (Asian powers, the US). At the same time, emphasize civil rights and freedom while negotiating free-trade deals with, for

¹⁵⁹ Italy's *Grandi Opere* ("Great Public Works") that the government launched in 2001; after 14 years, only 8.3% of projects were completed, 57% of initiatives were in "project-level status", and costs rose by 40% because of corruption. See Il Sole 24 Ore, Così la corruzione «brucia» il reddito, available at http://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/commenti-e-idee/2016-01-28/cosi-corruzione-brucia-reddito-103931.shtml?uuid=ACVww1IC&refresh_ce=1

¹⁶⁰ ARRA: Monitoring body - the Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board - and the related online platform where any citizen could monitor how the funds were invested. See Star Coalition, States for a Transparent and Accountable Recovery, available at

<http://www.accountablerecovery.org/accountability-transparency>

¹⁶¹ For more details see [Free, fair, and sustainable trade](#)

example, Asian countries, and ensure that minimum EU quality standards are respected (e.g.. Chinese steel).¹⁶²

- **Ensuring that free-trade deals benefit all European citizens.** Trade has the potential to enrich the society in its entirety. However, some benefit from commerce, while others are harmed by it. For this reason, when discussing new free-trade deals, we should include some mechanisms to distribute their potential benefits. These redistribution mechanisms, such as progressive taxation,¹⁶³ have to be included in the negotiation of trade deals if appropriate measures are applied.

VII. Fiscal policies

A. Taxation: challenges and general principles

Volt is aware that this will be one of the fiercest battles for European integration. Therefore, this long-term process is intended to be implemented gradually, one measure at the time.

Volt believes that European common taxation as a EU-based competence is necessary. Moreover, Volt thinks that all Member States' forms of taxation should be deeply aligned. This would ensure direct sources of funding for the EU, as well as securing a better answer to globalisation's challenges. Moreover, it would assure solidarity between EU members, while requiring more fiscal sustainability. Finally, it would ensure that non-European corporations could not easily arbitrage our national regulations.

Volt wants to pursue multiple objectives on both individual and corporate taxation:

- Reduce the complexity of tax returns to increase transparency.
- Identify loopholes (e.g., within the deductions system).
- Review the fiscal systems to increase fairness of fiscal pressures across society.
- Rebalance fiscal pressures.
- Fight evasion in the short term and build a long-term culture against fiscal evasion.
- Leverage fiscal incentives to ease entrepreneurship and support the birth & growth of new enterprises.

¹⁶² For more details see [EU Reform, Foreign & Neighbourhood Policy Reform, EU relationships with the United Nations and other multilateral institutions, Relationship with other multilateral institutions](#)

¹⁶³ Ibid., Lyon, Redistributing the Gains From Trade Through Progressive Taxation, available at <https://as.vanderbilt.edu/econ/sempapers/Waugh.pdf>

B. Concrete proposals about taxation

1. Individual taxation

- **Introduce a lower tax on dividends and on interest payments received from bonds issued by SMEs.**
- **Lift the fiscal ceiling** by allowing private investors to invest in SMEs and that investment to be fiscally deducted over the invested sum (e.g.: in France, a household can invest up to 10k€ and benefit from a fiscal redemption. This could be raised up to 30k€ per household).
- **Reduce the number of deductions** in favor of lower tax rates and shrink number of taxes to boost simplicity.
- **Anchor income tax to the level of inequality** in the country so that its progressivity would increase when the GINI coefficient (level of inequality) increases in the country.
- **Aim to reduce overall fiscal pressures on low- and middle-income groups.**
- **Keep low VAT on basic goods** (bread, milk), slightly higher on normal goods (mass clothing and cars), even higher on intermediate goods (fashion clothing, sport cars), and highest on luxury goods (boats, etc). The various steps must be carefully assessed not to depress production and consumption of luxury goods.

2. Corporate taxation

- **Make social charges deductible** for the first 3 years of profit.
- **Introduce a progressive tax system according to the size of business**, and relieve tax pressure for startups. However, make sure brackets do not hamper growth incentives.
- **Develop methods to harmonize taxes across the EU**, ultimately leading to European corporate taxes.¹⁶⁴
- **Introduce a bandwidth** for corporate tax rates across the EU to ensure competitiveness of Europe as a whole, and fiscal competition among member states.
- **Introduce tax cuts for setting up businesses** in all sectors for longer than the current period of time (e.g. 5 years).

¹⁶⁴ For more details see [Economic Renaissance, Fiscal policies, A European Corporate Tax](#)

3. General taxation

- **Develop easy-to-use digital platforms** for everyone (individuals and corporations) to calculate and pay their taxes. Additionally, leverage innovative techniques to pursue and investigate tax evasion.
- **Reduce cash payments** in order to minimise illegal transactions as much as possible. This could be pursued by increasing legal consequences of tax evasion and the effectiveness of tax fraud administrators on one side, and by making sure merchants do not pay excessive commissions on card transactions.
- **Review the effectiveness of penalties related to fiscal evasion**, both monetary and nonmonetary.
- **Regularly inform the public** via EU institutional websites about the level of fiscal evasion, breaking it down by sector, and showing the consequence on public services.
- **Work with regional administrations** and the highest level of central governments in order to define regional long-term development plans, as well as short-term alleviating interventions that stimulate local economies.
- **Support the introduction of an EU-wide Financial Transaction Tax.** Tax all financial transactions at 0.05% (transactions on derivatives and “financial market bets”) or 0.021 % on standard transactions (securities trading: shares and bonds).¹⁶⁵ Exemptions have to be defined, e.g. for SME growth markets.¹⁶⁶

C. A European corporate tax

A first step towards a European corporate tax would primarily concern larger EU corporations (please see below which characteristics would apply), as well as non-EU companies conducting business in the EU. Volt needs to ensure that non-EU corporations generating revenue in the EU are properly taxed for their profits related to their European revenue. As it is very easy for non-EU companies to transfer their profits out of the EU and thus pay very low taxes, Volt must find alternative tools that would

¹⁶⁵ European Commission, Implementing enhanced Cooperation in the area of Financial Transaction Tax (FTT), available at https://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/sites/taxation/files/resources/documents/taxation/other_taxes/financial_sector/ftt_under_ec_en.pdf

¹⁶⁶ Legislative Train Schedule, Deeper and fairer internal market with a strengthened industrial base/taxation, Financial transaction tax, available at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-deeper-and-fairer-internal-market-with-a-strengthened-industrial-base-taxation/file-financial-transaction-tax>

assure a fairer competition scenario in Europe. This would also provide incentives to EU Member States to compete on non-fiscal features in order to attract businesses.

- **Transfer the national taxation authority of all EU companies generating revenue exceeding 50m€ in more than 2 EU countries (each) to the EU.**
- **Apply a unique minimum European tax rate for the companies mentioned above**, which should be set at 15%,¹⁶⁷ and then increased depending then on the size, type of business, and number of employees. Additional features may also be considered.
- **Transfer national taxation authority over non-European companies generating revenue in any European country to the EU.** Funds obtained with this taxation would be used for financing the EU budget.
- **Tax non-EU based companies on their revenue rather than on their profits if:**
 - they present an annual global turnover of more than €500m¹⁶⁸ and total taxable revenue of 50m€ generated in the EU;¹⁶⁹
 - their European ponderate taxation rate is inferior to 15%
 - Other features may be considered.

Non-EU based companies are considered those whose headquarter (HQ) or which parent company is based out of the EU.

Companies included in these new “revenue taxation” rules may ask to be taxed on their profits. This can happen if:

- these companies transfer their HQ within a EU Member State, at which point they would be subject to European taxation as if they were EU businesses; or
- prove that the difference between their profit tax rate and their revenue tax rate is not inferior to 5% for businesses generating under €50m in revenues, and not inferior to 2.5% for business generating over €50m in revenues.

If a company falls into the above set of EU rules but is incurring losses instead of profits (i.e. startup phase, new product launch), then this company would be allowed to use accounting mechanisms that permit it to carry the loss onto future financial years.

¹⁶⁷ Susceptible to change, depending on more data research and indications from the EU Commission and independent research bodies.

¹⁶⁸ Susceptible to change, depending on more data research and indications from the EU Commission and independent research bodies. Apply to all numbers within this subchapter.

¹⁶⁹ Financial Times, Tech tax deepens EU-US trade rift, available at <https://www.ft.com/content/e9c37b1e-2932-11e8-b27e-cc62a39d57a0>

Due to the extensive nature and length of the taxation topic, many technical mechanisms have not been included above but they will be during the legislative process.

D. Funding support and sustainable finance

Analyse available funding along the different stages of business growth and enable the private sector to fill in the identified gaps (e.g., "valleys of death").

- **Find innovative means to bridge investment gaps, especially during early phases of business creation** in order to create incentives for other players (e.g., state guarantees, co-investment funds, financial tool-kit for startups, centralized platforms for funding, matching investors and startups).
- **Scale up the European Investment Bank (EIB)** with the clear mandate on investments where there are "valleys of death" for startups (e.g., ticket sizes of 50.000 to 1.000.000) or lack of available funds in strategic industries.
- **Standardize the definition of impact investment** and enable institutional investment in impact investment.
- **Create incentives for institutional investors** to (co-)invest in socially beneficial projects (e.g., infrastructure projects with a long horizon).

VIII. Mobilize Europe in a smart and sustainable way

In Europe, air pollution continues to take a heavy toll on health, causing around 400,000 early deaths annually.¹⁷⁰ Road mobility also comes at a high price in terms of lives lost: in 2015, slightly over 26,000 persons lost their lives in road accidents within the EU, whereas the road death toll in 2015 is still more than 22 times the total number of fatalities in rail and air transport combined.¹⁷¹ Many European cities are polluted, noisy, and face massive congestion problems. In 2017, Bucharest, Romania, had the worst traffic in Europe, with a score of 50%, meaning it takes drivers 50% more travel time to get to their destination in the city, a massive 7-point increase from the year before.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ UN Environment, The right to breath clean air, available at
<https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/right-breathe-clean-air>

¹⁷¹ Eurostat, Road safety statistics at regional level, available at
http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Road_safety_statistics_atRegional_level

¹⁷² Business Insider, The 15 European cities with the worst traffic, available at
<http://www.businessinsider.de/europe-city-worst-traffic-2017-8?op=1>

On the other hand, rural areas face the challenge of lacking transport connection. For many years now, freedom of movement has been fully recognised and applied throughout the European Union. However, putting aside some security limitations, travel across our continent is still complex. A lot has yet to be done regarding pollution, and the rights of travellers are not always protected in the best possible ways.

We follow the UN's definition of sustainable transport as "the provision of services and infrastructure for the mobility of people and goods - advancing economic and social development to benefit today's and future generations - in a manner that is safe, affordable, accessible, efficient, and resilient, while minimizing carbon and other emissions and environmental impacts."¹⁷³ We envision a smarter and more eco-friendly transportation system, both for people and freight, that is built on cutting-edge technology, while increasing safety and leveraging concepts such as the sharing economy. Volt wants greener cities with reduced noise and as little pollution as possible, which will result in a higher quality of life for everyone.

- **Reduce pollution caused by transportation by promoting new ways of mobility and new transportation modes.** These encompass public hybrid buses,¹⁷⁴ bike cities like Copenhagen (a policy which led to a 30% reduction in private cars¹⁷⁵ by installing "bicycle snakes" and other appropriate infrastructure),¹⁷⁶ solar boats/cars/planes, electric vertical take-off and landing jets,¹⁷⁷ and Hyperloops between big city hubs. Smarter infrastructure may include ideas as diverse as electrified roads¹⁷⁸ and roads made out of solar panels, which can directly charge electric vehicles driving on them, and sharing economy concepts. To enable the implementation of these transport and infrastructure concepts, we envision cooperative ventures bringing together industry, research, and society in the development and testing of solutions for next-generation sustainable public and private transport.¹⁷⁹
- **Enable the safe development of autonomous driving.** This technology has the potential to substantially benefit social welfare through the reduction of crashes and congestion, a decline in fuel consumption and emissions, an increase in mobility, and, eventually, changes in land use. Volt believes that AV

¹⁷³ United Nations, Mobilizing Sustainable Transport for Development, p. 7, available at <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2375Mobilizing%20Sustainable%20Transport.pdf>

¹⁷⁴ MAN Bus Germany, MAN Lion's City Hybrid, available at <https://www.bus.man.eu/de/en/city-buses/man-lions-city-hybrid/overview/Overview.html>

¹⁷⁵ Visitcopenhagen, Copenhagen's bike culture, available at: <https://www.visitcopenhagen.com/copenhagen/sightseeing/copenhagens-bike-culture>

¹⁷⁶ The Bicycle Snake, Visit Copenhagen, available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R_vk4WtvDE

¹⁷⁷ The Lilium Jet, The world's first electric vertical take-off and landing jet, available at <https://lilium.com/>

¹⁷⁸ eRoadArlanda, Electrified roads – a sustainable transport solution of the future, available at <https://eroadarlanda.com/>

¹⁷⁹ Best practise: ElectriCity in Gothenburg, Exciting cooperation for sustainable public transport, available at <https://www.electricitygoteborg.se/en>

technology ought to be permitted if and when it is superior to average human drivers. Safety regulations and liability rules should be designed with this overarching guiding principle in mind.¹⁸⁰ Therefore we are also in favour of sandbox experiments.¹⁸¹

- **Get the most out of existing infrastructure** by assessing and mapping infrastructure productivity levels per region, in order to create a European database which is available to all European citizens. Revamp current infrastructure utilisation with technologies and new pricing schemes.
- **Stimulate local economies by investing in infrastructure development projects to connect challenged areas to more developed areas.** This includes urban clusters, incentivizing High-Speed Rail projects to connect more remote areas to the rest of Europe. Many European areas do not have efficient infrastructures and/or travel costs are prohibitive (e.g. Sicily: two major airports, an old and inefficient highway, lack of a high-speed railway that the island needs, expensive flight tickets, etc.). Fairer prices can be reached by increasing competition; however, priority is given to improving infrastructure in remote areas. Examples include extending the high-speed rail network to minor provincial hubs, improving infrastructure connecting both cities to airports¹⁸² and airports to airports, etc.
- **Build a more integrated transportation system.** Foster multimodal transport to shift road transport and to other modes such as inland waterway transport and rail. Make rail transport more competitive to road transport by subsidizing investments in transshipment hubs by enabling longer freight trains and by reducing rail access charges.
- **Use the current low-interest market to launch infrastructure investments and improve mobility.** Volt recommends that member states enjoying healthy financial and commercial surpluses take advantage of the current low interest-rate momentum and launch serious infrastructure/reform plans. By doing so, they would make sure that they will not need to do that in a less favourable financial market phase.

¹⁸⁰ Anderson et al., Autonomous Vehicle Technology - A Guide for Policymakers, available at https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR400/RR443-2/RAND_RR443-2.pdf

¹⁸¹ Rbb 24, Autonomes Fahren in Berlin - Forscher arbeiten an Teststrecke auf der Straße des 17. Juni, available at

<https://www.rbb24.de/wirtschaft/beitrag/2017/07/in-berlin-entsteht-die-komplexeste-teststrecke-fuer-autonomes-fahren-in-deutschland-auf-der-strasse-des-siebzehnten-juni.html>

¹⁸² Malpensa Express, extended to Malpensa Terminal 2 since 2017, Corriera della Sera, Sempre più persone scelgono il treno per arrivare a Malpensa, available at

http://milano.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/17_ottobre_06/treno-malpensa-express-aeroporto-trenord-fc6fe5d6-aaa7-11e7-bf9b-eb2db464e457.shtml

- **Assess, if possible, multiplier and welfare effects of public expenditure** on different infrastructure projects in order to come to more productive infrastructures, such as free wifi and crucial connections between airports and cities.
- **Legally require all transport companies receiving any kind of public incentive to send their financial statements to public authorities.** If incentives are given to transport companies in specific cases (such as funding not-profitable routes), we cannot allow companies receiving them to distribute their eventual profits (*if these exceed a certain amount*) to shareholders. Moreover, public authorities and citizens shall always be able to check beneficiary companies' financial statements to verify that no abuses are carried out.
- **Revamp current infrastructure utilisation** with technologies and new pricing schemes to make infrastructure more productive

Challenge 3- Social Equality

Vision

No one should be left behind. Everyone should be guaranteed equal rights and opportunities, and human rights need to be respected, applied, and upheld.

It is unacceptable that in 2018 people are still subject to discrimination because of their gender, sexuality, appearance, origin, or beliefs. It is equally intolerable that almost one in every four Europeans¹⁸³ faces poverty or social exclusion, and that support is not provided for those who are most vulnerable. Finally, some Europeans still cannot make choices when it comes to their own bodies.

Volt is tackling social equality challenges by addressing four core issues and taking a holistic approach with the aim to end all forms of discrimination, stigmas and disparities, and ensuring that no one is left behind.

Volt strives to end discrimination against women and LGBTIQ+ people as well as discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, nationality, descent, skin colour and belief. These issues will be addressed in four sectors: the law, the public sector, the workplace and the education system.

Volt works towards alleviating poverty by way of empowering individuals to become active members of society; combating homelessness, reducing youth poverty, reforming the social benefits and healthcare systems and introducing new forms of social and community housing.

Volt recognises that inclusion in society is fundamental and as such special focus is placed on seniors, people with special educational needs and disabilities as well as children in care.

Volt emphasises a person's right to their own body and their freedom to choose. Our policies therefore discuss reproductive rights, surrogacy, prostitution and ending life with dignity.

¹⁸³ European Commission, Europe 2020 strategy, available at
https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/eu-economic-governance-monitoring-prevention-correction/european-semester/framework/europe-2020-strategy_en

I. End discrimination against groups and minorities

"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights."¹⁸⁴ **Let's make Europe equal by 2025!**

A. End discrimination against women

Gender equality is a fundamental human right, and one that should be rapidly achieved. In the current state of our societies, women are still treated unfairly, face more barriers than their male counterparts, are subject to specific types of violence, and are discriminated against in their private, public and professional lives. An example of this is the fact that women are heavily discriminated against in the workplace: they tend to have lower salaries, are underrepresented in senior management positions, and experience workplace bullying and harassment.¹⁸⁵

1. In the law

- **Promote legislation and concrete action to address persistent discrimination against women.**
- **Work towards ending violence against women** in a comprehensive manner, including through the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating both violence against women and domestic violence (the "Istanbul Convention").¹⁸⁶

2. In the public sector

- **Ensure that countries lead by example and apply inclusive and equal policies** that actively contribute towards effective and sustainable gender equality. Comprehensive strategies are needed to address the issues, with a broad range of measures, such as trainings and overcoming stereotypes. Women not only continue to be underrepresented in decision-making positions at all levels, but the rate of progression in this regard is slow.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁴ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 1, available at <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

¹⁸⁵ A study suggests that the actual gender pay gap is at a much lower rate, the reason for being is that women tend to go for lower-ranking jobs at lower paying organisations. However, this begs the question of whether women have equal opportunities to achieve higher paid jobs. See The Economist, Are women paid less than men for the same work?, available at

<https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2017/08/01/are-women-paid-less-than-men-for-the-same-work>

¹⁸⁶ For the full list, see Council of Europe, Chart of signatures and ratifications of Treaty 210, available at <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/210/signatures>

¹⁸⁸ European Commission, 2017 Report on equality between women and men in the EU, available at

- Implement comprehensive programmes to encourage women to get into politics and support them once there, through training courses, mentoring, public campaigns, and other means.
 - Educate the public about the benefits of gender parity in political decision making.¹⁸⁹
- **Require political parties to ensure equal representation of men and women on their lists of candidates for elections.**¹⁹⁰ The European Commission itself has explained that “formal quotas are an effective way to accelerate the pace of progress and encourage political parties to seek the participation of women.”¹⁹¹
- **Ensure gender parity¹⁹² within the public sector** through various means, such as setting quotas or giving preference to female candidates during the recruitment process.¹⁹³ Such measures will be in place as long as necessary, up until the desired outcome has been achieved.
- **Make reporting on gender representation mandatory at all levels of government, whether** at the national, local, and regional level. This will draw attention to the lack of female representation. Public reporting can also prompt change due to possible reputational risks.

3. In the workplace

- **Require all mid-sized to large companies to disclose and report on gender balance and gender pay gap.** Across the EU, wage gaps between genders is

https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/2017_report_equality_women_men_in_the_eu_en.pdf

¹⁸⁹ EIGE, Gender equality in Political Decision-making, available at http://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2016.1523_mh0116064enn_pdfweb_20170511095720.pdf

¹⁹⁰ France introduced a compulsory 50% gender parity provision. Political parties are required to ensure the equal representation of men and women on their lists of candidates for most elections. The first major impact of the quota was in 2007, when the number of women in parliament rose to 18.5 percent. See International IDEA, Gender quotas database France, available at

<https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/country-view/86/35>. This is the case in other European Countries, whether through a strict 50% rule like in France, or looser regulations. See International IDEA, Gender quotas database, available at <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/database>; Similar provisions already exist Germany, where most political parties introduced measures in their respective nomination procedures of candidates to increase the proportion of women in electoral lists. In particular gender quotas and zipping systems have proven positive effects. See Directorate-General for Internal Policies, Citizens' rights and constitutional affairs, available at

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2015/510025/IPOL_IDA\(2015\)510025_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2015/510025/IPOL_IDA(2015)510025_EN.pdf).

¹⁹¹ European Commission, 2017 Report on equality between women and men in the EU, available at https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/2017_report_equality_women_men_in_the_eu_en.pdf

¹⁹² The process to achieve, and the exact definition of, the goal of gender parity can vary depending on circumstances, and requires constant monitoring to measure progress made towards the goal.

¹⁹³ Following the example of Germany, see Global Government Forum, Women Leaders Index Gender Equality Case Study. See Germany, available at

<https://www.globalgovernmentforum.com/women-leaders-index-gender-equality-germany-case-study/>

still at 16.3%.¹⁹⁴ Greater transparency on gender pay gaps will help to tackle gender inequality in the workplace and help to ensure representation of women at all levels throughout companies. Gender reporting increases accountability and drives action towards more inclusive and fairer policies. Volt is proposing:

- From 2020 onwards, mid-sized to large companies (more than 100 employees) will be **required to disclose how much they pay male and female staff** in terms of salaries and bonuses,¹⁹⁵ and by 2025 they will be obliged to obtain a government certificate demonstrating pay equality.¹⁹⁶ Failure to comply will result in fines.
- Businesses will have to **disclose gender balance across the company** in their annual financial statements, including the number of women in senior management positions, from the moment the legislation will come into effect.
- Every state-owned company, regardless of its size, ought to disclose its gender balance across the whole enterprise by 2020. All state-owned companies will also have to produce a report demonstrating equal pay on an annual basis.
- Sanction companies that do not extend to each individual the same benefits, salaries, opportunities for training or promotion because of their gender identity, and include reference to non-discrimination on these grounds in any vacancy announcements.

➤ **Set a 40% quota for women on the boards of all publicly traded enterprises.**

¹⁹⁷ In 2016, the boards of the largest publicly traded companies in Europe had on average only 23% female representation.¹⁹⁸ This measure will not only positively impact the performance of companies, but will also lead to an increased number of women across the company as a whole.

¹⁹⁴ Eurostats, "Gender pay gap statistics", available at

http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Gender_pay_gap_statistics

¹⁹⁵ Following the example of Germany, see The Financial Times, German employers forced to reveal gender pay gap, available at <https://www.ft.com/content/e9f618c0-f210-11e7-ac08-07c3086a2625>

¹⁹⁶ Following the example of Iceland. See The Independent, Iceland makes it illegal to pay men more than women, available at

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/iceland-gender-pay-gap-illegal-men-pay-more-women-income-salary-earn-a8139141.html>

¹⁹⁷ In 2010, the EU Commission published the 'Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015' initiative, challenging gender diversity and equality. See European Commission, Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015, available at

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=LEGISSUM:em0037&from=EN>. The matter has recently been reopened by the current commissioner for justice and gender equality. See The Guardian, EU to push for 40% quota for women on company boards, available at

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/20/eu-to-push-for-40-quota-for-women-on-company-boards>

¹⁹⁸ European Commission, Gender Balance on corporate boards: Europe is crackling the glass ceiling, available at

http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/gender_balance_decision_making/1607_factsheet_final_wob_data_en.pdf

- All companies that are publicly traded on a stock market¹⁹⁹ will be required to have 40% female representation on their corporate boards by 2025. Failure to comply with this regulation will result in heavy fines, suspended remuneration of board members, and/or a possible delisting from the market.
 - Existing companies will be given **a five-year timeframe** to achieve the quota, while newly listed companies will be required to comply with the requirement at the time of listing.²⁰⁰
- **State-owned companies should act as role models.** State-owned companies ought to have a 50% female representation on their corporate boards by 2025.
- **Incentivize He For She programmes: make men part of the solution, not the problem.** Volt believes that all parties need to participate in the conversation for a solution to evolve. For this reason, it is necessary to encourage more dialogue and to create initiatives in the workplace, consisting of men supporting good practices and sensitizing others to the issues. Those can and should take various forms: men attending women's meetings to take part in discussions, listen, and ask questions; men simply standing up every time a woman is treated in an unfair manner; or pledges consisting of men refusing to speak on a panel that has no women or participate in a meeting that women are not part off.
- **Require all mid-sized to large companies to have confidential channels and hotlines separate from general employee relations to report inappropriate and discriminatory behaviour, violence and/or sexual harassment.** Women still face sexual harassment and violence, as well as inappropriate behaviors in the workplace.²⁰¹ Volt will require employers to have those reporting channels in place, and have them be managed by an external company or by a separate human resources team that includes women.
- **Introduce measures to empower women with children to have a successful career.** The following measures will benefit all types of parents (including but not limited to single men, women, heterosexual and homosexual couples):

¹⁹⁹ A publicly traded company, or a public company, is a company that has issued securities through an initial public offering and is traded on at least one stock exchange or the over-the-counter market. See Investopedia, Public Company, available at <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/p/publiccompany.asp>

²⁰⁰ Germany can already fine companies EUR 50,000 for non compliance while Norway can delist a Company from the market. Hence, we want to learn from those best practices and have a unified system to achieve equality, by fining companies EUR 50,000, delisting, and suspending remuneration when non-compliance has been established. See The Conversation, Lessons from Norway in Getting Women onto Corporate Boards available at

<http://theconversation.com/lessons-from-norway-in-getting-women-onto-corporate-boards-38338>; Bredin Prat Hengeler Mueller Slaughter and May, France and Germany available at https://www.hengeler.com/fileadmin/news/BF_Letter/14_Board-LevelGenderQuotas_2016-08.PDF.

²⁰¹ People of other genders face some of those types of violence as well, and shall have access to the same channels.

- **Incentivize companies' internal nurseries and working modes**, enabling flexibility suited for each parent's needs.
- **Enable equal paid maternity and paternity leave** for a specific period of time, and then extra time off that can be shared according to the parents' preferences. Heavily incentivize both parents to take their time off. The length of leave can be decided according to the countries' existing frameworks, but equality shall prevail.
- **Pilot more flexible “more-people-working-less” models**. The sharp rise in productivity has created an imbalance in the labour markets. A reduction in individual working hours would absorb much of the structural unemployment which has resulted.²⁰²
- **Implement Family Working Time following parental leave** to allow both parents to transition back to work starting part-time, with possible compensation of reduced income during specific life phases (e.g. during early infancy as foreseen in the German Parental Leave Act)²⁰³ to better balance between parents' responsibilities for family, caregiving and generating income.²⁰⁴ Family Working Time would follow parental leave and last up to three years. Both parents would, for example, work 80% of full-time, and the loss of wages would be compensated with a digressive rate based on income level and duration.²⁰⁵

4. In the education system

- **Educate students about the advantages and the importance of having a discrimination-free society and workforce**. For example, a diverse workforce is profitable for companies as it improves both levels of productivity and employment.
- **Incentivize girls and women to enter careers in which they are often underrepresented**. This could be done in many ways, including by setting up state-sponsored ‘summer camps’ for sectors which are generally dominated by men to incentivise equal representation in younger generations. This would provide an opportunity for women to familiarise themselves with possible careers and/or studies.

²⁰² Jean-Marie Perbost, Work more? Work less? What should be done so that we can all work and perform better?, p. 48, available at https://gef.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Work_more_work_less.pdf

²⁰³ BMFSFJ, Manuela Schwesig: Mütter und Väter wollen heute beides: Familie und Beruf, available at <https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/aktuelles/reden-und-interviews/manuela-schwesig--muetter-und-vaeter-wollen-heute-beides-familie-und-beruf/75720?view=DEFAULT>

²⁰⁴ OECD, Be Flexible! Background brief on how workplace flexibility can help European employees to balance work and family, available at

<https://www.oecd.org/els/family/Be-Flexible-Backgrounder-Workplace-Flexibility.pdf>

²⁰⁵ FES (Ed.), Müller, Neumann, Wrolich, Familienarbeitszeit, available at <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/dialog/10335.pdf>

- **Have internal biases trainings for professionals in the education system, including teachers and professors**, to ensure that girls and women have the same chances and opportunities as others, and that they are not steered towards particular careers.

B. End discrimination against LGBTIQ+ people

Volt is based on the principles of equality for all, equal opportunities, and the respect of human rights. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) individuals are subject to discriminatory practices, violence, harassment, and so much more in every realm of their lives. LGBTIQ+ individuals each face different challenges and have different needs; there is no one-size-fits-all policy. Volt aims to introduce regulations and concrete actions to achieve equality in law and in practice for all. By this, we don't mean an abstract concept of equality, but pure equality: we will settle for nothing less. We want to ensure that LGBTIQ+ people have access to the same rights and protections as others. It is also key to eliminate all forms of discrimination, whether in the private or public sphere, through education, incentivize in the workplace etc. In short, love is love, and it's that simple.

1. In the law

- **Legalize marriage for all.** Unfortunately, in many countries in Europe some people cannot yet get married because of the gender of the person they love.²⁰⁶ The fact that other types of partnerships exist and are available does not mean that this is acceptable in any way. This is why Volt will work to legalize marriage for all across Europe where it is not already the case, in order for heterosexual and homosexual couples to have access to the exact same rights, procedures, and union in the eyes of the state.²⁰⁷
- **Legalize adoption for same-sex couples.** So many children need families, and so many families - or individuals - want children. The only criteria that should matter is whether one can and will provide a safe and loving environment to a child. Equality means that all should have the same rights, including the right to adopt a child. No, same-sex parents are not less able to raise a child than heterosexual ones. No, a child does not need both a maternal and a paternal figure. Otherwise, how could we explain that so many children raised by single parents or by homosexual parents are like everybody else? Otherwise, how could we justify letting single parents raise children alone? For these reasons, Volt will work to:

²⁰⁶ Marriage for same-sex couple is legal in Austria (as of January 1, 2019), Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Malta, Spain, Sweden, and the UK.

²⁰⁷ It is necessary to stress that this is not an affront to religion: Volt stands for secular states; as a result is talking about civil rights and union in front of the state, and not religious ones.

- **give the opportunity to adopt a child to every adult** - regardless of their gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status - based on the same criteria as those imposed for adoption on heterosexual couples according to local law.
- **ensure that the procedure will be the same as for heterosexual couples.** Homosexual couples and single parents should not have to jump through any additional hoops to be able to adopt. No discrimination should take place on the basis of a parent's gender identity, sexual orientation, or marital status.

➤ **Guarantee transgender rights:**

- **Make gender affirming procedures**, such as hormone treatment, surgery and psychological support, **accessible for transgender persons**, and ensure that they are reimbursed by public health insurance schemes.²⁰⁸
- **Challenge legislation that require transgender individuals** to do the following to change their gender legally: undergo medical procedures (such legislations are still present in 23 countries in Europe, and need to be challenged rapidly),²⁰⁹ or be diagnosed as mentally ill.
- Ensure that people are able to use the facilities linked to one's own gender identification (e.g. bathrooms).

➤ **Guarantee intersex rights:**²¹⁰

- **Prohibit medically unnecessary “sex-normalising” surgery, sterilisation and other treatments practised on intersex babies and children** without their informed consent.²¹¹ Such treatment shall be deferred “until such time as the child is able to participate in the decision,” unless when there is a risk to the life of the child.²¹² As of April 2018, Malta

²⁰⁸ See for example NHS, Gender Dysphoria, available at

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/gender-dysphoria/treatment/#surgery>

²⁰⁹ Amnesty International, Sexual and reproductive rights, available at

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/sexual-and-reproductive-rights/>; Malta, Norway, Denmark, Ireland, Portugal and Belgium are the only European nations that allow a change of gender without medical or state intervention. See Reuters, Portugal approves law to boost transgender rights, protect intersex infants, available at

<https://www.reuters.com/article/portugal-lgbt-lawmaking/portugal-approves-law-to-boost-transgender-rights-protect-intersex-infants-idUSL1N1RQ0ZP>

²¹⁰ “The intersex definition is a person is born with a combination of male and female biological characteristics, such as chromosomes or genitals, that can make it difficult for doctors to assign their sex as distinctly male or female.” See Planned Parenthood, What is intersex, available at

<https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/sexual-orientation-gender/gender-gender-identity/whats-intersex>

²¹¹ The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, PACE calls for a ban on 'sex-normalising' surgery for intersex children, available at

<http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/News/News-View-EN.asp?newsid=6834&lang=2&cat=8>

²¹² Ibid.

- and Portugal are the only countries in the world to ban medically unnecessary surgery on the genitals of intersex infants.
- Ensure that there are **no administrative obstacles for intersex individuals in being recognized**, getting necessary administrative papers etc. Gender markers in identity documents and birth registries should be reviewed to better protect intersex people (see point below).²¹³
 - **Promote legislations that allow non binary people to choose their gender on IDs, forms, and official documents** (as X or Q for example). Add the use of singular “they” instead of only “he or she” or “he/she” in documents and forms. States could also consider making the registration of one’s gender optional on birth certificates and other identity documents.²¹⁴
 - **Promote and revise legislations that address persistent discrimination against LGBTIQ+ people.** While legislation is in place to tackle discrimination, it is essential to increase their visibility and revise laws where necessary.
 - Ensure that adequate deterrents, such as fines and criminal penalties, are in place and applied when acts of violence (hate crimes) or discrimination take place because of a person’s orientation, sexuality, and/or gender.²¹⁵
 - **Conduct trainings for the police on hate crimes** against LGBTIQ+ people.²¹⁶

2. In the public sector

- Ensure that countries lead by example and **apply inclusive and equal policies to actively contribute towards real equality**. Comprehensive strategies are needed to address the issues, with a broad range of measures that could be used to accomplish this goal.
 - Implement **comprehensive programmes** to encourage minorities to get into politics, and support them once there, through training courses, mentoring, public campaigns, and other means.
 - Educate the public about the benefits of diversity in political decision making.

²¹³ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, The fundamental rights situation of intersex people, available at <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2015/fundamental-rights-situation-intersex-people>

²¹⁴ The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, PACE calls for a ban on 'sex-normalising' surgery for intersex children, available at

<http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/News/News-View-EN.asp?newsid=6834&lang=2&cat=8>

²¹⁵ Following the example of France. See Connexion France, French racial discrimination fines rise up to 15 00 available at

<https://www.connexionfrance.com/French-news/French-racial-discrimination-fines-rise-up-to-15-000>

²¹⁶ As recommended by the Council of Europe. See Council of Europe, Policing Hate Crime against LGBTI persons: Training for a Professional Police Response, available at

<https://rm.coe.int/prems-030717-gbr-2575-hate-crimes-against-lgbti-web-a4/1680723b1d>

- **Train judges, magistrates and other civil servants to recognize and address implicit biases towards minorities.** The justice system is vital to ensuring that disputes are resolved in an orderly manner and that victims are protected. Volt wants to reinstate the confidence in the justice system and ensure that biases towards minorities are maintained at a minimum, if not eliminated, through trainings and other methods.

3. In the workplace

- **Sanction companies** that do not extend to each individual the same benefits, salaries, opportunities for hiring, training, or promotion regardless of one's sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics, and include reference to non-discrimination on these grounds in vacancy announcements.
- **Require all mid-sized to large companies to have confidential channels and hotlines, separate from general employee relations, to report inappropriate and discriminatory behaviour, violence and/or sexual harassment.** Volt will require employers to have reporting channels in place that are managed by an external company or by a separate human resources team.²¹⁷
- **Incentivize companies to train staff** - especially managers - to raise awareness of issues faced by their LGBTIQ+ colleagues.
- **Provide incentives to companies to ensure that they address the specific rights of transgender²¹⁸ and intersex²¹⁹ people at work.**
 - Companies should adopt policies for trans inclusion, including the recognition of the gender identity of trans staff, customers, and other stakeholders, regardless of whether this is reflected in official documents

²¹⁷ These channels will be accessible to all.

²¹⁸ “Some people feel that the sex they were assigned at birth doesn’t match their gender identity, or the gender that they feel they are inside. These people are often called transgender.” See Planned Parenthood, Trans and Gender Nonconforming Identities, available at <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/sexual-orientation-gender/trans-and-gender-nonconforming-identities>; “An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.” See Human Rights Campaign, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Definitions, available at <https://www.hrc.org/resources/sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity-terminology-and-definitions>

²¹⁹ “The intersex definition is: a person is born with a combination of male and female biological characteristics, such as chromosomes or genitals, that can make it difficult for doctors to assign their sex as distinctly male or female. Being intersex is a naturally occurring variation in humans, and isn’t a medical problem. It’s also more common than most people realize. It’s hard to know exactly how many people are intersex, but estimates suggest that about 1 in 100 people born in the U.S. is intersex.” See Planned Parenthood, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Definitions, available at <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/sexual-orientation-gender/gender-gender-identity/whats-intersex>

- (which includes establishing policies that require company staff to respect the name, pronouns, terms, and gender used by the person concerned).
- Companies should ensure safe and non-discriminatory access to bathrooms and other single-sex facilities, and non-discriminatory dress codes.
 - Companies also need to adopt policies to respect the rights of intersex people at work, including access to personal services and changing rooms, dress codes, healthcare and medical attention.

4. In the education system

- **Cover all subjects in sexual education classes:** education is key to eliminating inequalities and unfair treatments, and to foster a culture of mutual understanding and acceptance. It is important to make sure that in a safe learning environment ²²⁰ they have access to the information and resources that concern them, their classmates and the rest of the world. This is why Volt will ensure that during sexual education classes:
 - not only heterosexuality should be discussed, but also all other types of sexual orientations and gender identities (for example, what it means being non-binary, cisgender, transgender, intersex),
 - Methods of contraception and protection are explained and discussed,
 - All of the above is to be done without shaming, false explanations, and religious commentaries, and in a way which is non-discriminatory and inclusive.
- **Educate students about the advantages and the importance of having a discrimination-free society and workforce.** For example, a diverse workforce is profitable for companies as it improves both levels of productivity and employment.

C. End discrimination based on ethnicity, national origin, descent and skin colour

Current legal instruments at the national, European, and international level fail to protect individuals facing prejudice, unequal treatment, and social exclusion. Minorities still experience discriminatory treatment and hate crimes, including in education, employment, social services, interaction with law enforcement, etc. Discrimination based on ethnicity and skin colour remains one of the most experienced forms of inequality, with these minorities remaining the most disadvantaged and persecuted

²²⁰ Follow the International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education set up by UNESCO. See UNESCO and SGDs, International technical guidance on sexuality education, available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0026/002607/260770e.pdf>

individuals in society.²²¹ Additionally, discrimination against Roma people is particularly problematic across Europe. Roma people represent the largest ethnic minority in Europe: it is estimated that there are 10-12 million Roma people in total, some 6 million of whom live in the EU, and most of whom hold the citizenship of an EU country.²²² Recent publications show that as many as 80% of Roma are still at risk of poverty.²²³

1. In the law

- **Promote and revise legislation that addresses persistent discrimination against certain groups.** While legislation is in place to tackle discrimination, it is essential to increase its visibility and revise it where necessary.
 - Ensure that adequate deterrents, such as fines and criminal penalties, are in place and applied when acts of violence (hate crimes) or discrimination take place due to someone's ethnicity, national origin, descent, or skin colour.²²⁴
 - Immediately remove any exceptions which permit discrimination on these grounds.
- **Strengthen law enforcement systems in order to end police violence, harassment, and profiling, and ensure that the police fulfill their duty to protect society.** The police practice of ethnic profiling²²⁵ still exists in most countries (e.g. in France, young men perceived as black or Arab are 20 times more likely to be stopped than the rest of the population).²²⁶ Recent statistics show that in 2017, almost half of those who were stopped by the police believed that this was due to their immigrant or ethnic minority background.²²⁷ Volt therefore proposes to work to:

²²¹ 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

²²² European Commission, Roma integration in EU countries, available at https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/justice-and-fundamental-rights/discrimination/roma-and-eu/roma-integration-eu-countries_en

²²³ European Commission, Roma inclusion: More effort needed to improve access to schooling and employment, available at http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-2961_en.htm

²²⁴ Following the example of France. See Connexion France, French racial discrimination fines rise up to 15 00 available at

<https://www.connexionfrance.com/French-news/French-racial-discrimination-fines-rise-up-to-15-000>

²²⁵ Ethnic profiling consists of conducting identity checks based on appearance, in particular ethnicity, rather than on signs of illegal activity. See Human Rights Watch, France: the Human Rights Implications of the Presidential Campaign, available at

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/03/29/france-human-rights-implications-presidential-campaign>

²²⁶ Human Rights Watch, France: the Human Rights Implications of the Presidential Campaign, available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/03/29/france-human-rights-implications-presidential-campaign>

²²⁷ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey - Main results, available at <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2017/eumidis-ii-main-results>

- **End ethnic profiling** during police identity checks and require officers to **issue a stop form** for every identity check, to encourage well-grounded stops and greater accountability.
 - **Limit officers' discretionary authority** by requiring reasonable & individualised suspicion for all checks and searches, and develop clear guidance for law enforcement officers.
- **End police violence** through trainings, accountability mechanisms, and monitoring.
- **Remove the terms 'race', 'racism' and 'racial discrimination' in all legislations.** The current concept of different races is socially constructed, as scientifically there is only one human race (*Homo sapiens*).²²⁸ The use of such terms should therefore be eliminated in law and the concept should be redefined. On this merit, policies against discrimination shall consist of the following terms: ethnicity, national origin, descent or skin colour. *N.B. Volt does not dispute the fact that "racism" - in the traditional meaning of the word - exists and needs to end, but believes that acknowledging that all humans are of one race is a key factor in ending discrimination.*

2. In the public sector

- **Ensure that countries lead by example and apply inclusive and equal policies** to actively contribute towards real equality. Comprehensive strategies are needed to address the issues with a broad range of measures, such as:
- Implementing comprehensive programmes to encourage minorities to get into politics, and support them once there, through training courses, mentoring, public campaigns, and other means.
 - Educating the public about the benefits of diversity in political decision making.
- **Train judges, magistrates and other civil servants to recognize and address implicit biases towards minorities.** The justice system is vital to ensuring that disputes are resolved in an orderly manner and that victims are protected. Across Europe, people from who are, or seem to be, from minority groups linked to their ethnicity or skin colour are still more likely to face arrest, charging, prosecution or imprisonment.²²⁹ It is therefore essential for judges, magistrates and other civil

²²⁸ A concept or perception of something based on the collective views developed and maintained within a society or social group; a social phenomenon or convention originating within and cultivated by society or a particular social group, as opposed to existing inherently or naturally. See Oxford living dictionary, Social construct, available at https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/social_construct

²²⁹ For example, recent report found that in the UK, people from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds are more likely to be jailed for certain crimes than those who are white. See The Guardian, Ethnic Minorities More Likely to be Jailed For Some Crimes, Report Finds, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/nov/16/ethnic-minorities-more-likely-to-be-jailed-for-some-crime-s-report-finds>

servants to demonstrate fairness and justness when carrying out their responsibilities. Volt wants to reinstate confidence in the justice system and ensure that biases towards minorities are maintained at a minimum, if not eliminated, through trainings and other methods.

3. In the workplace

- **Increase ethnic and cultural diversity in companies across the continent.** Achieving greater diversity is not only the right thing to do, but is also profitable for companies: it is more likely to bring competitive advantage to a company and is linked to higher financial returns.²³⁰ Volt wants to ensure that both the private and public sectors respect and promote diversity and encourage minority workforce to enter careers in which they are underrepresented.
- **Motivate and encourage minority workforce to enter careers in which they are underrepresented.**
- **Require all mid-sized to large companies to have confidential channels and hotlines, separate from general employee relations, to report inappropriate and discriminatory and inappropriate behaviour, violence and/or harassment.** Workplace discrimination can take many forms. It occurs during recruitment and interviews and is reflected in unequal pay, unjustified dismissals and harassment.²³¹ Volt will require employers to have those reporting channels in place, and have them be managed by an external company or by a separate human resources teams.
- **Perform temporary positive discrimination** (e.g., special practices aimed at fostering equality: “supporting groups of people who face, or have faced, entrenched discrimination so they can have similar access to opportunities as others in the community”)²³² to speed up economic, social and cultural integration.

4. In the education system

- **Incentivize and protect diversity in schools to promote better educational opportunities.** Promoting diversity in schools has several advantages, including educational benefits and the promotion of good relations between people of different backgrounds.²³³ Volt wants school curricula to better incorporate

²³⁰ McKinsey & Company, Why Diversity Matters, available at <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/why-diversity-matters>

²³¹ Equinet, 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

²³² Australian Human Rights Commission, Positive Discrimination, available at <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/quick-guide/12078>

²³³ ATL, Race Equality and Education: A practical resource for the School Workforce, available at <https://www.atl.org.uk/Images/Race%20equality%20and%20education.pdf>

diversity. For example, through cross-cultural exchange, the study of books by authors from different backgrounds and with different perspectives, with workshops, and by using more practical pedagogical tools. Additionally, provide internal erasmus opportunities within different regions of the country to diminish regional differences.

5. Specific discrimination against Roma people

- **Ensure that Roma people have equal rights, both in the legal system and in practice, and that no more discrimination is tolerated.** For this, ensure that they have equal access to education, housing, employment and healthcare.²³⁴
- Ensure that during winter people cannot be evicted and advocate for a school year truce from expulsions, to enable children to stay in school.
 - Create awareness-raising campaigns about the Roma community to decrease stigma.
 - Ensure equal access of Roma children to public school, regardless of living situations. For this, eliminate administrative hurdles (such as requiring children to live in the neighborhood of the school in order to be able to register there).
 - Ensure that Roma people have access to basic infrastructure and human needs such as running water, electricity and heating.
 - Incentivise programmes at the local level to help tackle issues Roma people most commonly face, including language classes, courses and trainings to help find employment, assistance in getting the right information on entitlements and access to healthcare, etc.

D. End discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief

Every individual has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, as far as it does not restrict or violate the rights and freedoms of others. Religious discrimination is an unjustified act against an individual on the basis of their religion or belief. Such an act can be a direct form of violence or harassment, or indirect, where policies and practices place certain populations at a disadvantage. Despite a diverse European society, discrimination on these grounds still persists. For example, two in every five European Muslims experience discrimination in their workplace, housing and when accessing social services. One third claim verbal abuse.²³⁵ Volt believes that religion is a

²³⁴ These provisions are based on the European Commission's EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies which aims to close the gap between Roma and non-Roma in these four key areas. See European Commission, An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020, available at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52011DC0173>

²³⁵The Guardian, Two in five European Muslims have felt discriminated against, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/21/two-in-five-european-muslims-have-felt-discriminated-against-survey>

free choice and should be respected by others. Discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief includes the absence of a religion or belief, such as atheism.

Volt also believes in a secular state, and will work to ensure that such principles are respected across Europe.

1. In the law

- **Promote and revise legislation that addresses persistent discrimination against certain groups.** While legislation is in place to tackle discrimination, it is essential to increase its visibility and revise it where necessary.
 - Ensure that adequate deterrents, such as fines and criminal penalties, are in place and applied when acts of violence (hate crimes) or discrimination take place due to someone's religious beliefs and practices.
 - Immediately remove any exceptions which permit discrimination on these grounds.
- **Strengthen law enforcement systems in order to end police violence, harassment and profiling,** and to ensure that the police fulfills its duty to protect society. Conduct trainings for the police on hate crimes against minorities.
- **Guarantee freedom of expression and religion,** as long as it does not prevent others from exercising and enjoying their rights, and human rights are respected. Balance national security concerns and personal freedoms, only restricting the later when strictly necessary.

2. In the public sector

- **Ensure that countries lead by example and apply inclusive and equal policies** to actively contribute towards real equality. Comprehensive strategies are needed to address the issues, with a broad range of measures, such as trainings, overcoming stereotypes, etc.
 - Implement comprehensive programmes to encourage minorities to get into politics, and support them once there, through training courses, mentoring, public campaigns, and other means.
 - Educate the public about the benefits of diversity in political decision making.
- **Train judges, magistrates and other civil servants to recognize and address implicit biases towards minorities.** The justice system is vital to ensure that disputes are resolved in an orderly manner and that victims are protected. Volt wants to reinstate the confidence in the justice system and ensure that biases towards minorities are maintained at a minimum, if not eliminated, through trainings and other methods.

3. In the workplace

- **Require all mid-sized to large companies to have confidential channels and hotlines**, separate from general employee relations, to report inappropriate and discriminatory behaviour, violence, and/or sexual harassment. Volt will require employers to put such reporting channels in place, and have them be managed by an external company or by a separate human resources team.
- **Ensure that no discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief takes place in the workplace.**
 - Workplace policies in both private and public sectors should not restrict religious rights. This includes the right to wear religious symbols and clothing,²³⁶ for example the right of a woman to cover her hair, and other practices. Volt believes that no employer should have the right to tell individuals not to wear religious symbols,²³⁷ unless necessary for health and safety reasons (hereby countering the recent Court of Justice of the European Union judgment).²³⁸
- **Guarantee freedom of expression**, including the right to practice one's religion, as long as it does not deprive others from exercising and enjoying their rights and human rights are respected.
- **Ensure that during application processes for employment, candidates are not discriminated against because of their religion.** This includes ensuring that job descriptions do not use discriminatory language and avoid reference to personal characteristics. During the recruitment process, individuals should not be required to disclose their religion. Mechanisms should be in place to ensure that individuals can make a complaint if discrimination occurs during the recruitment process.

4. In the education system

- **Ensure that public school funding is not used for religious classes or activities**, and that students from all religious (or non-religious) backgrounds can attend.

²³⁶ Examples of religious clothing are religious headscarves, face-covering veils, turbans and skull caps, while crucifixes, kara bangles, kirpans (ceremonial daggers) and certain religious jewellery can be seen as examples of religious symbols. See European Commission, Religious clothing and symbols in employment, available at

https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/document.cfm?action=display&doc_id=48810

²³⁷ However, no religious symbol that could be used as a weapon should be brought to the workplace.

²³⁸ CURIA, An internal rule of an undertaking which prohibits the visible wearing of any political, philosophical or religious sign does not constitute direct discrimination, available at

<https://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs/application/pdf/2017-03/cp170030en.pdf>

- **Ideally, schools should be a religion-neutral environment which allows for students and teachers to express their own religion. Promote learning experiences:**
 - In the event that schools provide civics classes in which religion is discussed, ensure that they include all (or the highest possible number of) religions, not only the dominant one. This policy does not include theological faculties in higher education.
 - Foster cross-cultural exchanges, with workshops and visits to religious sites, and more practical pedagogical tools.
- **Educate students about the advantages and the importance of having a discrimination-free society and workforce.** Teachers should present diversity as a positive element of human life.
- **Allow children to wear religious symbols** as long as they are doing so of their own free will.

II. Alleviate Poverty

In 2015, up to 23.7% of EU population (approximately 120 million people) lived in a situation facing poverty or social exclusion.²³⁹ As the second largest economy in the world²⁴⁰ in 2017 with a cumulated GDP of more than \$17.1 trillion, the EU has the necessary resources to significantly reduce poverty and poverty risk in order to eventually eradicate it.

A. Overall issues linked to Poverty

With almost 1 out of every 4 Europeans²⁴¹ facing poverty or social exclusion, there is a pressing need to meet the goals set out by the Europe 2020 Strategy that aims to have at least “20 million fewer people in – or at risk of – poverty/social exclusion” in the next two years.²⁴² The Strategy further aims to drop the number of Europeans in poverty and at risk of poverty or social exclusion to less than 100 million by 2020 and to less than 50 million by 2030. Social benefits are essential and should be designed to help the most

²³⁹ Eurostat, People at risk of poverty and social exclusion, available at http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/People_at_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion.

²⁴⁰ International Monetary Fund, Report for Selected Countries and Subjects, available at <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2017/02/weodata/weorept.aspx?pr.x=89&pr.y=6&sy=2017&ey=2017&sccsm=1&ssd=1&sort=country&ds=.&br=1&c=998&s=NGDPD%2CPPPGDP%2CPPPC&grp=1&a=1>.

²⁴¹ European Commission, Europe 2020 strategy, available at https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/eu-economic-governance-monitoring-prevention-correction/european-semester/framework/europe-2020-strategy_en

²⁴² Ibid.

vulnerable; however, they do no represent a long-term solution for alleviating poverty. Therefore, the main focus of Volt's policy consists of equipping everyone with the tools they need in order to have access to equal opportunities and fully participate in society.

1. Social benefits and healthcare

- **Ensure that social benefits guarantee a basic standard of life** (taking into account housing, food, clothing, healthcare, professional programmes, etc. in a given region) and cover a broad set of measures. Use social benefits as a **transitory measure** aiming to support people to get back on their feet and provide for themselves.
- **Introduce a monthly child benefits scheme** and send young parents a **welcome box** for their newborn child. In Finland, such a measure contributed to one of the lowest infant mortality rates in history (e.g., new parents get send a starter kit of clothes, sheets and toys, and the box of the package can even be used as a crib). The maternity package is not to be commercially available, but available solely as a benefit offered.²⁴³
- **Ensure universal coverage** and access to healthcare across Europe.²⁴⁴

2. In-work poverty

- **Guarantee a minimum income above absolute poverty levels.** Volt envisions universal social protection and an adequate income to become core pillars of EU policy making.²⁴⁵ In-work poverty continues to be a burden for many workers throughout Europe. In 2016, 9.6% of EU citizens 18 and older who are currently employed faced in-work at risk of poverty.²⁴⁶ In other words, people are not remunerated sufficiently for their work, which represents a deeply unfair situation.
- **Venture into unconditional income:** support large-scale experiments with unconditional basic income (UBI), to provide a solid knowledge basis to decide on the merits of this novel approach to social protection.

B. Social and Community Housing

According to data provided by member organizations of Housing Europe, new social housing production has decreased in most countries between 2009 and 2012. This

²⁴³ Finnish maternity boxes have been available since the 1930s, and provide an equal start in life for all babies. See Kela, Maternity Package, available at <http://www.kela.fi/web/en/maternitypackage>.

²⁴⁴ For more details see [Smart State, Make high quality healthcare available for everyone](#)

²⁴⁵ For more details see [Economic Renaissance, Social Policies](#)

²⁴⁶ Eurostat, In-work poverty at risk of poverty rate by age and sex, available at <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>.

includes in the UK, the Netherlands, Austria, Italy, Denmark, Ireland, and Spain. The most significant exception is France, which has produced 116,000 new HLM (social housing) units in 2012.²⁴⁷

As part of a social housing initiative, Volt will support the development of policies that promote new forms of shared living and community-led housing (CLH). CLH is increasingly being established as a viable and sustainable response to the challenges of providing affordable housing in the context of state withdrawal, spatial and social segregation, and climate change.²⁴⁸ A diversity of CLH models have emerged across Europe, including co-housing, co-living, intergenerational housing, and co-operative models.²⁴⁹ Shared living models could help increase affordability, reduce the negative impact on the environment, and improve social cohesion for more resilient and secure communities.

- **Support efforts to subsidize shared social living.** Subsidies should be offered for buildings designed according to defined social living standards, with an aim to ensure shared and affordable living spaces.²⁵⁰ Volt will work to ensure that

²⁴⁷ Housing Europe, The State of Housing in the EU, available at www.housingeurope.eu/file/306/download

²⁴⁸ Cooperative City, Lessons from community-led housing for city-makers across Europe, available at <https://cooperativecity.org/2017/10/01/lessons-from-community-led-housing/>

²⁴⁹ The different types of shared housing arrangements are: co-housing, coliving, co-op houses, and intergenerational houses.

1) Co-housing: a specific type of intentional community typically consisting of separate private dwellings clustered around a common areas (e.g. shared kitchen, dining area, laundry, garden, playground). Households have independent incomes and private lives, but neighbors collaboratively plan and manage community activities and shared spaces. They can be urban, suburban, or rural.

2) Coliving: a modern form of housing where residents share living space and a set of interests, values, and/or intentions. It tends to be urban and integrated into a single building, house, or apartment and the demographics tend towards 20 and 30 something professionals. See Open door, So what exactly is coliving, available at <http://opendoor.io/so-what-exactly-is-coliving/>

3) Co-op house: co-ops are an outgrowth of the student cooperative movement, and are often found at or surrounding major colleges and universities.

4) Intergenerational Houses: the aim of intergenerational/multigenerational houses is to revive the idea of interaction and mutual support between young and old. Older people are encouraged to rent a room in a house with younger people in exchange for help in the daily household tasks. This kind of experience can be a win-win situation for both older and younger people. Multigenerational houses have been receiving funding in Germany since 2006 with the idea of transferring the concept of the extended family to modern society, and is found in around 550 communities and districts. The subsidy programme for multigenerational living, run by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens and Youth (BMFSFJ), is a model that other EU countries could investigate. It is implemented with EU, federal and local funding in the form of a co-financing model. See IFA, Intergenerational House Sharing, available at <https://www.ifa-fiv.org/intergenerational-house-sharing/>; and European Commission, Intergenerational learning. See European Commission, The multigenerational house model, available at <https://ec.europa.eu/epale/en/blog/intergenerational-learning-multigenerational-house-model>

²⁵⁰ The subsidy programme for multigenerational living, run by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens and Youth (BMFSFJ), is a model that other EU countries could investigate. See European Commission, Intergenerational learning, The multigenerational house model, available at <https://ec.europa.eu/epale/sv/node/41229>

repayable funding, such as low-interest loans to buy new property or to renovate an existing property, is made available.

- **Integrate social and shared housing into EU cohesion policy.**²⁵¹ Use available funds for social housing to improve the situation of low wage earners, including marginalised groups (i.e. migrants, Roma people etc) earning a low income.

C. Homelessness

Homelessness levels have been on the rise across Europe in recent years.²⁵² The EU's 2020 Poverty Target²⁵³ and Social Investment Fund were supposed to tackle poverty and homelessness, but European governments, with the exception of Finland, have fallen behind in addressing the issue.²⁵⁴

Volt will work tirelessly to ensure that no one is left behind and to help those who are deemed the most vulnerable. Adequate social policies must be put in place to tackle homelessness and rough-sleeping in Europe. In an economically developed continent, there is no justification for people to live on the street, therefore every member of society must be given a chance to recover from hardship. Such a strategy is not only compassionate and fair, it is also a path to greater economic prosperity and social inclusion, through providing the means for homeless people to become active members of their communities. Homelessness needs to be tackled holistically; therefore, the following is not an exhaustive list, and other policies detailed throughout the document will all contribute towards its eradication, including, but not limited to: social benefits, accessible and appropriate health care, a decrease in unemployment, and reduced in-work poverty.

- **Invest in sustainable and affordable public housing** to bring down the cost of rent, and allocate high-quality housing for those in need.²⁵⁵ Work with local governments to set targets for investment in social housing. Volt will push for a

²⁵¹ The Regional policy of the European Union (EU), also referred as Cohesion Policy, is a policy with the stated aim of improving the economic well-being of regions in the EU and also to avoid regional disparities. More than one third of the EU's budget is devoted to this policy. See European Commission, Cohesion policy Frequently Asked Questions, available at http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/faq/#1

²⁵² Euronews, Homelessness on the Rise in all EU Countries - except Finalnd: Report, available at <http://www.euronews.com/2018/03/21/homelessness-on-the-rise-in-all-eu-countries-except-finland-report>

²⁵³ Eurostat - European 2020 indicators - poverty and social exclusion, available at http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Europe_2020_indicators_-_poverty_and_social_exclusion

²⁵⁴ FEANTSA, News: Housing First in Brno Meets Goal and is Set for Expansion, available at <http://www.feantsa.org/en/news/2018/04/11/news-housing-first-in-brno-meets-goal-and-is-set-for-expansion>

²⁵⁵ An example of this is HomeLab. See Housing Europe, HomeLab, available at www.housingeurope.eu/section-111/homelab

'housing first' approach to ending homelessness, providing homeless people with social housing before other rehabilitation steps.²⁵⁶

- **Provide support for community-based social enterprise and rehabilitation initiatives.** To do so, work with civil society organisations to expand initiatives focusing on preventing homelessness, as well as providing solutions to help those who are already on the street. Such initiatives can focus on various projects such as providing homeless people a home and an opportunity to work, and lifelong learning through vocational and entrepreneurial programmes, particularly in the context of cooperative businesses that they can participate in and co-own, etc.²⁵⁷
- **Combat indebtedness in vulnerable households,** which can be a cause of homelessness among vulnerable groups.²⁵⁸
 - Restrict abusive loan sharks and invest in awareness campaigns on exploitative practices.
 - Invest in community-based access to finance, particularly micro-finance schemes for entrepreneurship, through community cooperatives in areas at risk.
- **Provide a mixture of services to meet needs related to age, gender and special needs.** Addressing the needs of specific groups of vulnerable individuals is fundamental to ensure that they feel comfortable and safe, and implement measures to prevent the prolonging of their "homelessness journeys."
 - Provide treatment for drug use (often a cause and/or result of homelessness) and treat addiction as a medical condition rather than a crime.²⁵⁹
 - Provide mental health support and social services to those who have experienced homelessness or social exclusion in order to tackle

²⁵⁶ A best practice for this is Finland. See Housing First, Finland, available at <http://housingfirsteurope.eu/countries/finland/>; FEANTSA, News: Housing First in Brno Meets Goal and is Set for Expansion, available at <http://www.feantsa.org/en/news/2018/04/11/news-housing-first-in-brno-meets-goal-and-is-set-for-expansion>

²⁵⁷ Best practices for this are Nightstop and Emmaus. See Night Stop, UK initiative on homelessness, Home, available at www.nightstop.org.uk/; See Emmaus, international charity, What we do, available at www.emmaus.org.uk/international

²⁵⁸ FEANTSA, News: Housing First in Brno Meets Goal and is Set for Expansion, available at <http://www.feantsa.org/en/news/2018/04/11/news-housing-first-in-brno-meets-goal-and-is-set-for-expansion>

²⁵⁹ A best practice in this regard is found in Portugal. See Open Society Foundation, Drug Policy in Portugal, available at <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/drug-policy-in-portugal-english-20120814.pdf>; Global Commission on Drug Policy, The world drug perception problem, available at http://www.globalcommissionondrugs.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/GCDP-Report-2017_Perceptions-ENGLISH.pdf

- conditions that may lead to further alienation and worsening of the situation.
- Increase the provision of preventative services, such as family mediation and short respite accommodation, so that in cases where homelessness can be prevented, families are supported to work through conflict
 - Tackle gender-based violence and related gendered causes of women's homelessness, including indebtedness and a lack of access to public services, and address underlying gendered aspects of poverty and homelessness.
- **Support existing European and national strategies to end homelessness and alleviate poverty.** Volt will push for a EU strategy to end homelessness, as well as national strategies in every member state, and reinforce anti-poverty strategies. When the European Commission reviews national policies, known as the European semester,²⁶⁰ it must provide a social focus aimed at ending poverty, homelessness, and exclusion.
- **Shorten the time period until the final asylum decision is taken,** allowing asylum seekers to work from day one, and support and provide access to vocational training.²⁶¹ Work with civil society to match persons in need with housing and public services, as seen in Utrecht's Urban Innovative Action.²⁶²
- **Encourage businesses to take on long-term unemployed and/or homeless persons** by providing tax breaks and offering government subsidies.

D. Youth

- **Give access to free internet to all students,** as it can help reduce poverty through growth opportunities. Access and connectivity to technology and the internet is not only a matter of economic potential or consumer protection, but a social, cultural and economic right.²⁶³ This is why Volt wants to ensure that there are high-quality internet connections across Europe²⁶⁴ in terms of the fastest available mobile network connections and wifi, including in rural areas and marginalised communities, as soon as possible. The economic benefits of widespread connectivity should be encouraged, while provisions must be equitable, fair and universal as a merit or public good.

²⁶⁰ European Commission, The European Semester, available at https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/eu-economic-governance-monitoring-prevention-correction/european-semester_en

²⁶¹ For more details see [Asylum seekers and refugees](#)

²⁶² Urban Innovative Actions, Utrecht, available at <http://www.uia-initiative.eu/en/city/utrecht>

²⁶³ For more details see [Smart State, Guarantee Digital Right and Freedom](#)

²⁶⁴ European Commission, Connectivity for a European Gigabit Society, available at <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/policies/improving-connectivity-and-access>

- **Provide youth and students free access to participation and enjoyment of culture** by showing their national ID or any other official document that indicates their age and/or confirms student status.²⁶⁵ This includes free entry to museums, monuments, concerts, art exhibitions, music lessons, municipal theaters and cinemas.
- **Reform the European Youth Card to offer reduced prices for public and private transportation** (intercity and urban) all over the European Union in order to promote travelling, as a positive initiative that develops a pan-European identity. This card should be available for free to all young people (0-30 years old) who can prove that they face poverty around Europe. Make public transportation free for youth in vocational training and general education, and who are job-seeking.
- **Provide young people with free access to the healthcare system.**²⁶⁶ Universal access to high-quality and affordable healthcare is a basic right for everyone in Europe. Volt will set European standards for fast access to specialised healthcare and standardize preventive health care programmes for children.
- **Equalize the minimum wage for all workers above the age of 18** in order to stop the age gap of salaries. This is to discontinue the practice in some European countries in which young people (18-25 years old) are legally paid less than those above 25 years old.²⁶⁷
- **Ensure minimum child benefits all over Europe** and harmonize them to minimum standards in the EU. Universal child benefits substantially reduce child poverty. Efficient family policies, such as providing adequate child benefits, lead to better chances to secure a sustainable work-life balance and to protect children from social exclusion.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁵ Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits. This includes the right of individuals and communities to know, understand, visit, make use of, maintain, exchange and develop cultural heritage and cultural expressions, as well as to benefit from the cultural heritage and cultural expressions of others. It also includes the right to participate in the identification, interpretation and development of cultural heritage, as well as in the design and implementation of safeguarding policies and programme. See UNESCO, The right to culture, available at

http://www.unesco.org/culture/culture-sector-knowledge-management-tools/11_Info%20Sheet_Cultural%20Rights.pdf

²⁶⁶ For more details see [Smart State, Make high quality healthcare available for everyone, Provide preventive healthcare programmes for minors](#)

²⁶⁷ A wage gap still exists in some European countries, including Greece, The Netherlands, the UK, Kosovo, Andora, and Belgium. See FeDEE, Minimum Wage Rates, available at

<https://www.fedee.com/pay-job-evaluation/minimum-wage-rates/>

²⁶⁸ For more details, see [Economic Renaissance, Shape the future of work and tackle \(youth\) unemployment with innovative concepts](#)

1. Education

- **Provide free and daily school meals** to all students to break the cycle of hunger and child poverty. Access to free meals has nutritional and health benefits²⁶⁹ and supports productivity and educational success.
- **Improve the quality and accessibility of childcare services** and promote early learning programmes for children to ensure early education services and enhance children's learning skills.²⁷⁰ These should be available to all children under 6 years of age for free.
- **Encourage skill-training** (eg. woodworking, culinary, sewing, foreign languages, rhetoric, business management) while at school, aiming to develop skills that enhance human capital and lead to long-term gains in employment and standard of living.²⁷¹
- **Ensure that students have access to career guidance.** Such guidance will include opportunities available for students, including higher education and career options. Counselling will also provide an opportunity to learn about the job market.
- **Perform temporary positive discrimination to speed up economic, social, and cultural integration** (i.e., special practices aimed at fostering equality: "supporting groups of people who face, or have faced, entrenched discrimination so they can have similar access to opportunities as others in the community.")²⁷² Include special tracks and exams that reward merit among students from disadvantaged backgrounds to increase their access to good schools and universities.
- **Ensure the necessary funding goes through all levels of education** (including tertiary and vocational education), including through low or no-interest loans for students and/or their families, subsidized by governments.
- **Reduce the stigma attached to homelessness** through educational policies and by running awareness raising campaigns particularly targeted at youth.

²⁶⁹ For more information, see Sustain, Free school meals for all, available at , https://www.sustainweb.org/childrensfoodcampaign/free_school_meals/

²⁷⁰ Early learning is a term that is used to describe programmes that provide education for children outside their own home before kindergarten. See Early Learning Coalition for Osceola County, What is Early Learning?, available at <http://elcosceola.org/for-families/what-is-early-learning/>

²⁷¹ What Works in Youth Employment, Skills Training programmes, available at <http://www.wwinye.org/by-theme/skills-training/more-on-skills-training>

²⁷² Australian Human Rights Commission, Positive Discrimination, available at <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/quick-guide/12078>

III. Include everyone in society

A. Seniors

1. Intergenerational engagement

- **Introduce intergenerational/multigenerational houses** to revive the idea of interaction and mutual support between young and old. The subsidy programme for multigenerational living, run by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens and Youth (BMFSFJ), is a model that other countries should investigate. It is implemented with EU, federal, and local funding in the form of a co-financing model.²⁷³
- **Introduce state-sponsored mentoring programmes that connect retirees with young people.** Such intergenerational programmes are beneficial for both parties²⁷⁴ - young people gain attention and mentoring they often lack, while seniors benefit from learning new skills (e.g. technology) and from having company and a sense of purpose, which further tackles loneliness in seniors.²⁷⁵

2. Infrastructures

- **Ensure the capillarity of services for seniors**, including in remote locations and rural areas. This could, for example, help elderly people who wish to remain in their homes, but live outside centres of high service density.
- **Support programmes and centres for the elderly** by providing seniors with geriatric healthcare services and supporting them in activities such as trips, lifelong learning, and other such programmes. Ensure that seniors have access to goods and services, including the web. Volt will work to increase the focus on digital technological literacy education for all ages.
- **Ensure transport is accessible and affordable for seniors.**
 - Ensure that seniors can travel at a reduced cost on local public transportation.

²⁷³ European Commission: Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe, The multigenerational house model, available at

<https://ec.europa.eu/epale/en/blog/intergenerational-learning-multigenerational-house-model>; The Guardian, Germany's 'multigeneration houses' could solve two problems for Britain, available at

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/02/germany-multigeneration-house-solve-problems-britain>

²⁷⁴ Stanford, Older people offer resources that children need, Stanford report says, available at <https://news.stanford.edu/2016/09/08/older-people-offer-resource-children-need-stanford-report-says/>

²⁷⁵ Mmlearn, Improving Quality of Life for Seniors through Intergenerational Mentoring, available at <http://training.mmlearn.org/blog/improving-quality-of-life-for-seniors-through-intergenerational-mentoring>

- Provide discounts and concessions on train tickets. This would also apply for privately-owned train companies.
- Adapt public transportation so that seniors who are less mobile can freely use it. This includes requiring public transportation (e.g. buses, trams) to have wheelchair lifts and requiring every train to have at least one wheelchair-accessible railcar.

3. Work

- **Provide incentives for individuals to continue to be engaged at work**, in accordance with their ability and skills.
- **Fight discrimination based on age** in everyday life, in the workplace, and in seeking employment.²⁷⁶
- **Encourage lifelong learning to enable people to adapt to changes in the labour market and in society.**²⁷⁷ Volt supports a strategy to move ‘From an Unemployment to an Employment Insurance,’ with a reorientation towards a preventive scheme focused on maintaining employability,²⁷⁸ including for the elderly.

B. People with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)

People with SEND shall be treated with decency, and shall always have access to (basic) services. They should have access to equal opportunities in society. People with SEND are people first, with their own lives, ambitions, and hopes.

1. Education

Education should aim to promote the academic, practical, social and emotional learning of all learners. Disabled children and children with special educational needs are entitled to an education that pushes them to reach their full potential.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁶ Age Platform Europe, Active Seniot Citizens for Europe: A Guide to the EU, available at http://www.age-platform.eu/images/stories/EN/activesenior_citizens_for_europe- a_guide_to_the_eu.pdf

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ For more details see [Economic Renaissance, Shape the future of work and tackle \(youth\) unemployment with innovative concepts](#)

²⁷⁹ Council for disabled children, Education & Learning, available at <https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/our-work/education-learning>

- **Ensure that educator qualifications include special educational needs and disability training** and, where practical, placement experience in a setting caring for children with additional needs.²⁸⁰
 - Ensure educational institutions approach teaching as a learning activity, where teachers take responsibility for their lifelong learning.²⁸¹
 - Promote learner difference as an asset to education.²⁸²
 - Promote anti-bullying campaigns to promote inclusion and understanding.²⁸³
- **Create and enforce an inclusion requirement for educational facilities**, which will consist of producing information on admissions policies and making reasonable adjustments to admit children with additional needs. This requirement should be supported by clear arrangements with local authorities to provide the necessary support.
- **Ensure that families of children with SEND have access to affordable, suitable, and high-quality childcare.**²⁸⁴ In order to do this:
 - Identify where financial support must be improved to meet the extra costs of childcare for disabled children and remove barriers to access.
 - Introduce a requirement for local authorities to publish clear information on access to childcare, including support for parents and providers.
 - Ensure inclusivity is supported in mainstream schools so that children with SEND can be part of one inclusive system. This excludes cases where children would benefit more from specialised institutions.
- **Ensure data (including statistical and research data) is collected in a holistic manner** to enable states to formulate appropriate policies, while complying with legal safeguards and international norms to protect human rights in the collection and use of statistics.

²⁸⁰ European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, Five Key Messages for Inclusive Education: Putting theory into practice, available at <https://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/Five%20Key%20Messages%20for%20Inclusive%20Education.pdf>

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ An example of this is the “All Together School” initiative, which has proven to reduce bullying of all children. The All Together programme builds upon the work of the Anti-Bullying Alliance’s previous SEND anti-bullying champion programme which saw significant positive results. Participating schools are supported on- and offline to make whole-school changes to anti-bullying practices. See Anti-bullying Alliance, The All Together Anti-Bullying programme for Schools, available at <http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/aba-our-work/our-programmes/all-together-anti-bullying-programme-schools>

²⁸⁴ In 2014, Every Disabled Child Matters launched a new campaign called Levelling the Playing Field following an independent parliamentary inquiry into childcare for disabled children and those with Special Educational Needs. See Council for Disabled Children, Leveling the Playing Field: One Year Update, available at

<https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/help-resources/resources/levelling-playing-field-one-year-update>

2. Health and Wellbeing

- **Destigmatize mental health** by:
 - Easing access to mental health care.
 - Openly discussing mental illness in education and at work.
 - Incentivizing schools and companies to provide mental health support.
- **Ensure that people with SEND, their next of kin and carers explore and understand their rights** and how to navigate the healthcare system.²⁸⁵ This could include face-to-face training, online modules and online resources. Provide criteria for quality (a set of non-mandatory standards to delivering health services) so that healthcare providers can assess how their provisions meet the needs and preferences of people with SEND.²⁸⁶
- **Draft and enforce minimum standards for psychiatric hospitals, rehabilitation centers, and other hospitals** with longer-term patients, which should include but not be limited to:
 - Providing support to people with SEND.²⁸⁷
 - Systematically involving people with SEND in planning and managing their own healthcare, when possible.
 - Ensuring health professionals have training on how to communicate with people with learning difficulties and communication impairments.²⁸⁸

3. Into Adulthood

²⁸⁵ The Get Your Rights project helps children and young people explore their rights and become more confident when using the NHS, by explaining what the rights in the NHS Constitution mean for them through a website, workshop resources, and research papers. See Get Your Rights, Everything you need to get the most out of the NHS, available at <http://www.getyourrights.org/>

²⁸⁶ Based on 'You're Welcome - Quality Criteria for Young People Friendly Health Service' policy paper. See Gov.uk, Quality criteria for young people friendly health services, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/quality-criteria-for-young-people-friendly-health-services>

²⁸⁷ The Special Educational Consortium (SEC) campaigned for young people in custody to receive support while they are detained. See Council for Disabled Children, Our work, available at <https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/special-educational-consortium/our-work>.

²⁸⁸ A best practice in this regard is the "Managing My Way" project. See Council for Disabled Children, Managing my Way, available at <https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/help-resources/resources/managing-my-way-report>

- **Ensure services facilitate the successful transition of young people with complex health needs from childhood to adulthood.**²⁸⁹ Transitional care should be commissioned collaboratively by child and adult services.²⁹⁰
- **Support mid-sized to large companies to make work experience schemes fully inclusive**, so that people with special education needs and disabilities have opportunities to join the workforce and are supported to take up these opportunities.

4. Participation

- **Ensure the accessibility of public transportation** everywhere and support a barrier-free transport (e.g., barrier free underground/ metro services, regular transportation in rural areas, etc). People with SEND should be involved in planning decisions about local and accessible public transport, so that transport issues do not become a barrier to people's participation.
- **Set minimum quotas across the private and public sector** (mid-sized to large companies) to ensure that people with SEND are given the chance to work. If quotas are not met, companies should provide and contribute to vocational programmes to integrate people with disabilities. Give benefits to companies that employ people with disabilities and tax breaks to companies focusing on technological innovation for those in need.
- **Promote the supported employment model**, which is an individualised model to ensure people with SEND secure and retain employment. Using a collaborative strategy, the model allows people with SEND to sustain employment and businesses to employ valuable worker.²⁹¹
- **Ensure that people with SEND are included in political decision-making processes**. Provide clear guidance on how to involve people with SEND in strategic decision making, which should include indicators to measure the performance of the development of inclusive participation opportunities.²⁹²

²⁸⁹ Transition is the "purposeful, planned process that addresses the medical, psychosocial, educational and vocational needs of adolescents and young adults with chronic medical and physical conditions as they move from child-centred to adult oriented healthcare systems." See Blum RW, Garell D, Hodgman CH, et al. Transition from child-centred to adult health-care systems for adolescents with chronic conditions. A position paper of the Society for Adolescent Medicine. J Adolesc Health. 1993;14:570–6.

²⁹⁰ Following the example of Transition Information Network submitted to UK's Department of Health. See Transition Information Network, Implications for the Department of Health, available at <https://research.ncl.ac.uk/media/sites/researchwebsites/transitionprogramme/Implications%20for%20Department%20of%20Health.docx>

²⁹¹ European Union of Supported Employment, European Union of Supported Employment Toolkit, available at <http://www.euse.org/content/supported-employment-toolkit/EUSE-Toolkit-2010.pdf>

²⁹² This is based off the VIPER recommendations. VIPER is a three-year project which started in summer 2010, and set out to explore disabled children and young people's participation in decision making about services. See Council for disabled children, VIPER, available at

5. Social Care

- **Establish a new statutory right to a period of ‘adjustment leave’** to enable parents to cope with the onset of a disability in a child and put care arrangements in place.
 - Provide support to families from the time of diagnosis that their child has a learning disability.²⁹³ This could include a key worker to support the family, and it is particularly important if the parent/carer has SEND needs themselves.

6. Holistic approach

- **Provide guidance and funding** to ensure provisions such as leisure centres, after school clubs and holiday play schemes can accommodate people with special educational needs and disabilities. This includes training staff, ensure buildings are accessible, and activities are differentiated.
- **Ensure co-ordination and co-operation among services** (such as social care services, education, hospitals, transportation etc) to ensure a holistic approach and good communication between the key stakeholders.

C. Child in care

Every child deserves a home and an opportunity to live a happy life. Institutions, or orphanages, across Europe are proving to be insufficient to accommodate and address the needs of children who were placed under the care of the state.²⁹⁴ Deinstitutionalisation is a process of replacing institutional care for children with care in a family or family-like environment. The main focus should therefore be placed on supporting adoption policies and reforming the current institutional system. Poverty and social exclusion among families is a driving force of children's institutionalisation - many children placed in orphanages have parents - therefore our children's care policy goes hand in hand with our policy on the alleviation of poverty.

<https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/our-work/participation/policy/research-young-peoples-participation-local-decisions-viper>

²⁹³ The Foundation for People With Learning Disabilities' First Impressions research project (Davies, J., (2005) First Impressions London: The Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities) emphasised the shortcomings in how professionals share the new's child's disability. Nearly 50% of participants in the study reported a poor experience. If there is good information and emotional and practical support, this will impact positively on the future of people with learning disabilities and their families.

²⁹⁴ Opening Doors for Europe's Children, Institutional Care in Europe, available at <http://www.openingdoors.eu/institutional-care-in-europe/>

- **Give the opportunity to adopt a child to every adult** - regardless of their gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status - based on the same criteria as those imposed on heterosexual couples, according to local law.
- **Enable children to have more than two legal parents** if it is in the best interest of the child.²⁹⁵ Typical examples of this include a child raised by both their biological parents and by a third person who equally cares for the child, who could be a step-parent or a person who is also considered by the child to be a parent.
- **Reform existing institutional care systems** to improve the quality of care, including re-training and training staff, supporting independent living skills and personalised transition plans, and strengthening existing services.²⁹⁶ Increase public spending to strengthen such institutions and ensure they are of the highest quality.
- **Transition from institutional care to family and community care** (deinstitutionalisation), with a focus on the integration of children into communities and wider society to avoid segregation and social exclusion.²⁹⁷

IV. Own your body

A. Sex Work

Legalize sex work, while heavily regulating the profession.

- **Legalise sex work**, and ensure that safe working places exist; such as brothels.
- **Ensure that sex workers get insurance, healthcare and other standard protections.**

²⁹⁵ A best practice example is California. See SB-274 Family law: parentage: child custody and support, available at https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201320140SB274. To understand better the issues linked to this subject, see Youtube, Should three-parent families be legally recognised? See The Economist, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lIBtgXO3taw>; Boston.com, Courts and 'tri-parenting': A state-by-state look, available at <https://www.boston.com/news/national-news/2017/06/18/courts-and-tri-parenting-a-state-by-state-look>

²⁹⁶ Opening Doors for Europe's Children, Poverty remains a Europe-wide cause of children's institutionalisation, campaign's latest fact sheets reveal available at <http://www.openingdoors.eu/opening-doors-for-europe-s-children-releases-latest-fact-sheets-from-15-countries/>

²⁹⁷ Receiving community-based services provides an opportunity to have adequate individual support that institutional care often cannot provide, and as a consequence, a good quality of life and the right to independent living. See European Commision, Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, available at <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1246&furtherNews=yes&langId=en&newsId=9056>

- **Address violence**, trafficking, and ensure access to legal services

B. Ending life with dignity

Ending life is a profound existential process that cannot be reduced to a mere medical procedure.

Volt believes that every person has the right to determine how to end their life with dignity, as long as no other person's life is harmed. A wide range of support should be available and accessible for those people seeking help, in addition to medical attention, e.g. palliative medicine to alleviate pain, hospices to offer psychological or spiritual support, or flexible work-time to allow family members to care for dying relatives. In particularly grave situations of "constant and unbearable physical or mental suffering that cannot be alleviated,"²⁹⁸ a person may seek assistance to terminate their life, and deserves to be supported to do so with dignity.

We distinguish three forms of terminating life upon request:

- **Passive Euthanasia:** Passive euthanasia occurs when the person dies because the medical professionals either don't do something necessary to keep the person alive, or when they stop doing something that is keeping the person alive, such as switch off life-support machines, disconnect a feeding tube, don't carry out a life-extending operation, or don't give life-extending drugs.²⁹⁹
- **Assisted Suicide:** A person makes the request out of their free will, not coerced or pressured by other persons, and with full conviction, to take their life, and seeks professional (typically doctor's) assistance. Before undertaking Assisted Suicide, the person should first be given the opportunity to explore other life and death options available. To the very end, the person stays in full control of the process and is solely responsible for their death. The physician role is to supply, but not to administer, the lethal drug.
- **Active Euthanasia:** Active euthanasia occurs, when a doctor, or another person, intentionally administers a fatal dose of a medication to cause the patient's death at the patient's request and with full, informed consent.³⁰⁰ The main difference to assisted suicide is, that active euthanasia is entirely physician-mediated, including administration of the lethal dose, whereas persons committing assisted suicide administer the lethal dose to themselves.

²⁹⁸ The Belgian Act on Euthanasia of May, 28th 2002, available at <http://www.ethical-perspectives.be/viewpic.php?TABLE=EP&ID=59>

²⁹⁹ BBC, Ethics Guide, Active and Passive Euthanasia, available at http://www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/euthanasia/overview/activepassive_1.shtml

³⁰⁰ Michael Manning, Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Suicide: Killing or Caring?, 1998, p.3, available at https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=t1THVkQPbfsC&printsec=copyright&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false

Volt stands for the following policies:

➤ **Legalize passive euthanasia.**

- Also legalize living wills to guide decision on passive euthanasia for people who wish passive euthanasia to be performed if they ever find themselves in a particular situation which they now regard as unbearable and offering no prospect of improvement (e.g. dementia) and in which the person is incapacitated to make a decision her/himself.³⁰¹

➤ **Legalize assisted suicide for competent adult who suffer from "constant and unbearable physical or mental suffering that cannot be alleviated". Ensure that the following criteria are met before allowing assisted suicide:**

- The person is a competent adult who suffers from "constant and unbearable physical or mental suffering that cannot be alleviated".
- The person undergoes an ex-ante evaluation with at least two independent doctors and one psychiatrist, that need to confirm the person is a competent adult who suffers from "constant and unbearable physical or mental suffering that cannot be alleviated," and that the person is making the request out of their own free will, not coerced or pressured by other persons.
- The person's request must be made earnestly and with full conviction, as determined during the ex-ante evaluation.
- If the person is a minor, only allow assisted suicide in exceptional circumstances, with the consent of parents if they are younger than 16 years, and with the parents at least informed, if they are under 18, and a confirmation by at least two independent doctors and one psychiatrist that the minor is competent to take such a decision.

➤ Ensure that during the procedure,

- the person stays in full control of the process. Indeed, the physician's role is to supply, but not to administer, the lethal drug.
- family and friends are allowed to be present if the patient chooses so.

➤ Put in place an ex post committee to review all cases of assisted suicide, comprised of at least a medical expert, an ethicist and a legal expert. Every instance of assisted suicide must be reported.

➤ Make publicly available information of doctors willing to assist. Ensure that no doctor is forced to take part in such procedure.

➤ **Strictly oppose active euthanasia, with one exception:**

- Allow active euthanasia only when a person fulfills all the conditions for assisted suicide (see provisions above) but is **physically handicapped** in such a way that makes it impossible for the person to administer the legal

³⁰¹ In fact, a living will need not block treatment, but could also specify that doctors must continue treatment until the patient is dead, regardless of pain or suffering. See BBC, Ethics Guide, Living wills, available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/euthanasia/overview/livingwills.shtml>

- dose themselves. Ensure that the doctor's intervention is as limited as Possible.
- **Volt opposes the legalization of active euthanasia**, as it is a highly controversial issue that raises ethical and legal issues, in particular the fact that another party performs the act of taking the life of a person.

C. Reproductive rights

The right to health includes women's sexual and reproductive rights, which States have an obligation to respect, protect and guarantee. Women are entitled to reproductive health care services, goods, and facilities that are (a) available in adequate amounts; (b) accessible physically and economically; (c) accessible without discrimination; and (d) of good quality.³⁰²

Access to health services is a human right. However, women are often either denied this right or have limited access to it, especially when it comes to abortion or contraception.

1. Abortion

- **Make abortion accessible in the law and practice, and free** for all women at least until the end of the first trimester.³⁰³
 - Ensure that abortions are not only legal, but also accessible. This means that health centers and hospitals should offer the procedures across regions, and that there are no unreasonably long waiting lists.
 - Ensure that women have knowledge of, and access to, all possible types of abortion.
- **Make abortions accessible at a later stage as well, when a continued pregnancy would endanger the health of the mother or when the fetus is not viable.**

³⁰² According to the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. See UNGA, The right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health A/61/338, available at <http://undocs.org/en/A/61/338>

³⁰³ 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/polish-parliament-must-protect-womens-health-and-rights>.

Additionally, abortions need to be accessible in practice, because despite the fact that abortion is legal in certain countries, it is not always accessible. Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, Portugal, and Spain are some of the countries with tight regulations regarding abortion, including extended waiting periods, counseling sessions and high prices. See abortion-clinics.eu/abortion-europe/restrictive-access-foreign-women/

- **Remove undue burdens on women** such as “cooling off periods”, parental consent, spousal or partner consent, multiple appointments necessitating multiple days off, etc.
 - For women under the age of 16, no parental consent is necessary, but an adult needs to be present.³⁰⁴
 - Enough doctors, hospitals, clinics and others need to provide abortions, so that it is not only legal but easily accessible.

2. Contraception

- **Ensure that women have access to the morning after pill without a prescription** from a doctor, that pharmacies are required to sell them, and that it is reimbursed by public healthcare.
- **Ensure that women have access to doctors to be prescribed contraceptive means.** Require pharmacies to sell the various contraceptives methods, and for those to be reimbursed by public healthcare.
- **Reform the healthcare system so that all contraception is reimbursed** by providers of healthcare and services upon request, without any need to report patient age.

3. Education

- **Introduce accurate, mandatory classes on sexual reproductive health and rights in schools.** Establish a European standard for the curricula and ensure that schools comply with it.³⁰⁵
- Ensure that hospitals offer **free educational information and/or programmes on sexual reproductive health and rights**, and that women are informed about their rights, contraception, and protection against sexually transmitted diseases.

³⁰⁴A best practice in this regard is France. See IVG.gouv.fr, L'IVG pour mineures : comment ça se passe?, available at

<https://ivg.gouv.fr/l-ivg-pour-mineures-comment-ca-se-passe.html>

³⁰⁵The Council of Europe emphasized that sex education is one of the most critical issues in guaranteeing women's sexual and reproductive health. Nonetheless, even if some countries have established sex education in schools the information provided is not medically "accurate, scientific and age-appropriate" in a number of states or is focused on a "preparation for family life", according to the Council. In addition, in Bulgaria, Lithuania, Poland and Romania, sex education either remains voluntary or policies allow children to be withdrawn from classes. See EUobserver, Council of Europe warns on backlash to abortion access, available at <https://euobserver.com/health/140158>

D. Surrogacy³⁰⁶

Surrogacy is a method of assisted reproduction. There are two types of surrogacy arrangements: gestational surrogacy, where the embryo is created via *in vitro* fertilization (IVF) using the eggs and sperm of the intended parents or donors, and traditional surrogacy, where the surrogate mother uses her own egg and is artificially inseminated using sperm from the intended father or a donor. A surrogacy agreement can be altruistic or commercial. Surrogacy is already legal in some European countries, including in the UK, Denmark, Ireland, Belgium, Greece and the Netherlands, given that the surrogate does not receive any financial benefit.³⁰⁷

- **Legalize surrogacy agreements when they are altruistic** (not counting reimbursement of expenses)
- **Research potential ways to legalize commercial surrogacy agreements**, while ensuring that it does not increase the power of black markets.

³⁰⁶ Best practices include South Africa, California, New Hampshire, The Netherlands

³⁰⁷ See Sensible Surrogacy, Surrogacy Laws Around the World, available at <http://www.sensiblesurrogacy.com/surrogacy-law-worldwide/>

Challenge 4 - Global Balance

Vision

In today's interconnected world, and given the recent developments in the international policy arena, Europe needs to re-assume its responsibility to take on global challenges. These challenges are diverse and manifold including topics such as climate change, international fair trade, sustainable farming, food security, biodiversity, migration issues, and international development cooperation. All proposals outlined hereunder are underscored by Volt's political values of "Equal opportunities, Justice, Liberty, Human Dignity, Sustainability, and Solidarity". Inspired by our pan-European members at Volt, "Volt Global Balance" proposes progressive, bold, pragmatic, and human-centered policies, with short-, medium- and long-term changes. Ultimately, our goals are to hasten the global eradication of poverty, to be quicker in moving towards a circular economy, to ensure that international trade is done in a free, fair and sustainable manner, and to put human rights first and opportunistic and national interests second.

I. Green issues

Green issues are as important for global balance as they are diverse, encompassing various issues such as clean energy, climate change, the circular economy, sustainable farming and food processing, environmental protection, pollution prevention, and biodiversity. Volt fully supports the process of transforming the world by implementing the UN Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as the Paris Climate Agreement as endorsed by global leaders in late 2015.

A. Clean energy and climate change

Since the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement,³⁰⁸ the shift towards a more desirable, climate-responsible world has already started. However, it needs to be much faster and bolder.³⁰⁹ Because the problem is structural, it needs to be addressed in a systematic way by taking comprehensive steps. Therefore, strong commitments and actions from

³⁰⁸ As of February 2018, the Paris Climate Agreement has been ratified by 174 of 197 parties to the Convention. It sets targets such as "keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius." See the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), eHandbook on the UN Climate Change Regime, available at

<http://bigpicture.unfccc.int/#content-the-paris-agreement>

³⁰⁹ Ecological footprint on our continent is double its land area and the EU relies heavily on import of resources. See European Environment Agency, Resource efficiency, available at

<https://www.eea.europa.eu/soer-2015/europe/resource-efficiency>

all stakeholders across Europe are needed to achieve the targets set by the Paris Climate Agreement. Ultimately, Volt's vision is to live in a world in which climate responsibility is part of the solution. Volt envisions a world where individuals, corporations and public entities take more responsibility for the future of our planet. Economic profit and growth should not prevail over the well-being of people and the environment. Volt supports progressive policies that are taking the climate revolution to the next stage at the local, European, and global level.

1. EU-wide Carbon Tax

➤ **Introduce an EU-wide Carbon Tax.**³¹⁰ This would result in clear incentives for climate-friendly solutions and discourage the production and consumption of carbon-intensive products.

- Reducing CO₂ emissions must be a high priority.³¹¹ The existing measures, such as the recently reformed EU Carbon Trading Scheme, are not sufficient.
- In practice, a carbon tax would favour renewable energy over fossil fuels, and thus sustainable transportation over carbon-intensive ones.
- The tax needs to be carefully designed to make sure that no one is unduly burdened. National governments should ensure that their social welfare programmes consider the increase in cost of energy, transport, meat, heating, etc., that the carbon tax requires.
- The tax revenue and the cost savings from the reduced subsidies shall be used directly to fund relevant climate mitigation and adaptation projects.
- To avoid penalising the European industry, the carbon tax shall also be applied to imports from outside the EU.
- Advocating for a wider uptake of this policy instrument by non-European countries is crucial, it will contribute to achieve a real "global balance".

2. Stop subsidies for fossil-based fuels³¹²

³¹⁰ British Columbia, Canada, has put a price on burning fuels and introduced successfully a Carbon Tax, available at

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/climate-change/planning-and-action/carbon-tax>; and
<http://institute.smartprosperity.ca/sites/default/files/publications/files/British%20Columbia's%20Carbon%20Tax%20Shift.pdf>

³¹¹ See Allianz Environment Foundation, booklet on climate issues (in German), available at
https://umweltstiftung.allianz.de/v_1479811662000/media-data2/publikationen/wissen/download/wissen_klima_2016.pdf

³¹² A policy is being developed on the issue of Nuclear Energy and not part of the current version of this programme.

- **Stop subsidising fossil-based fuels.** Kerosene, diesel, coal and other fossil-based fuels, currently amounting to as much as €200 billion per year,³¹³ need to be phased out as efficiently and as quickly as possible.³¹⁴
- **Prohibit new permits to drill for fossil fuels.** To limit warming to +2°C, 80% of all known fossil fuel reserves should be left in the ground.³¹⁵

3. Strengthen the Energy Efficiency Directive goals and extend its scope

- **Increase the level of ambition of the energy saving target to a binding 40%** (of final energy consumption in 2030 against a business-as-usual scenario).
 - The current goal of a 30% binding target to 2030 is considered not ambitious enough to deliver the full benefits of energy efficiency.³¹⁶ A higher goal would unlock secure investments and jobs for years to come. Furthermore energy efficiency would reduce both emissions and energy dependence.
- **Extend energy efficiency obligations to the transport sector:**
 - The Energy Efficiency Obligation scheme would target transportation to discourage the use of fossil fuels, which is currently the main energy source for this sector.³¹⁷ Efficiency in the transportation sector includes RES integration (biofuels and electric motors), and may ultimately promote the use of public transportation.

4. Smart electricity grids

- **Support enhanced research on the development of smart electricity grids at the European level.** This is necessary to ensure the development of a stable and clean energy system. Moving towards renewable energies means that energy systems will rely more and more on volatile electricity generation.

³¹³ European Parliament, Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department, Economic and Scientific Policy, Analysis on Fossil Fuel Subsidies, available at [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2017/595372/IPOL_IDA\(2017\)595372_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2017/595372/IPOL_IDA(2017)595372_EN.pdf)

³¹⁴ The IEA estimates that even a partial phase-out of fossil fuel subsidies by 2020 would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 12% of the needed reduction to hold a temperature rise to 2 degrees. See European Parliament, Directorate General for Internal Policies; Policy Department A: Economic and Scientific Policy: Fossil Fuel Subsidies; IP/A/ENVI 2016-18-REV; PE 595.372, 2017, available at [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2017/595372/IPOL_IDA\(2017\)595372_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2017/595372/IPOL_IDA(2017)595372_EN.pdf)

³¹⁵ IPCC, Climate Change 2014, Mitigation of Climate Change, Contribution of Working Group III to the Fifth Assessment Report, Chapter on Energy Systems, available at http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/wg3/ipcc_wg3_ar5_chapter7.pdf

³¹⁶ ECOFYS, Update to the Study “Impact assessment of EU 2030 energy efficiency targets in the context of the Energy Union & Energy Efficiency First”, available at <https://www.ecofys.com/files/files/ecofys-ces-2017-impact-assessment-eed.pdf>

³¹⁷ IEA, Energy Efficiency 2017, available at http://www.iea.org/publications/freepublications/publication/Energy_Efficiency_2017.pdf

Therefore, Volt advocates for the need to integrate electric storage systems, such as batteries, compressed air reservoirs, or power to gas systems (P2G) more efficiently in our European grids.

- **Promote enhanced and harmonised financing of relevant infrastructure** for centralised and decentralised energy solutions.
- **Introduce an EU-wide infrastructure of high Voltage “electricity-motorways”** and storage systems funded by the EU budget.³¹⁸

5. Responsible public and private financing

- **Incentivise institutional investors and the financial sector to shift resources away from fossil fuels towards climate-friendly solutions.**³¹⁹ All public administrations, pension funds, etc. need to gradually take their funds out of fossil fuels.
- **Incentivize divestment strategies** at the national level consistently across Europe.
- **Support research, training and capacity-building programmes for investors and business professionals** to encourage corporate social responsibility together with effective and efficient financing for the climate revolution. Support the creation of such training schemes for responsible public and private financing.

6. Sustainable transportation and environmentally-friendly travelling

- **Incentivise emission-free and shared mobility, and environmentally-friendly travelling.** Support all measures and initiatives encouraging consumers to choose sustainable means of transportation and reduce their carbon footprint. A coherent set of policies shall be developed considering the following issues:
 - Extend the ban on diesel cars by 2040 across Europe as long as toxic emissions cannot be drastically reduced by means of new technologies.

³¹⁸ Experience gathered from research projects such as “Interflex” shall be useful in order to guide smart grid development and implementation. See Interflex, Interactions between automated energy systems and Flexibilities brought by energy market players, available at <http://interflex-h2020.com/>. Volt also welcomes other initiatives funded by the EU, such as NETfficient, to develop new smart storage technologies, and to transition to sustainable and climate friendly energy systems. See InvestEU,a Storage and supply project launched on a small North Sea island, available at https://europa.eu/investeu/projects/energy-borkum-gets-smarter_en; NETfficient, Home, available at <http://netfficient-project.eu/>

³¹⁹ Such as shifting towards a low-carbon economy, climate risk resilience, and environmental expertise on corporate boards.

- The transportation systems in Europe shall be modernised, both for short and long distances. This includes the promotion of innovative road charge solutions³²⁰ as well as the development of coherent re-charging station networks throughout Europe, which are, at the moment, depending on region, quite deficient.
- Sustainable public transport holds great potential for reducing emissions of greenhouse gases at the local level.
- The shift from fuel and pistons to batteries and electric motors and other emission-free solutions shall be incentivized, e.g. by establishing relevant infrastructure in cities, creating bicycle-friendly zones and bike lanes, promoting sharing solutions, introducing free public parking slots for electric cars, further developing clean energy solutions independent from fossil fuels, etc.
- Education and awareness-raising initiatives on environmentally friendly travelling shall be promoted, such as #FreelInterrail or Shift2Rail.

7. Low-carbon and disruptive technologies

- **Promote low-carbon and disruptive technologies, such as sustainable chemistry concepts and bio-based solutions.** Shifting from theory and prototypes to large-scale applications is crucial.
- **Advocate for green public procurement standards** to help accelerate the adoption of low carbon technologies and set an example.

8. Modernise our buildings³²¹

- **Promote cost-effective energy efficiency measures**,³²² and develop standards to support the integration of renewable energy generation into the design of new buildings (exemplified by the UN building in Copenhagen)³²³ to shift towards carbon-neutrality in the construction sector. Volt wants to support sustainable and resource efficient building and living research, and enforce the European legislation on “Clean Energy for All Europeans”³²⁴ by restoring and modernising older buildings and designing new buildings to save energy and water.

³²⁰ Best practice example of Sweden. Information available at

<https://www.electrive.com/2018/04/18/eroadarlanda-swedish-road-charges-evs-while-driving/>

³²¹ Heating, cooling, and lighting of buildings account for a large part of total energy consumption (e.g. in Germany this constitutes 24% of the energy consumption), and most of this energy comes from burning fossil fuels (90% in Germany). See Anwendungsbilanzen für die Endenergiesektoren in Deutschland in den Jahren 2013 bis 2016, Arbeitsgemeinschaft Energiebilanzen e.V., Berlin, November 2017.

³²² For example: better insulation, temperature regulating systems, thermal solar energy for warm water, and higher efficiency equipment, including green heat pumps.

³²³ Best practice example from UNOPS in Denmark. Information available at

<https://stateofgreen.com/en/news/un-opens-green-headquarters-in-copenhagen>

³²⁴ European Commission, 2016, Communication on Clean Energy For All Europeans, available at

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52016DC0860>

B. Circular Economy

We exploit, create value, and then waste. This is how our current economic model works, and it is absolutely unsustainable. It is unfair to those who are affected by inhumane working conditions or poisoned living areas. It is also unfair to future generations, who will not be able to use the resources that we are wasting. Let's work to change this by moving toward a circular economy. More precisely, this means that Volt wants to solve the waste problem in Europe and stop plastic-based pollution. Volt promotes a world where economies are based on longevity, renewability, and dematerialisation. Concerted action is needed across Europe to take global responsibility for our actions, and to establish the right framework of conditions so that principles of a circular economy are consistently applied by all relevant stakeholders. There are already a number of instruments known or in place that describe how a transition towards the circular economy can be achieved, including:

- incentivising the mainstreaming and up-taking of innovative circular economy business models and technologies;
- considering new pricing models and price caps;
- Introducing enhanced control mechanisms; and
- stimulating transparency initiatives to facilitate market entry for new players.

In this regard, Volt builds on the 2015 EU Circular Economy Action Plan³²⁵ and welcomes current initiatives such as The New Plastics Economy.³²⁶ However, we can all do more and better: politicians, scientists, industries, and also consumers. The following list of actions reflect our priorities to kick-start the circular economy in Europe grouped by different stakeholders.

- **Help SMEs to successfully move toward the circular economy.** For example, producers and service providers developing and implementing goods and services with longer usability and useful after-lives shall benefit from harmonised tax incentives and speedier regulatory processes.
- **Facilitate the compliance of big corporations with the circular economy** by using more ambitious regulation, enhanced information technology, new incentive models, and close-the-loop systems. Funds shall be made available for rethinking the design and digitalisation of organisations and services.
- **Advance the circular economy by moving public authorities' towards more sustainable consumption patterns:** Promote Green Public Procurement³²⁷

³²⁵ European Commission, the Circular Economy Action Plan, available at <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/circular-economy/>

³²⁶ Ellen Mac Arthur Foundation, The New Plastics Economy, available at <https://newplasticseconomy.org/>

³²⁷ Green Public Procurement, or green purchasing, refers to the concept of using public authorities' purchasing power to choose environmentally friendly goods, services and works, which can

measures, e.g. by implementing new concepts for governmental car fleets and car sharing of employees in the public sector.

- **Promote consumer awareness on the circular economy and of supply chains** at various levels to enable conscientious consumerism to combat corruption, inhumane working conditions, environmental destruction, child labour, deforestation and resource scarcity. Therefore:
 - Introduce an eco-label that is strictly related to the circular economy in order to promote products issued from circular industrial processes.
 - Promote sharing economies.
- **Support largely scientific research** on circular economy solutions.

In addition, Volt advocates for a couple of policy proposals addressing the circular economy issue from a system's/ multi-stakeholder perspective:

- **Ensure fair-trade and foster efficient use and recycling of critical raw materials**, a priority area in the EU circular economy action plan, in line with the European Commission's list of critical raw materials.³²⁸
- **Advocate for the implementation of harmonised circular economy solutions across Europe**, e.g. by
 - developing one coherent European system for bottle recycling;
 - developing standardised household waste management regulations and enforcement;
 - replicating best practices in sustainable waste management, e.g. the success story of Greece's first-ever integrated waste management centre³²⁹, especially with an eye on regions particularly affected by waste issues and pollution;
 - incentivising take-back systems (systems where producers take a product back from consumers after the end of its lifetime for proper disposal, reuse or recycling) with an emphasis on extended producer responsibility;³³⁰

make an important contribution to sustainable consumption and production. More information available at http://ec.europa.eu/environment/gpp/index_en.htm

³²⁸ EU Commission's Report on Critical Raw Materials and the Circular Economy, 2018, available at <http://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/27348>

³²⁹ "An integrated waste management system for West Macedonia" is an EU-funded project which created 140 permanent jobs and can manage 120,000 tonnes of waste a year. See investEU, West Macedonia waste management, available at

https://europa.eu/investeu/projects/west-macedonia-waste-management_en.

³³⁰ According to EU DG Environment 2014, Development of Guidance on Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), Extended producer responsibility is an environmental policy approach in which a producer's responsibility for a product is extended to the post-consumer stage of a product's life cycle. See European Commission, Development of Guidance on Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), available at

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/waste/pdf/target_review/Guidance%20on%20EPR%20-%20Final%20Report.pdf

- Redesigning regulations on secondary raw material usage and recycling to achieve a coherent system where sustainability principles are applied consistently.
- **Take concerted action to move away from a plastic-based society** and provide broad financial and political support to successfully implement the new EU Strategy for plastics in the circular economy.^{331,332} Volt will:
- Support enhanced research looking at the entire product life cycle starting from new materials to waste recovery and design and advocate for policy instruments catalysing quick adoption of more sustainable materials and technologies across industries;
 - Raise consumer awareness and build capacity among stakeholders;
 - Promote innovative waste management approaches (e.g. solutions to collect the plastic waste from lakes, rivers, oceans and beaches³³³);
 - Support best practices and current EU policy proposals to create a less plastics-dependent future such as:
 - Banning the sale of single-use plastic cutlery, trays and cups across all EU Member States and considering additional bans of certain products if appropriate.
 - Banning disposable packaging in public buildings.
 - Obliging the use of reusable items at large public and private events.³³⁴
 - Examine additional policies and regulatory actions, including a tax for plastics and packaging.

C. Sustainable Farming and Food Security³³⁵

The current agriculture sector in Europe is characterised by either high efficiency or sustainability. Agriculture of the future must address issues such as food security for a rising population, climate change, low biodiversity, high nitrate levels in groundwater,

³³¹ European Commission 2018, A European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy, available at <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/circular-economy/pdf/plastics-strategy.pdf>

³³² According to the European Commission, Europe is discarding more than 2 billion tons per year. If we continued at this rate, there will be more plastic in the oceans than fish by 2050, says the Ellen MacArthur Foundation in The New Plastics Economy: Rethinking the future of plastics, available at <https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/publications/the-new-plastics-economy-rethinking-the-future-of-plastics>

³³³ Just to give one non-representative example for such solutions: The Waste Free Oceans Initiative collaborates with fishermen and brand owners to collect and upcycle ocean plastic into new products, information available at <https://www.wastefreeoceans.org/>

³³⁴ These best practices have been implemented in Navarra, Hamburg and Vienna. They all refer to the new EU Strategy for plastics in the circular economy. See European Commission, A European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy, available at

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1516265440535&uri=SWD:2018:16:FIN>

³³⁵ A policy is being developed on the issues of Sustainable Fishing and Animal Rights and not part of the current version of this programme.

and a foreseeable phosphorus deficiency. Volt intends to put forward effective ideas and implement more sustainable farming across Europe. Food security needs to be ensured across Europe and beyond, and a comprehensive strategy on efficient and sustainable production and distribution of food is therefore needed.

1. Sustainable farming

- **Develop a new system for the support of farms that are strongly committed to sustainability and product quality** instead of keeping the current unfair and unbalanced subsidy system in European agricultural sectors across Europe. Certain subsidies may be part of solution, but other reforms and incentives are urgently needed. Agriculture subsidies that focus only on production and favor large producers must be discontinued.
- **Establish pre-emptive rights of farmers to farmland to minimize agricultural land trade.**
- **Volt supports the ongoing testing and evaluation of agricultural land to ensure farming is sustainable and does not deplete the land or devastate its surrounding areas and waterways.**³³⁶
- **Advance the closing of the nutrient cycle.** Effective resource management includes a closed nutrient cycle and minimal use of mineral fertilizers. This leads to a reduction of agricultural greenhouse gas emissions (like nitrogen oxides). Therefore, Volt will propose the following measures:
 - Promote the recovery of phosphorus from the sewage sludge.³³⁷
 - Use individual plant-oriented fertilizer application techniques, catch crops, and green manure to minimize nitrogen input into the soil and leaching.³³⁸
 - Store liquid manure surpluses in form of fertilizer pellets.
 - Support pesticide-free hydroponic production with closed water and nutrient cycles.³³⁹
 - Introduce peat alternatives for horticultural substrates, like coconut fibers and compost. The extraction of peat leads to the release of climate-damaging carbon dioxide. Additionally, the increased use of compost substrates closes the nutrient cycle.³⁴⁰

³³⁶ Bai, Z. 2018, Effects of agricultural management practices on soil quality: A review of long-term experiments for Europe and China, available at <http://www.isqaper-project.eu/>

³³⁷ Egle, L. 2016, Phosphorus recovery from municipal wastewater: An integrated comparative technological, economic assessment of P recovery technologies, available at <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0048969716314656>

³³⁸ Kirchmann, H. 2002, Possibilities for reducing nitrate leaching from agricultural land, available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12374048>

³³⁹ Sardare, M.D. 2013: A review of plant without soil - hydroponics, available at <https://ijret.org/volumes/2013v02/I03/IJRET20130203013.pdf>

³⁴⁰ Schmielewski G. 2008: The role of peat in assuring the quality of growing media, available at http://pixelrauschen.de/wbmp/media/map03/map_03_02.pdf

- **Create species-appropriate livestock farming measures to address current problems:**
 - Promote livestock farming with species-appropriate herd sizes, adequate space, and the integration of playthings.
 - Stop preventive use of antibiotics in livestock farming.
 - In case of disease-related use of antibiotics, it has to be ensured that only non-reserve human antibiotics are used.
 - Establish alternatives to imported soy as protein sources for animal nutrition. Explorable possibilities include the cultivation of soybeans in Europe and the use of alternatives such as duckweed

2. Research and use of new techniques

- **Support research programmes to identify and prioritise exploration of possibilities to realize a sustainable and effective agriculture with new techniques.** Examples include:
 - Politically promote the implementation of Sustainable Land Management practices including the use of precision agriculture and GPS technology, which can ensure effective cultivation by creating fields at the same elevation along the slope.³⁴¹ Hedges and flower strips can thus be integrated into agricultural land without disrupting cultivation. This creates coherent biotopes that bring a veritable increase of biodiversity.
 - Incentivise the use of individual plant-oriented sensors to calculate fertilizer demand, which will lead to optimal growth conditions and minimize leaching.
 - Examine the chances and risks of innovative procedures like cisgene gene editing or artificial meat, and explore how these techniques can support sustainable agrarian reform.
- **Promote alternatives to the use of pesticides by integrating the knowledge of organic crop protection into conventional cultivation.** A possible alternative for herbicides is the mechanical destruction of weeds by robots.
- **Support the establishment of food production systems that omit food waste.**
 - Set up bans for food waste from the distribution sector (supermarkets and wholesale food suppliers) as has been implemented in France.³⁴²
 - Apply consistent, Europe-wide legislation and support best practice programmes making use of existing initiatives, such as those in Italy³⁴³ or

³⁴¹ Moravalli et al., Global achievements in sustainable land management, available at <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2095633915300447>

³⁴² The Guardian, French law forbids food waste by supermarkets, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/04/french-law-forbids-food-waste-by-supermarkets>

³⁴³ The Guardian, Italy tackles food waste with law encouraging firms to donate food, available at

those developed by the City of Lisbon,³⁴⁴ where food waste plans involving several stakeholders have been implemented successfully to tackle the problem. Coordinate effectively with local and international NGOs that tackle food waste.

D. Pollution prevention and biodiversity

Pollution-related causes led to one in every six premature deaths worldwide in 2015, according to a study published by the Lancet Commission.³⁴⁵ Indeed, urban development needs to include a strong focus on cleaner air and reducing pollutants which, according to the WHO, contributes to elevated rates of heart disease, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and lung cancer.³⁴⁶ The climate impact of urban environments urgently demands further action to avoid greater degradation of our environment and our health.³⁴⁷

Pollution is also one of the major risks for further losing biodiversity. Biodiversity not only refers to the number of species within an ecosystem, but also to the genetic diversity within a species' gene pool and the number of and interaction between different communities of species within a larger ecosystem. Each level is affected by human activity, and in many cases, this interaction results in a reduction in biodiversity. This raises severe concerns among biologists, environmental scientists, and other communities of researchers. A comprehensive approach to global balance must take into account bold measures on pollution prevention and nature conservation.

1. Pollution prevention

- **Promote the reuse, refurbishment and recycling of existing materials** to avoid waste and overproduction, providing a real alternative to limit the introduction of contaminants into the natural environment.
- **Promote investment in research and incentivising changes in legislation to hasten the adoption of new practices** that avoid pollution. This could include building roads made of more sustainable materials compared to current building blocks, road pricing for cities as seen in Oslo and London and the promotion of electrified communal transport.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/03/italy-food-waste-law-donate-food>

³⁴⁴ The Portugal News, Food waste combat saves 2 million meals, available at

<http://theportugalnews.com/news/food-waste-combat-saves-2-million-meals/38597>

³⁴⁵ The Lancet Commission on Pollution and Health, available at

<https://www.thelancet.com/commissions/pollution-and-health>

³⁴⁶ WHO, Ambient air pollution: health impacts, available at

<http://www.who.int/airpollution/ambient/health-impacts/en/>

³⁴⁷ Breathelife, A Global Campaign for clean life, available at <http://breathelife2030.org>

- Examine the idea of a pollution tax by supporting research on this topic.

2. Biodiversity

- **Commit to the United Nations Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020**, including the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and promote its overall vision of living in harmony with nature.³⁴⁸
- **Promote biodiversity for agricultural land use** by:
 - Consistent installation of flower strips and hedges to link habitats.
 - Stop eutrophication caused by excessive fertilizer use and the associated loss of species.
- **Support the development of stronger assessment systems for urban development** in view of its impact on biodiversity.
 - Support insect-friendly street lawns with high biodiversity by replanting with mixed trees, bushes, and open blooming flowers.
 - Promote initiatives that empower citizens, like urban gardening and sharing economies to reduce waste as well as support and develop enhanced education programs on biodiversity for all generations.

II. Migration

Volt defines ‘migration’ to include all individuals and groups that voluntarily or involuntarily move from one place to another with the intentions of settling, permanently or temporarily, in a new location. This includes internal migration and migration between different countries. It is acknowledged that challenges differ depending on the different groups that are included in the broad definition of migration. However, Volt believes that the difference between groups is fluid, and that existing definitions create artificial lines that are less relevant now than at the time of their establishment.³⁴⁹ Therefore, different policies are proposed in reference to different categories of migrants. Each category will be defined along the lines of existing definitions as established by expert international organizations, such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (Red Cross), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

³⁴⁸Convention on Biological Diversity, Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, including Aichi Biodiversity Targets, available at <https://www.cbd.int/sp/>

³⁴⁹ “... In order to capture the full extent of humanitarian concerns, the policy is deliberately broad. Therefore, while recognizing the specific rights of different categories under international law, it addresses the needs and vulnerabilities of, among others, labour migrants, stateless migrants, irregular migrants, as well as refugees and asylum seekers.” See International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Policy on Migration, available at <http://www.ifrc.org/Global/Governance/Policies/migration-policy-en.pdf>.

A. Asylum seekers and refugees

One of the biggest crises in the world since the second World War is unfolding at Europe's doorstep, and the continent is only taking a secondary role in helping those affected by conflicts in the Mediterranean basin and beyond. An unprecedented 65.6 million people around the world have been forced from their homes. This means that nearly 20 people are forcibly displaced every minute as a result of conflict or persecution.³⁵⁰ Contrary to discourse stating that EU countries are carrying the burden of African and Middle Eastern refugees, developing countries host 86% of the world's refugees.³⁵¹ The current focus in Europe is primarily on curbing migrations flows - which, in the first 9 months of 2017, accounted for 150,000 arrivals, equal to 0.03% of the population of the Union - instead of providing a safe haven and opportunities to those who are fleeing war.³⁵²

Volt aims to dramatically reform the way the European system deals with asylum seekers and refugees, to make it more effective, humane, and fair. Additionally, Volt wants to set up an international system to prevent and address refugee crises, and to address the issue of statelessness coherently: these are global issues that should be dealt with at the international level.

1. Reform the EU Refugee system

- **Set up a Unified EU Refugee Policy to define a unified approach to manage refugee flows from outside the EU.** Within the EU, some countries³⁵³ are overwhelmingly taking in asylum seekers and refugees.
 - The Dublin system³⁵⁴ needs to be reformed and a settlement system must be defined (e.g. based on population, population density, wealth, age, and growth). The amended system should provide for penalties for those countries who do not abide by it.

³⁵⁰ UNHCR, The Refugee crisis through statistics 2017, available at <http://www.esiweb.org/pdf/ESI%20-%20The%20refugee%20crisis%20through%20statistics%20-%2030%20Jan%202017.pdf>

³⁵¹ World Economic Forum, Europe's refugee and migrant crisis in 2016 in numbers, available at <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/12/europe-s-refugee-and-migrant-crisis-in-2016-in-numbers>

³⁵² IOM, Mediterranean Migrant Arrivals, available at <https://www.iom.int/news/mediterranean-migrant-arrivals-reach-150982-2017-deaths-reach-2839>

³⁵³ All emergency plans to resettle refugees among EU member states have largely failed: only 7,224 asylum seekers had been relocated from Greece and Italy to other EU countries by mid-november 2017; see Human Rights Watch, World Report 2017, available at <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/european-union>

³⁵⁴ The Dublin Regulation establishes that the European country through which a refugee first enters the EU is responsible for the examination of the asylum procedure. See European Commission, The Dublin System, available at https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/20160406/factsheet_-_the_dublin_system_en.pdf

- **Increase and improve legal pathways into Europe** in order to effectively manage flows of refugees and asylum seekers. This includes policies that go beyond the current Dublin Regulation and focus on relocation.³⁵⁵
- **Continue the practice of protecting refugees for the duration of the risk.** Additionally, offer permanent residence to refugees after a certain period if they are still at risk (five to seven years) when certain criteria are met.³⁵⁶ There is little chance of refugees going back to their home countries after such a long period, as often there is often nothing to go back to. Immediate permanent integration is also required for certain types of refugees, such as identified unaccompanied minors.
- **Make the asylum system fair, effective, and quick:**
 - By shortening the time period until the final asylum decision is made.
 - By always providing social, legal, and psychological support with specialised services.
 - By allowing asylum seekers to enter the job market from the very first day.
³⁵⁷ Asylum seekers are often not given the opportunity to gain employment or partake in other activities. It is expensive for countries to provide them with enough money to live on. Often, insufficient resources are provided, leading asylum seekers to live in dire situations. Additionally, excluding asylum seekers from the workforce for the duration of the asylum procedure does not foster integration. Finally, it is against countries' obligations under international law, human rights law, humanitarian law, and European guidance to support asylum seekers' right to work. Indeed, "without the right to work, all other rights are meaningless."³⁵⁸
- **Ensure that asylum seekers' and refugees' rights are respected and that countries uphold obligations arising out of international treaties.**
 - Put an end to the practice of detaining asylum seekers under inhumane conditions. Practices that cause unjustified and undue detention should be stopped.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁵ The European Agenda on Migration, available at

https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/20170927_factsheet_relocation_sharing_responsibility_en.pdf

³⁵⁶ For example, clean track record, language skills, and knowledge of key elements of the country.

³⁵⁷ Asylum seekers are often not given the opportunity to gain employment or partake in other activities. This is problematic on many levels: it is expensive for countries to financially support them ,leading asylum seekers to live in dire situations.

³⁵⁸ Louis Henkin, U.S. delegate at the drafting of the 1951 Refugee Convention.

³⁵⁹ UNHCR, Beyond Detention A Global Strategy to support governments to end the detention of asylum-seekers and refugees - 2014-2019, available at <http://www.unhcr.org/53aa929f6.pdf>; Human Rights Watch, Greece: 13,000 Still Trapped on Islands, available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/03/06/greece-13000-still-trapped-islands>

- Ensure that the standards for the reception of applicants for international protection are complied with by all European countries.³⁶⁰
- **Involve the private sector and educational institutions in fostering integration** by designing alternative accreditation systems for undocumented skills and qualifications, offering training courses and language classes, gathering early information to facilitate employment matching, and setting up platforms and communication channels to explain and openly discuss the rights and duties of people living in Europe.
- **Ensure decent housing for every asylum seeker and refugee.** Additionally, incentivise the adoption of decentralised habitations to foster integration, increasing the chance of securing jobs and of creating a new life in the host country.
 - Integrate social and shared housing into EU cohesion policy.³⁶¹ The EU Council of Ministers has given priority to combating social exclusion related to housing in its EU cohesion policy.³⁶² In 2007, the European Parliament committed itself to a ‘European Declaration on Housing’.³⁶³ As such, it is recommended to use available funds for social housing to improve the living situations of people including asylum seekers and refugees.³⁶⁴

2. Set up an international system to prevent and address refugee crises

- **Move towards an international administration to cooperatively address refugee crises.** The failure to do so is not only unfair, but it is also short-sighted,

³⁶⁰ Particularly articles 8(3), 8(4), 9, 10, 11 of Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council, Laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection, 26 June 2013. See Official Journal, Directive 2013/33/EU, available at

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32013L0033&from=EN>

³⁶¹ For more details see [Social Equality, Alleviate poverty, Social and community housing](#)

³⁶² The Regional policy of the European Union (EU), also referred as Cohesion Policy, is a policy with the stated aim of improving the economic well-being of regions in the EU and also to avoid regional disparities. More than one third of the EU's budget is devoted to this policy. See European Commission, Cohesion policy Frequently Asked Questions, available at http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/faq/#1

³⁶³ European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, available at https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_files/pubdocs/2008/18/en/1/ef0818en.pdf

³⁶⁴ One example is the Sharehaus Refugio in Berlin. Planned in collaboration with the Berlin City Mission, the Refugio provides refuge, community and skills development renewal for refugees, local Germans, and people of different cultures who have lost their homes or were forced to flee. Made up of 5 floors, the Refugio offers private rooms and shared communal spaces for 12-18 months. People are encouraged to learn German, make local friends and start working or studying as soon as possible. Residents cook and eat together daily in a creative community in which storytelling and singing, art and theater are nurtured.

as it drives extra-regional asylum and prompts smuggling and trafficking.³⁶⁵ This is why it is necessary to move internationally in the direction of “pre-determined burden (financial) sharing and responsibility (human) sharing quotas.”³⁶⁶ Refugee crises must be addressed proactively, not reactively.³⁶⁷

- **Allow different protection roles for different countries**, embracing common but differentiated state responsibilities. This means that, “beyond the common duty to provide first asylum, states could assume a range of protection roles within their responsibility-sharing quota (protection for duration of risk; exceptional immediate permanent integration; residual resettlement)—though all states would be required to make contributions to both (financial) burden-sharing and (human) responsibility-sharing, with no trade-offs between the two.”³⁶⁸
- **Ensure safe passage by creating humanitarian corridors.** While combating human smuggling is necessary, it must be acknowledged that often, closing one route forces the creation of another, sometimes more dangerous. Better communication with people attempting the journey, both in their home countries and in transition countries, is necessary.
- **Advocate before the international community for famine³⁶⁹ and climate migrants to be classified as refugees**, or to be afforded the same rights under international law. While this is a long-term process, Volt will advocate for it to become reality. These are key and necessary measures. Additionally, only four countries³⁷⁰ are currently either at risk of or in a famine situation, and such migrants would not dramatically increase the number of refugees seeking refuge abroad. Many individuals in those countries already qualify as refugees, since they are fleeing on the grounds of persecution based on their ethnicity, national origin, descent, skin colour, religion, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion).

³⁶⁵ Open Democracy, A global solution to a global refugee crisis, by Professor James C. Hathaway, available at www.opendemocracy.net/openglobalrights/james-c-hathaway/global-solution-to-global-refugee-crisis

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ UN and food organisations define famine as when more than 30 percent of children under age five suffer from acute malnutrition and mortality rates are two or more deaths per 10,000 people every day, among other criteria. See Al Jazeera, Famine ‘largest humanitarian crisis in history of UN,’ available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/03/famine-united-nations-170310234132946.html>

³⁷⁰ Yemen, South Sudan, Somalia and northeastern Nigeria. See VOA, UN Aid Chief: 20 Million People in 4 Countries Face Starvation, Famine, available at

<https://www.voanews.com/a/twenty-million-people-four-countries-face-starvation-famine-un-aid-chief-says/3760816.html>

- **Help transform the protracted refugee camp situation to enable refugees and asylum seekers to contribute to society** and ensure that they are afforded their full rights.
- **Work at the source** and tackle the problems that create refugee crises in order to prevent them, through international cooperation and diplomacy.
 - Strengthen international cooperation and governance of migration.
 - Increase focus on prevention of conflict and the mitigation of other causes of refugee flows by political means.
 - Use joint economic, financial, and military resources to diplomatically resolve existing conflicts in areas from which a large percentage of the population was forced to flee.
 - Provide people at risk with protection and assistance in their own countries (including internally displaced persons).³⁷¹
 - Invest in the creation and improvement of humanitarian centres in regions close to the affected area, and support opportunities and effective application processes for resettlement.³⁷²
 - Promote the rights of refugees to ensure that the obligations of Member States are upheld. This includes positive incentives for those States that respect the rights of refugees and asylum-seekers in the form of financial benefits. Diplomatic and economic sanctions shall be applied as a last-resort measure.
 - Increase financial aid for refugee-hosting countries and ensure existing funding commitments are honoured.

3. Statelessness

- **Put an end to statelessness in Europe.** More than 10 million people are stateless in the world.³⁷³ Stateless persons are often denied the enjoyment of essential rights, such as identification documents, employment, education, and health services.³⁷⁴
- **Push all individual European countries to ratify and implement the 1954 Convention relating to the status of Stateless Persons** - designed to ensure

³⁷¹ World Economic Forum, 5 long-term solutions to Europe's refugee crisis, available at <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2015/04/5-long-term-solutions-to-europes-refugee-crisis/>

³⁷² The resettlement process follows UNHCR practices. See UNHCR, Resettlement, available at <http://www.unhcr.org/resettlement.html>

³⁷³ 'Stateless persons' are understood as: "A person who is not considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law." See Article 1(1) 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, available at <http://www.unhcr.org/protection/statelessness/3bbb25729/convention-relating-status-stateless-persons.html>.

³⁷⁴ UNHCR, Global Action Plan 2014-24 to End Statelessness, availbale at <http://www.unhcr.org/protection/statelessness/54621bf49/global-action-plan-end-statelessness-2014-2024.html>

that stateless people enjoy a minimal set of rights - and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, that aims at reducing the number of stateless people in the world. As of April 2018, most, but not all, countries are parties to these conventions.³⁷⁵

- **Work to implement the objectives laid out in the UNHCR Action Plan to End Statelessness in the world by 2024.**³⁷⁶ Volt will focus on a number of challenges specific to the EU, including:³⁷⁷
 - Increasing homogeneity among the procedures of European countries regarding the determination of statelessness, with respect to both administrative and judicial procedures.
 - Facilitating access to nationality for children born stateless in all European countries. In addition, separate procedures should be established for children born *en route*.
 - Ensuring access to the labour market, education, and social services, even when the residency status of a stateless person cannot be determined.
 - Establish suitable procedures for unaccompanied stateless minors that are considerate to the specific vulnerabilities of this particular group.
- **Comply and share best practices among countries**, as it was set in the December 2015 Council Conclusions to end statelessness.³⁷⁸ **Stimulate the exchange of information between Member States**, in particular on policies regarding the prevention and reduction of statelessness and the treatment of stateless persons.³⁷⁹

B. Economic Migrants

Volt supports enabling labour mobility by removing existing barriers. At the bi-, multi-, and plurilateral level, much can be gained from liberalized commitments specifically targeting those groups of economic migrants that come from developing and

³⁷⁵ France and Spain, for example, are only parties to the 1954 Convention. See UNHCR, The Faces of Statelessness in Europe, available at

<http://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=topic&docid=5aa79f9d4&skip=0&tocid=50ffbce524%20d&toid=50ffbce5268&queryi=European%20Union&searchin=fulltext&sort=date>

³⁷⁶ UNHCR, #IBelong, available at <http://www.unhcr.org/ibelong-campaign-to-end-statelessness.html>

³⁷⁷ European Commission, Statelessness in the EU, available at

https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/reports/docs/emn-informs/emn-informs-00_inform_statelessness_final.pdf

³⁷⁸ European Council, Council adopts conclusions on statelessness, available at

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/12/04/council-adopts-conclusions-on-statelessness/>

³⁷⁹ European Parliament, Practices and Approaches in EU Member States to Prevent and End Statelessness, available at

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/536476/IPOL_STU\(2015\)536476_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/536476/IPOL_STU(2015)536476_EN.pdf)

least-developed countries. An important consideration, which should form the basis of any policy regarding the increased mobility of economic migrants, is the needs of the labour market, both in Sending States as well as in Receiving States. Receiving States are often faced with an aging population and an over-represented supply of professionals in the service sector. These demographic factors create a demand for the type of work which can be met by economic migrants. Furthermore, economic migrants send much of their income back to their home States in the form of remittance.³⁸⁰ Investments made possible due to remittances greatly benefit the economic development of the home State.³⁸¹ Promoting economic growth through remittances is mutually beneficial, as it not only supports the development of Sending States, but it also prevents poverty-driven migration.³⁸² Volt advocates for permanent economic migration to be made possible by establishing transparent and coherent policies in all European countries. However, policies regarding permanent economic migration should include safeguards to mitigate the negative effects of permanent migration on the workforce and general development of the Sending State.³⁸³

1. Economic migrants as a temporary workforce

- **Target temporary economic migrants when liberalizing labour market mobility.** Policy designed to this respect should facilitate circular labour mobility.
³⁸⁴ Volt will:
 - Actively assess the impact on the labour market of the Receiving and the Sending States to ensure a balance between needs and demands.

³⁸⁰ Hertel, T. W. et al, "Agriculture and Non-Agricultural Liberalization in the Millennium Round", CIES Working Paper No. 16 (March 2000), p. 16-18. Available at SSRN <http://ssrn.com/abstract=231205>. See also Walmsley, T. L. and Winters, A. L., "Relaxing the Restrictions on the Temporary Movements of Natural Persons: A Simulation Analysis", CEPR Discussion Paper No. 3719 (January 2002). Read in Mattoo, A., Carzaniga, A. (eds.), *Moving People to Deliver Services*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2003), p. 73- 85.

³⁸¹ Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, Common actions for growth and employment: the Community Lisbon programme, COM(2005) 330 final, Brussels 20.7.2005, p. 2. See also Mattoo, A., Carzaniga, A. (eds.), *Moving People to Deliver Services*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2003). Also Münz, R. et al, "What are migrants contributions to employment and growth", Hamburgische WeltWirtschafts Institut, Migration Research Group (2006), p. 5.

³⁸² Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), "How Do People in Asia and the Pacific Migrate Legally for Work? An Overview of Legal Frameworks: GATS Mode 4, PTAs and Bilateral Labour Agreements", Trade and Investment Division, Staff Working Paper 03/11, p. 110.

³⁸³ International Migration Papers, Migration of Highly skilled persons from developing countries, available at http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---migrant/documents/publication/wcms_201706.pdf; F. Docquier, H. Rapoport, Skilled Migration: the Perspective of Developing Countries, available at http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/856971468761964198/129529322_20041117165105/additional/WPS3382.pdf

³⁸⁴ European Commission, "Policy Coherence for Development, Accelerating progress towards attaining the Millennium Development Goals", COM(2005)134 final, Brussels, 12.4.2005, p. 15. See also European Commission, "Policy Plan on Legal Migration", SEC(2005)1680, Brussels 21.12.2005, p.4.

- Commitments made should accommodate the outcome of such an analysis and mitigate the negative effects of increased labour mobility.
- Support the active involvement of relevant stakeholders, such as employers and trade unions, when designing policy on temporary economic migration, both in Sending and Receiving States.
- **Ensure that a level playing field is created, in which temporary economic migrants have equal access to justice.**
- Use the expertise of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in designing policies that enable temporary migration of workers which adequately balances the interests of foreign and domestic workers.³⁸⁵
 - Support national and international prosecution agencies in the fight against human trafficking and in the creation of a global system to report trafficking crimes.
- **Develop a specific migration visa** that should be made available to temporary foreign workers.
- Visas for temporary foreign workers should be subject to a separate regime. Temporary foreign workers should not be entitled to apply for permanent residency or social security in the Receiving State. In turn, the labour rights of temporary migrant workers should be ensured by ensuring access to medical services, necessary insurances, and legal services, as well as compliance with local labour laws of the Receiving State.³⁸⁶
- **Work to liberalize services commitments in the World Trade Organization** to better enable the temporary movement of natural persons.
- Adapt the definition of service supplier in the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) to include workers that fall into non-service categories, such as agricultural and fishery workers.³⁸⁷
 - Utilize the possibility of negotiating additional commitments which support circular migration. Specifically, this means commitments that ensure voluntary return and the prevention of exploitation of temporary workers.

³⁸⁵ IOM, World Migration Report 2015 - Migrants and Cities: New Partnerships to Manage Mobility, available at <http://publications.iom.int/books/world-migration-report-2015-migrants-and-cities-new-partnerships-manage-mobility>, IOM, Labour Market Inclusion of the Less Skilled Migrants in the European Union, available at <http://publications.iom.int/books/labour-market-inclusion-less-skilled-migrants-european-union>.

³⁸⁶ Council for Trade in Services, Negotiating Proposals of WTO Members, India, S/CSS/W/12, 21 November 2000. See also Services Signalling Conference, Report by the Chairman of the TNC, JOB(08)/93, 30 July 2008, paras. 1–4.

³⁸⁷ M. Panizzon, M., “International Law of Economic Migration - A Ménage À Trois? GATS Mode 4, EPAs and Bilateral Migration Agreements”, Journal of World Trade, Vol. 44(6), (July 2010); Society of International Economic Law (SIEL), Second Biennial Global Conference, University of Barcelona, July 8-10, 2010, p.6. Also Hertel, T. W. et al, “Agriculture and Non-Agricultural Liberalization in the Millennium Round”, CIES Working Paper No. 16 (March 2000), p. 14-16.

- Actively work towards the further defining and utilizing of Emergency Safeguard Mechanisms, which enable the temporary protection of certain sectors of the labour market in case of an unexpected surge of temporary migrant workers which threatens to harm or harms the national labour market.³⁸⁸

2. Economic migrants as permanent workforce

- **Push forward the establishment of a separate administrative procedure for permanent economic migrants**, in addition to facilitating temporary economic migration.
- **Support and further develop existing efforts to ease permanent migration for highly skilled migrants**, such as the EU Blue Card visa.³⁸⁹

3. Irregular economic migration

- **Ensure that the fundamental rights of undocumented migrants across Europe are respected in case of detention and deportation.** Ensure that the principle of non-refoulement is upheld.
- **Give particular attention to the rights of minors within the category of irregular economic migrants.** The rights as contained in the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child must be respected in all circumstances.³⁹⁰
- **Facilitate the creation of an administrative system** within and across European countries which allows for the conditional change of status from irregular to regular economic migrant.³⁹¹

III. Development Cooperation and International Fair Trade

³⁸⁸ WTO Secretariat, Trade Policy Review European Union, WT/TPR/S/284, p. 31-32, para. 2.28.

³⁸⁹ OECD, International Migration Outlook 2017, available at

https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/international-migration-outlook-2017_migr_outlook-2017-en#page45

³⁹⁰ OHCHR, Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), available at <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>.

³⁹¹ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, A European Agenda on Migration, Pillar III, p. 12. available at

https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/communication_on_the_european_agenda_on_migration_en.pdf

Sustainable development is the highest priority and challenge that humanity faces today, and Volt will ensure that Europe lives up to its commitments. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have set out a clear international agenda to follow, tackling environmental destruction, inequalities, and conflict.³⁹² The EU and its Member States must put people and planet first in their foreign policy, to achieve global balance. Volt is committed to trade that is free, fair, and sustainable, and benefits the welfare of all people along the value chain. Trade policy must facilitate development and be compatible with development cooperation, as well as prioritise principles of democracy and human rights. Development cooperation policies centred on partnership with third countries need to take a geo-political view, seeking to address conflict and instability and the root causes of migration holistically, empowering those who are most vulnerable and promoting peace, democracy, and human rights.

A. Development Cooperation

By adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the EU Member States acknowledged that a paradigm shift is necessary in international policies on development cooperation.³⁹³ Nowadays, it is impossible to speak about economic growth without taking into consideration its environmental and social impacts. Volt believes that Europe should lead by example and promote sustainable development objectives, not only in its internal but also in its external policies. In particular, Europe should focus on the objectives of poverty eradication, zero hunger, quality education, and inequality reduction. All this is to be achieved while respecting the environment, peace, justice, and gender equality.

Providing over 50% of all global development aid, the EU and its Member States are collectively the world's leading donor.³⁹⁴ This entails a huge responsibility for Europe and Europeans, who are asked to respect their commitments while promoting the values of peace, democracy, and human rights. However, the coherency and consistency of the EU's external action is often undermined by the lack of coordination and vision. That is why Volt is committed to better coordinated development and cooperation policies that are driven by common interests and shared values. We support such development and cooperation policies which are fair, transparent, and respectful of countries' development priorities.

³⁹² UN, SDGs, available at <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

³⁹³ European Commission, The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, available at

https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/policies/european-development-policy/2030-agenda-sustainable-development_en, Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform, Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, available at

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

³⁹⁴ EU Aid Explorer, Welcome, available at <https://euaidexplorer.ec.europa.eu/>

- **Propose that Member States and EU-level planning and programming shall follow the same cycles** in order to provide maximum support to developing countries and to speak with a single voice in our external relations.
 - To this end, Volt proposes to replicate the Joint Programming Exercise, which already proved successful in Cambodia and Palestine, to the rest of our development cooperation relations.³⁹⁵
 - The extended use of Joint programming would not always allow national- and EU-level actions to be coordinated and synchronized, but it would lead to the elaboration of a joint strategy that is fully aligned to the partner country's national development plan.
- **Introduce a switch to a form of development cooperation which is not only based on public money, but which also intelligently mixes different sources of financing and leverage investments from the private sector.** In this context, Volt welcomes the European External Investment Plan³⁹⁶ and promotes the use of various forms of blended finance, in coordination with international financial institutions.
- **Advocate for the economic development of Europe's partners countries** to respect sustainability concerns. Initiatives for financial inclusion shall pave the way to creating fairer societies, where the differences generated by growing inequalities are substantially reduced.
- **Support the use of new technologies and of innovative methods of consumption and production to promote inclusive and green growth.**
- **Promote and support the development of a good governance framework on the basis of sustainable and foreseeable criteria** upon which the eligibility of countries to receive European development aid should be decided.
- **Coordinate development cooperation on the EU level** as part of the common foreign policy based on the principle of sustainable development.
- **Introduce Results-Based Financing** as part of the common foreign policy on development cooperation.
 - Instead of financing inputs, the recipient country will take care of inputs and results. The results will be rewarded according to agreed-upon criteria and amounts.
- **Advocate for the establishment of sound fiscal systems** as part of development cooperation. This includes:

³⁹⁵ European Commission, Joint programming, available at

https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/policies/eu-approach-aid-effectiveness/joint-programming_en

³⁹⁶ European Commission, External Investment Plan, available at

https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/node/118008_es

- The generation of domestic finance in order to reduce aid dependency, e.g. by providing support for increasing tax collection, raising the public image of taxation and its benefits, as well as reviewing and improving tax policy.
 - The prevention and punishment of tax evasion by individuals and (foreign) companies.
 - The development of financial instruments, such as public and private sector bonds, to allow citizens to invest their savings at home rather than sending the money abroad.
- **Stimulate local economies** and the creation of new jobs through the promotion of production and trade chains by using sustainable technologies.

B. Free, fair, and sustainable trade

Volt supports global free and fair trade that is grounded upon the principles of sustainable development and puts people and planet ahead of narrow profits. When negotiating trade commitments on the bilateral or multilateral level, a number of core principles should be included and respected. International trade should be rules-based, reciprocal, non-discriminatory, and actively work towards the sustainable development of all States involved. This means that free trade should be promoted but should not be unregulated. International trade should respect human rights principles and the limitations of the earth's resources.

1. Rules-based free, fair, and sustainable trade

- **Advocate for multilateral trade agreements** rather than unilateral trade policies or agreements between a limited number of trading partners. Global free and fair trade is more effective and efficient if the same set of rules apply equally to all trading nations.
- **Support the WTO** and related institutions such as the IMF, World Bank, UNCTAD, OECD, and ILO to ensure rules-based free and fair trade globally. Volt will work actively to adequately reform these institutions for the purpose of ensuring that their mandates prioritise sustainable development, and that economic growth remains within the possibility of our globally limited natural resources. Due to the importance of achieving Global Balance in international trade, Volt in particular supports the OECD's "due diligence" approach as requisite for companies operating in global value chains. This includes the maintenance and use of effective trade mechanisms, such as anti-dumping and anti-subsidy instruments.

- **Support the implementation of policies related to the UN Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights (UNGPs)³⁹⁷ and the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises** (renewed version 2011)³⁹⁸ that incorporate the UNGPs and lay the foundation for Responsible Business Conduct in value chains.
- **Actively hold European and other developed States to their commitment** to diminish, and eventually stop altogether, export subsidies relating to agricultural products.
- **Closely follow the effects of newly established separate dispute settlements mechanisms** and dismantle them if it becomes clear that such mechanisms negatively affect the people of Europe and the environment, or disproportionately favour the private investors making use of them.
 - Structure the newly-proposed investor courts in such a way that democratic decisions made in the public interest cannot be interfered with. The new investment court should work on the basis of transparency and equity.³⁹⁹
- **Introduce binding oversight and arbitration mechanisms for the review of human rights breaches and environmental harm**, with open civil society participation and complaint mechanisms.

2. Reciprocal free, fair, and sustainable trade

- **Build upon the existing EU policies towards imports** from less developed countries, like ‘Everything but Arms’, and take away Intra-EU policies that prevent less-developed countries from effectively being able to export to the EU.
- **Support and defend the open trading character of the EU.** The gradual lowering of external tariffs should remain a priority, as well as the elimination of non-tariff barriers.
- **Improve the democratic legitimacy of the Member-driven governance system of the WTO.**

³⁹⁷ OHCHR, Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. available at https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/GuidingPrinciplesBusinessHR_EN.pdf.

³⁹⁸ OECD, OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, available at <http://www.oecd.org/daf/inv/mne/48004323.pdf>.

³⁹⁹ European Parliament Think Tank, From arbitration to the investment court system (ICS): The evolution of CETA rules, available at [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_IDA\(2017\)607251](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_IDA(2017)607251)

- Support a quick conclusion of the Doha Development Agenda, if necessary through the establishment of plurilateral agreements under the umbrella of the WTO.⁴⁰⁰
 - The EU and other developed WTO Members should work towards diminishing and eventually stopping all export subsidies relating to agricultural products.
 - Market access for non-agricultural products should be ensured and promoted. Practices that work against gradual liberalisation, such as tariff escalation and the implementation of tariff peaks, should be countered.
 - Negotiations on trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights should specifically focus on ensuring a balance of interests among WTO Members regarding the patentability of biological inventions, the protection of plant varieties, and the needed flexibilities for the protection of public health.
 - Further liberalization of trade in services is necessary in those sectors of interest for developing or least-developed Member countries.
 - The resources of the WTO Secretariat should be deployed specifically to facilitate cooperation among other international organizations to ensure that technical assistance is more efficient and effective.
 - Possibilities of cross-retaliation and related conflict resolution methods should be explored to better ensure the enforcement of decisions made by the Dispute Settlement Body.
 - Authoritative interpretations should be employed to enable multi-level judicial control of trade regulations so as to provide more democratic legitimacy to the Member-driven governance system of the WTO.
- **Support an EU ‘Trade and Aid’ agenda that stimulates Trade over Aid as soon as the level of development of the partner country allows reduction of development aid.**
- The priority must lie with the development of a strong governance structure on the basis of people-oriented programmes. The integration of developing countries in the global economy should be the main objective of development aid, provided such integration benefits the citizens of the State in an equitable manner. Timely review of development cooperation structures should be institutionalized in order to ensure the equal and equitable distribution of welfare.
- **Review and accordingly adapt the special and differential provisions in the WTO-covered agreements** in order to ensure a holistic and coherent approach

⁴⁰⁰ The Doha Development Agenda set the agenda for the Doha Round, the most recent round of trade negotiations conducted among the WTO Membership. See WTO, : Ministerial Declaration, WT/MIN(01)/DEC/1, 20 November 2001, available at

https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/minist_e/min01_e/mindecl_e.htm.

to development cooperation.

WORK IN PROGRESS

Challenge 5 - Citizen Empowerment

Vision

For Volt, the EU is a unique political space waiting to be filled with democratic life. European citizens need to be empowered to make informed political decisions, be able to influence politics beyond elections alone, and exercise their democratic rights within vibrant, resilient, and deliberative democracies.

First, we encourage local communities to start looking at the European Union as a potential problem-solver - as opposed to problem-maker - and to collaborate across borders when tackling local problems. Volt will highlight opportunities to constructively use the European spaces where they exist, to use the tools already available for doing so, and develop new channels for citizens to participate in political life. Furthermore, Volt will engage in capacity-building activities to strengthen citizens' ability to meaningfully participate in and influence political processes. And of course, we will practice what we preach by applying the standards we put down for citizen empowerment to ourselves.

We want to foster vibrant, pluralistic and accessible public spheres, which is why we advocate for a range of measures to safeguard media freedom and pluralism throughout Europe and support fostering the emergence of a transnational European media landscape. We also support strong and dynamic cultural and creative industry sectors, as these are key to maintaining European pluralism. We also want to ensure the openness of public data. We think open data provides an ideal and effective gateway for citizen empowerment: it can provide an objective basis for analysis, debate, and education, as well as empower citizens to make innovative use of the data available to them and to acknowledge their role in generating change.

We want to multiply citizens' opportunities to influence political and policy processes. Throughout Europe, citizens choose their European, national and local representatives through the act of elections, and we want to make sure that elections across all of Europe are free and fair. We also acknowledge that political innovations in general, and digital technologies in particular, have given rise to a variety of tools and processes that make it possible for citizens to actively take part in democratic civic life beyond elections alone. This is why we advocate for a range of concrete tools for strengthening participatory and transnational European democracy.

I. Foster vibrant, pluralistic and accessible public spheres to enable citizens to make informed political decisions

Empowered European citizenship requires vibrant, pluralistic, and accessible public spheres in the individual EU member States and in Europe as a whole. Informed political decisions are only possible under conditions in which information is freely accessible. This requires a functioning, healthy and independent public sphere, one in which citizens not only have access to quality information, but are also able to process this information; where diverse perspectives are publicly deliberated by media, political actors, and civil society, and where citizens are able to choose between valid political alternatives.

A. Promote free and pluralistic cultural and media landscapes

"The freedom and pluralism of the media shall be respected."⁴⁰¹ Media freedom and pluralism are essential pillars of democracy, and thus are enshrined as fundamental values in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.⁴⁰² Unfortunately, today's European media landscapes are under high pressure and stress: independence and pluralism of media are threatened in many European states, and a transnational European media landscape is still in its infancy. Furthermore, many citizens' information and communication habits have shifted towards the Internet. On the one hand, the Internet facilitates access to information and offers citizens new opportunities for participation, discussion, and shaping opinions. On the other hand, the emergence of a digital marketplace of news poses fundamental challenges to quality journalism, both online and in print. News outlets everywhere are struggling to find sustainable business models, while coordinated misinformation campaigns are undermining the very essence of rational discourse and decision-making across the globe. This undermines public trust in democratic institutions.⁴⁰³

⁴⁰¹ Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, article 11.2, available at http://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf?

⁴⁰² The EU's commitment to respect freedom and pluralism of the media, as well as the right to information and freedom of expression is enshrined in Art. 11 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights, similar to the provision of Art. 10 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. See also the Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on media freedom and pluralism in the digital environment, 2014/C 32/04 available at

[http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52014XG0204\(02\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52014XG0204(02)&from=EN)

⁴⁰³ Edelman, 2018 Executive summary, available at http://cms.edelman.com/sites/default/files/2018-02/2018_Edelman_TrustBarometer_Executive_Summary_Jan.pdf

Volt strives to support innovative solutions to these challenges by challenging citizens to use available tools needed to navigate today's complex media landscapes. Volt therefore advocates for a range of measures to safeguard media freedom and pluralism throughout Europe and to foster the emergence of a transnational European public sphere. Volt also advocates for the strengthening of Europe's diverse cultural landscape in order to safeguard the pluralism that underlies the European project as a whole.

1. Ensure media pluralism

- **Encourage the treatment of quality journalism as a public good, not a commodity.**⁴⁰⁴ While public broadcasting institutions in many European countries are expressions of an understanding of quality journalism as a public good, the quality media landscape also depends on a range of private actors. The vast majority of these actors struggle significantly to finance their endeavors with the tools available to them under free market criteria (i.e. advertising). In the digital realm, users often access news via social media, where non-transparent algorithms often cannot distinguish between quality and misleading media, and users expect to consume journalistic content for free. Some actors have moved their top quality content behind paywalls, excluding non-paying users. Others, like The Guardian, have so far refrained from doing so, relying instead on readers' subscriptions and a foundation model to keep their product accessible to all. Volt strongly encourages the exploration of innovative funding mechanisms to ensure the provision of quality journalism as a public good, safeguarding its non-excludable and non-rivalrous nature, all across Europe.
- **Work to ensure freedom of information and freedom of expression.** An engaged citizenry is not possible without the freedoms of information and expression.⁴⁰⁵ These freedoms must be upheld on the Internet as well as offline.⁴⁰⁶ Volt will work to ensure that relevant actions are taken to uphold freedom of

⁴⁰⁴ See for instance Allern, Sigurd and Pollack, Ester, Journalism as a Public Good: A Scandinavian Perspective, available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320306842_Journalism_as_a_public_good_A_Scandinavian_perspective; ResearchGate, Journalism as a public good: A Scandinavian perspective, available at <http://niemanreports.org/articles/news-is-a-public-good/>

⁴⁰⁵ "1. Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers. 2. The freedom and pluralism of the media shall be respected." See Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, article 11, available at

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf; The European Commission regards freedom of information and freedom of expression as fundamental pillars of democracy. See European Commission, Freedom of Expression, available at

https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sectors/human-rights-and-democratic-governance/democracy/freedom-expression_en; Official Journal of the European Union, Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on media freedom and pluralism in the digital environment 2014/C 32/04, available at

[http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52014XG0204\(02\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52014XG0204(02)&from=EN)

⁴⁰⁶ For more details see [Smart State, Guarantee digital rights and freedoms. Digital rights](#).

information and expression in Europe, particularly in places where these freedoms are in danger. Volt therefore calls on the Commission and the Member States to fully support and strengthen the tools already developed with regard to the promotion and protection of the rights and freedoms enshrined in Art. 11 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, such as the Media Pluralism Monitor and the Council of Europe Platform for the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists.⁴⁰⁷

- **Ensure the safety and security of journalists.** The safety and security of journalists is fundamentally important for a pluralistic media landscape. Volt will support a range of measures to ensure journalists in Europe are safe and have secure working environments, e.g. by calling on the Member States to fully support the initiative launched by Reporters Without Borders for the creation of a Special Representative to the United Nations Secretary-General for the safety of journalists.⁴⁰⁸
- **Demand transparency of media ownership and influence.** In order to be able to make informed decisions, consumers of media must be able to understand whose interests a medium serves. States are invited to ensure the independence of their audiovisual regulatory authorities, and to take appropriate measures to achieve genuine transparency of media ownership and funding sources, safeguard the right of journalists to protect their sources and to protect journalists from undue influence, and, depending on their national context, to prevent possible negative effects of excessive concentration of media ownership.⁴⁰⁹
- **Foster education on media literacy.**⁴¹⁰ Media literacy includes all technical, cognitive, social, civic and creative capacities that allow a person to access the media, to have a critical understanding of the media, and to interact with it.⁴¹¹ In today's news and media landscape, it becomes ever more important to be able to

⁴⁰⁷ European Parliament, European Parliament resolution of 3 May 2018 on media pluralism and media freedom in the European Union (2017/2209(INI)), available at

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P8-TA-2018-0204+0+DOC+X+ML+V0//EN>

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁹ Official Journal of the European Union, Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on media freedom and pluralism in the digital environment, 2014/C 32/04, available at

[http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52014XG0204\(02\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52014XG0204(02)&from=EN)

⁴¹⁰ For more details see [Smart State, Build an enabling education system for the future, Curriculum reform.](#)

⁴¹¹ This is the definition of the EU Media Literacy Expert Group (MLEG). The European Commission brings together stakeholders in media literacy in an Expert Group on Media Literacy which meets annually to identify, document and extend good practices in the field of media literacy, facilitate networking between different stakeholders, with the aim of cross-fertilisation, explore synergies between different EU policies and support programmes and media literacy initiatives. For more information, see European Commission, Meeting of the Media Literacy Expert Group, available at

<https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/meetings-media-literacy-expert-group>

distinguish between credible and *fake news* sources and content. Volt will seek to support educational measures undertaken by educational institutions such as schools, as well as aim to strengthen the role of civil society, public institutions and academia in this area.⁴¹² As also mentioned in our Smart State chapter, Volt supports efforts to teach “critical thinking” in schools, not only in relation to media, but also with regard to information disseminated by individuals (e.g. politicians) and institutions (e.g. NGOs, civil society organizations, think tanks, political parties).

- **Push the EU to safeguard the democratic public sphere necessary for the functioning of a European democracy.**⁴¹³ In order for public spheres to be conducive to a functioning democracy, they need to be places where open and free deliberation amongst a variety of actors - citizens, civil society organizations, political actors, media, etc. - can take place. Volt will strengthen the ability of the EU to uphold its citizens’ fundamental rights and to intervene effectively in cases where media freedom and pluralism are threatened in EU member states.⁴¹⁴ For instance, Volt calls on the Commission to propose an Anti-SLAPP (strategic lawsuit against public participation) Directive that will protect independent media from vexatious lawsuits intended to silence or intimidate them.⁴¹⁵ Volt will explore the introduction of further mechanisms that allow for the effective oversight of media independence at the European level, which would be conducted by a politically independent body.
- **Create a truly pan-European public sphere.** Volt shall encourage the EU to act where common rules in the Single Market may be necessary to prevent distortions in the functioning of the media arising from divergent Member State laws, especially with regard to online news and public media.⁴¹⁶ Volt will advocate

⁴¹² A survey conducted by the EU Media Literacy Expert Group in 2016 found that out of the main media literacy stakeholders, over a third were categorised as civil society, followed by public authorities and academia. More than two-thirds of all stakeholders did not have a statutory responsibility in this area but based their engagement on other motivations. For more information, see European Audiovisual Observatory, Mapping of Media Literacy Practices and Actions in EU-28, p. 3, available at http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/document.cfm?doc_id=43878

⁴¹³ The Report of the High Level Group on Media Freedom and Pluralism, A free and pluralistic media to sustain European democracy, available at

<https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/sites/digital-agenda/files/HLG%20Final%20Report.pdf>

⁴¹⁴ For instance, by working to increase the effectiveness of the current procedure after Art. 7 TEU. For more information, see European Parliament, Rule of Law Concerns in Poland: How the Article 7 Procedure Would Work, available at

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/eu-affairs/20180222STO98434/rule-of-law-concerns-in-poland-how-the-article-7-procedure-would-work>

⁴¹⁵ European Parliament, European Parliament resolution of 3 May 2018 on media pluralism and media freedom in the European Union (2017/2209(INI)), available at

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P8-TA-2018-0204+0+DOC+X+ML+V0//EN>

⁴¹⁶ The Report of The High Level Group on Media Freedom and Pluralism, A free and pluralistic media to sustain European democracy, available at

<https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/sites/digital-agenda/files/HLG%20Final%20Report.pdf>

for the creation of pan-European media outlets and for the dissemination of media content throughout the EU, in order to support the emergence of a transnational political public space and democracy, advocate for the cross-border accessibility of national public broadcasting content throughout the EU, and call for an increase of EU support and funding for training of journalists, as well as for quality and investigative journalism in the EU.

- **Incentivize greater media coverage of EU affairs.** Volt will encourage live coverage of national and European parliamentary gatherings by public media as a contribution to fostering the emergence of a pan-European public sphere. It will call for practical measures at the EU and member state levels to incentivize more general media coverage of EU affairs. At the EU institutional level, this might include encouraging regular interviews of Presidents of EU institutions with panels of national media outlets from across the EU.⁴¹⁷ The goal would be to promote a deeper general understanding of the European dimensions of various national policies.⁴¹⁸
- **Support the standards put forth by the Council of Europe to ensure media pluralism in Europe.**⁴¹⁹

2. Fight to ensure that strong and independent public media exists in the member states

- **Ensure sustainable funding for public media.** Encourage member states to grant public funding to media organizations only on the basis of non-discriminatory, objective, and transparent criteria. Work to ensure that a funding provision exists for media which are essential for pluralism (including geographical, linguistic, cultural and political pluralism), but are not commercially viable. Ensure that the EU has the ability to intervene in cases where state budget cuts to media actors endanger media freedom and pluralism. Specify that any EU funding is contingent on the adherence to core EU values as specified in Art. 2 TEU.
- **Ensure media's independence from government interference.** Ensure that public media in the EU member states are free from government interference. Ensure that public media are overseen by independent bodies, such as media

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

⁴¹⁹ Council of Europe, Recommendations and declarations of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in the field of media and information society, available at

<https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680645b44>

councils, that are composed of a politically and culturally diverse membership.⁴²⁰

- **Work to ensure a healthy balance between public and private media journalism.** Public non-profit media have a special role to play in maintaining pluralism and democratic values; were media to only follow free-market principles, cultural and linguistic diversity in Europe would be imperiled. However, in some countries, concerns exist regarding the risk of unfair competition. Recognizing the different legal and organizational contexts in the Member States, Volt will advocate for the strengthening or implementation of relevant control mechanisms, such as the introduction of independent media councils or media ombudspersons, to ensure that a healthy balance between public non-profit and private media exists.
- **Push for the exploration and establishment of innovative mechanisms to involve citizens in public media's programme selection.**
- **Promote the creation of a European media space.** Call for an increase of EU support and funding for the training of journalists as well as for quality investigative journalism in the EU.

3. Create a European Public Broadcasting Platform

- **Work towards the establishment of a common European Broadcasting platform** in order to supply EU citizens with an effective means of receiving information about the political situation in the various member states. Encourage the European Broadcast to serve as a platform for translated content from the national services, with content being made available through multiple channels (radio, television, and internet). The French-German channel Arte⁴²¹ may serve as an example.

4. Support strong and dynamic cultural and creative industry sectors

- **Stress the importance of the cultural and creative industry sectors for vibrant democracies.** Cultural and creative industries are vital to vibrant, pluralistic, and accessible public spheres, as they complement the media in processing information and cultural content in any society. Politically relevant debates are often the subject of literature, music, or theater productions. Furthermore, culture and creativity play an important role in strengthening the unique identity of places. They can also be important drivers and enablers for innovation and entrepreneurship. Culture also has an important role to play in

⁴²⁰ The Report of the High Level Group on Media Freedom and Pluralism, A free and pluralistic media to sustain European democracy, available at

<https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/sites/digital-agenda/files/HLG%20Final%20Report.pdf>

⁴²¹ ARTE, Home, available at <https://www.arte.tv/de/>

promoting social inclusion.⁴²² Europe's shared cultural heritage has served as a unifying force ever since the commencement of European integration after the Second World War, contributing to a shared sense of belonging across the EU. Volt fully supports the European Union's "unity in diversity" motto and stresses the importance of the cultural and creative industry sectors in fostering constructive dialogues within Europe's democracies.

- **Call for an increase in EU funding for transnational cultural cooperation in Europe.** EU funding for culture, through the Erasmus+ programme, supports programmes for Europeans to study, train, gain experience, and volunteer abroad,⁴²³ thus contributing to exchange among Europeans and fostering the emergence of a shared European identity. Funding for the audiovisual, cultural, and creative sector is provided through the Creative Europe programme.⁴²⁴ The EU also supports projects promoting conservation and research in the area of Europe's cultural heritage.⁴²⁵ Volt advocates for an increase in EU funding for transnational cultural cooperation.
- **Decrease the administrative burden to receive funding.** EU funding is often associated with an extremely high administrative burden for applicants, requiring a sizeable investment of time and coordination. This makes it disproportionately difficult for small actors and civil society organizations to apply for funding. At the same time, external funding is of existential importance for many of these smaller actors, with EU funding playing a significant role with regard to their potential to engage in cross-border collaborations. Volt advocates for a decrease in this administrative burden while ensuring that necessary transparency and accountability criteria are upheld.
- **Foster measures to reach the goals of the UNESCO 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.**⁴²⁶

B. Open public data

⁴²² European Commission, Culture, available at

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/themes/culture/

⁴²³ European Commission, Erasmus+, available at <http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/>

⁴²⁴ European Commission, Creative Europe, available at

<https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/>

⁴²⁵ European Commission, Cultural Heritage, available at

<https://ec.europa.eu/research/environment/index.cfm?pg=cultural>

⁴²⁶ UNESCO, Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions 2005, available at

http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=31038&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

The Convention has been ratified by the European Union. See UNESCO, Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, available at

<http://www.unesco.org/eri/la/convention.asp?KO=31038&language=E&order=alpha>

Digitalisation, increased connectivity, openness and transparency are leading to changes in citizen expectations with regard to communicating with, and accessing the data of, public authorities. Open data - data collected by public institutions which is shared with the public - provides an ideal and effective gateway for citizen empowerment. It can provide an objective basis for analysis, debate, and education, as well as empower citizens to make innovative use of the data available to them. It can also be used to foster trust in government institutions, as public authorities have the opportunity to become more effective and efficient, and citizens have the ability to verify political realities. In order for this to happen, however, citizens need the ability and skills to interpret this data. Our call to open public data on the one hand entails a strong commitment to the protection of private data on the other hand, as well as a call to foster educative measures with regard to data interpretation literacy.

- **Strongly advocate for the public availability and openness of public data.** Advocate for understanding open data as a public good, meaning it is non-excludable (everyone has access to it) and non-rivalrous (usage by one person does not reduce the availability to others). Encourage the sharing of public data under an open license and in an open format. Specifically, insist on open-source character of publicly funded research.
- **Insist on the protection of private data and ensure that published public data does not compromise privacy.** Insist on the protection of citizens' privacy with regard to the possibility of aggregating large amounts of data collected by government actors and private authorities. Ensure that no data may be linked to citizens' personal information such as name, identification number, address, etc. Call for an increase in research about measures to safeguard the privacy of citizens, as data about them is collected by public (and private) authorities over a prolonged period of time.⁴²⁷
- **Advocate for a general increase in government transparency.**⁴²⁸ Encourage making government data, priorities, and findings regularly accessible to citizens in a way that is easily understood, e.g. by regularly publishing "user friendly" budget reports and by shedding light on legislative processes. Encourage the sharing of data and services between administrations in order to trigger savings and efficiencies.⁴²⁹
- **Stress the potential positive effects of open data** with regard to knowledge building, citizen engagement, and innovation.

⁴²⁷ Berkman Klein Centre for Internet and Society at Harvard University, Practical Approaches to Big Data Privacy Over Time, available at <https://cyber.harvard.edu/publications/2018/03/BigDataPrivacy>

⁴²⁸ For more details see [Smart State, Administrative effectiveness to reduce waste and improve service quality, Glass State](#), and [Smart State, Administrative effectiveness to reduce waste and improve service quality, Digital revolution, in e-Governance](#).

⁴²⁹ Estonia is using this model effectively with X-Road. For more information see E-estonia, Interoperability Services, available at <https://e-estonia.com/solutions/interoperability-services/x-road/>

- **Make sure that all EU member states and their local authorities comply with the Open Data Charter by 2020.**⁴³⁰ Data should be (1) open by default (i.e. all data gathered by public institutions is published automatically, unless governments can justify keeping it undisclosed), (2) published in a timely and comprehensible manner, (3) accessible and usable (machine readable and under an open license - this ensures that not only companies with highly paid staff can access it, but also ordinary people like high school students or interested retirees), (4) comparable and interoperable, (5) used for improved governance and citizen engagement, and (6) used for inclusive development and innovation.

II. Strengthen the ability of citizens to influence politics

Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantees for all people “the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives”. The functioning of the European Union itself is “founded on representative democracy” as well as participatory democracy,⁴³¹ with a wealth of different variations of democracy at local, national and transnational levels. Everywhere throughout Europe, citizens choose their representatives through the act of elections. Yet electoral democracy is complemented, and can be further strengthened, via elements of participatory democracy. Political innovation in general, and digital technologies in particular, have given rise to a variety of tools and processes that make it possible for citizens to more actively take part in democratic civic life beyond elections alone.

Through widespread public participation in civic affairs and the use of democratic tools, citizens can help assure that their individual and collective interests are being heard and responded to by governments that are held accountable by citizens. Volt advocates for a strengthening of EU democracy and its member states’ democracies through the creation of additional accountability mechanisms. Starting locally, citizens are encouraged to elevate issues to the European level by collaborating across borders using both existing tools - such as freedom of information requests or complaints to the European Commission and EU Ombudsman - and new channels for citizen participation, such as European Citizens’ Initiatives. Volt will engage in a range of capacity-building activities with the goal of enabling meaningful citizen engagement, allowing citizens, governmental institutions, and other actors to enter into a meaningful exchange. In doing so, Volt will strengthen citizens’ ability to influence politics beyond elections alone.

⁴³⁰ The Open Data Charter, available at <https://opendatacharter.net/>

⁴³¹ Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union, article 10 , available at

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:115:0013:0045:en:PDF>

A. Improve accessibility of elections at European, national and local levels⁴³²

- **Ensure that all European citizens have the ability to vote in free and fair elections.** The right to vote is one of the fundamental rights of European citizens. However, several groups of people - such as the disabled, elderly or sick - are currently experiencing difficulties exercising their right to vote due to a lack of accessibility of elections.⁴³³ Volt will push for the removal of current barriers to participation in elections, such as restrictions on legal capacity, lack of access to information and polling stations, and a general lack of awareness among affected groups.⁴³⁴ Ensure that organization and scheduling of elections encourage high voter participation.
- **Encourage EU citizens to exercise their rights to vote in the member state in which they live.** Remove barriers currently hindering EU nationals living in another EU Member State from voting in elections in which they have the right to vote. Encourage Member States to make it easier for mobile EU citizens to register to vote and ease the administrative burden.⁴³⁵
- **Promote measures to incentivize mobile EU citizens to take advantage of their rights and opportunities to participate in their home country's civic and political life.**
- **Explore e-voting.** Advocate for the further development and implementation of e-voting, once security concerns have been successfully addressed. Encourage further research around the issue of e-voting, with the goal of providing all European citizens with a secure, anonymous, verifiable, and accessible electronic vote.

B. Strengthen the ability of citizens to influence politics beyond elections

Volt is strongly engaged in democratising Europe at every level - locally, nationally and transnationally - with a specific focus on giving Europeans a voice regardless of whether they live in their home country or not. Importantly, Volt actively works towards democratizing Europe by treating the European Union as a unique political space for

⁴³² For more details see [EU Reform, Institutional Reform and Governance, The legislative branch](#) and [EU Reform, Institutional Reform and Governance, The executive branch](#)

⁴³³ Inclusion Europe, Recommendations for Accessible Elections in Europe, available at http://inclusion-europe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Policy_Recommendations_EN.pdf

⁴³⁴ Inclusion Europe, Accessible Elections, available at http://inclusion-europe.eu/?page_id=187

⁴³⁵ European Citizen Action Service, Obstacles to Political Rights of EU Citizens: Survey Report, available at <http://ecas.org/obstacles-political-rights-eu-citizens/>

action. Furthermore, Volt is deeply convinced that citizens can provide valuable information, opinions, innovation, leadership, and action, which can contribute to solving local, national, European, and global challenges. In today's fast-paced environment, in order to counteract estrangement between citizens and their political representatives, more productive interaction is needed between them.

The goal is to empower citizens and make them active participants in the political process, creating an environment more conducive for citizens to voice their concerns, offer their ideas, take initiative, and hold governments and their representatives accountable. Government officials and politicians, on the other hand, will be empowered to be closer to their constituencies, able to better understand their challenges, and able to tap into and build on the capacity of their community in order to solve identified challenges more effectively and collaboratively. Citizen engagement shall be promoted as a key factor in shaping the future of European democracy.

1. Strengthen transnational European democracy

- **Utilize and promote the European Union as a unique transnational democratic space.** Volt recognizes the EU as a unique political space that can and should be used for citizens to articulate and organize their political demands. This may happen through coordinated action using established tools at the European level (such as European Citizens' Initiatives, public consultations and petitions) and informal, innovative actions. Volt will enable citizens and civil society organizations to share their challenges and solutions across borders, and learn from each other's best practices. Many regions and local communities across Europe can identify similar challenges. Volt encourages citizens and civil society organizations to organize together around these challenges to find solutions, and bring their challenges to the attention of the relevant institutions and politicians, if necessary.
- **Diminish the threshold to file a European Citizens' Initiative (ECI).** The European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) allows EU citizens to participate directly in the development of EU policies by allowing them to call on the European Commission to make a legislative proposal on matters where the EU has a competence to legislate.⁴³⁶ However, a citizens' initiative currently has to be backed by at least one million EU citizens from at least 7 member states, with a minimum number of signatories⁴³⁷ required in each of these 7 member states.⁴³⁸

⁴³⁶ The rules and procedures governing the citizens' initiative are detailed in Regulation (EU) No 211/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 February 2011 (OJ L 65, 11.3.2011, p. 1), see <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:02011R0211-20150728&from=EN>

⁴³⁷ The number of signatories varies from country to country. See European Commission, The European Citizens' Initiative: Minimum number of signatories per member state, available at <http://ec.europa.eu/citizens-initiative/public/signatories>

⁴³⁸ Since its inception in 2012 only 4 European initiatives have met these requirements. See European Commission, The European Citizen's Initiative: basic facts, available at <http://ec.europa.eu/citizens-initiative/public/basic-facts>

Volt wants to lower the threshold necessary for a European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) by cutting the minimum number of signatories in half, to 500,000.

- **Promote the establishment of a pan-European discussion platform for European citizens.** Europeans everywhere are faced by similar challenges, yet, currently, there is a lack of spaces beyond social media (which pose privacy problems and the algorithms of which are not conducive to substantial debate) where issues can be discussed not only across language barriers but also with relevant stakeholders. A pan-European moderated discussion platform should aim to identify issues Europeans care about in order to then facilitate a moderated exchange beyond party lines among citizens and politicians, political institutions, civil society organizations, and other relevant interest groups. Discussions and exchanges should be moderated by an independent, multi-stakeholder entity adhering to a clear set of principles and values. Facilitation should involve a strong commitment to clear (n)etiquette and a bridging of party lines.

2. Strengthen tools for direct citizen engagement in politics

- **Introduce digital platforms to communicate with administrations.** Administrations shall be incentivised to introduce open digital platforms through which citizens can actively participate in relevant political discussions and decision-making processes.⁴³⁹ Subjects discussed on these kinds of platforms might include local infrastructure proposals or plans for restructuring public spaces. Deliberative processes taking place on such platforms should be transparent, respectful, and take existing administrative rules, frameworks and procedures into account. Participation should be free to all interested persons affected by a particular measure. The online deliberative efforts taking place on the digital platform should be complemented by face-to-face consultations. The highest privacy and security standards should be implemented on the digital platform.
- **Encourage the introduction of citizen assemblies.** Citizen assemblies are an innovative tool to allow citizens to deliberate complex political issues. They can increase the quality and legitimacy of political decisions, especially when the results of citizen assemblies directly influence policy or spending of local funds.⁴⁴⁰ Citizen assemblies should be constructed in such a way that diverse groups of citizens are randomly represented, so that the diversity of the populace is

⁴³⁹ An excellent example is the platform meinberlin, which is the citizen engagement platform of the city of Berlin, Germany. See Berlin.de, meinberlin, available at <https://mein.berlin.de>

⁴⁴⁰ Best practices in this area are Ireland, see The Citizen's Assembly, available at <https://www.citizensassembly.ie/en/>; and the city of Gdansk, Poland, see How the Poles are making democracy work again, available at <http://www.resilience.org/stories/2017-11-22/solutions-how-the-polish-are-making-democracy-work-again-in-gdansk/>

mirrored in the composition of the assembly; this diverse group of people then meets in order to tackle a specific issue. A clear process - involving comprehensive briefings and independent expert input - should enable these citizens to shape informed opinions. These can then be debated in a group, in order to reach a shared output. Respective politicians should be held to account for the implementation of the citizen assemblies' output; for this reason it is important to secure the commitment and support of local politicians from the very beginning. Volt advocates for the implementation of clear mechanisms to trigger a citizen assembly, such as requiring a quorum of signatures to be reached within a particular time frame.

- **Promote participatory budgeting.** Participatory budgeting allows citizens to directly influence and allocate government investments, provided that political buy-in and a respective budget exist.⁴⁴¹ The process of allocating the budget collectively entails a process of deliberation and learning, with the goal of allocating budgets in such a way as to serve the public interest. The set-up of participants should reflect the diversity of the community affected by the budgeting measure. Training and capacity-building for citizens should be provided. Lastly, it needs to be ensured that the process is linked to assemblies or councils that have the power to supervise implementation by the administration.⁴⁴² Thus constructed, participatory budgeting may strengthen citizens' democratic experience and impact. Implementation of participatory budgeting at European level should also be explored.
- **Explore further political innovations for implementation.** All over Europe, innovative ideas regarding the topic of how best to involve citizens in deliberative and political decision-making processes arise all the time. Volt shall continuously explore such novel ideas and approaches. For instance, diverse citizen juries could be involved in shaping the debate around complex and highly politicized European decisions. Citizen audits could complement already-existing checks and balances on EU institutions.⁴⁴³

⁴⁴¹ Best practices of participatory budgeting are Madrid, Paris, Antwerp, and the Netherlands. For example, in Madrid, 100 million EUR are distributed each year via digital citizen deliberation, See Decide Madrid, Decide qué proyectos hará el Ayuntamiento con 100 millones, available at <https://decide.madrid.es/>; For Paris, France, see

https://budgetparticipatif.paris.fr/bp/plugins/download/PB_in_Paris.pdf; In Antwerp, Belgium, a citizen budget also exists, see <https://www.antwerpen.be/nl/overzicht/burgerbegroting-district-antwerpen/nieuws> (in Flemish Dutch); For the Netherlands, see

<http://democraticchallenge.nl/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/We-zijn-begonnen.-Burgerbegroting-in-Nederland-Joop-Hofman-publicatie.pdf> (in Dutch); In Paris, France, see

<https://participedia.net/en/cases/participatory-budgeting-paris-france>

⁴⁴² Yves Sintomer, Carsten Herzberg, Anja Röcke, From Porto Alegre to Europe: Potentials and Limitations of Participatory Budgeting, available at

<http://www.eukn.eu/fileadmin/Lib/files/EUKN/2013/From-Porto-Alegre%20to%20Europe.pdf>.

⁴⁴³ Following an example of a citizens' audit on a local scale in the Netherlands. See XI Update, Citizen Audit Mobilizes Citizen's Insights, available at

3. Empower citizens and governments to take concrete action

- **Enable and empower citizen and government actors to utilize citizen engagement techniques.** Volt advocates for a new way of doing politics, one where citizens feel empowered to actively participate in democratic life and feel their voice makes a difference. Citizens shall be enabled to organize in their communities around issues that are important to them and to act upon their values; they shall also be enabled to hold their government and politicians accountable. Government officials, institutions, and politicians everywhere, on the other hand, should be more responsive to, and might even encourage, citizen action. If citizens are at the centre of political decision-making, and government actors know how to respond to such engagement, democracy will be strengthened.
- **Enable and empower *citizens* to utilize citizen engagement techniques and tools.** Volt strongly advocates for an increase in funding for citizen engagement projects throughout the European civil society sector. Volt also advocates for the introduction of citizen engagement techniques, strategies and tools into educational programmes at the high school and university levels. Such educational measures might be achieved by adding citizen engagement to existing curricula, or they might take the shape of additional (one day or several days) civic engagement classes. Moreover, community organizing and leadership development trainings shall be conducted in local communities, with the goal of actively educating citizens on how to organize and exercise their rights. Volt will also aim to empower citizens through community organizing campaigns, where citizens select the campaign issue and receive training in campaigning and leadership. Volt will thus create and foster the emergence of new community leaders.
 - **Enable and empower *government institutions* to be responsive to citizen engagement.** Volt advocates for the training of government officials and civil servants in the basics of citizen engagement, also with regard to fostering a supportive institutional and organisational culture of respecting and supporting citizen initiatives throughout government. This effort will be helped by the creation of online platforms that enable interactions between citizens and institutions on a local, national, and European level. Institutions shall be enabled to include more or stronger deliberative elements to their decision-making processes, encouraging well-structured public discussions using analogue forums as well as relevant technology.
 - **Enable and empower *politicians* to be responsive to citizen engagement.** Volt will also encourage trainings on community organizing and other citizen engagement frameworks to different political actors, in

order to contribute to a general change in culture within the political landscape.

WORK IN PROGRESS

Challenge +1 - EU Reform

I. Vision for Europe

The European Union is our common project. Following centuries of conflict, we have managed to come together and build a Union that has **ensured peace and prosperity** for over sixty years. **We are proud** of this achievement.

Yet, the Europe we live in has its shortcomings. While others have enjoyed a quicker recovery from the economic crisis, EU countries have remained stuck in their austerity plans and structural deficiencies. Adding to inefficient and opaque public administrations, this has led to **high unemployment rates**, impeding investment and the growth of small businesses. Larger companies have benefited from easier access to a wider market and enjoyed cheaper labour, but workers have **not received harmonised social protections**. Wealthy individuals and companies also continue exploiting legal differences between countries to **avoid paying their fair share**, making everyone else foot the bill. And overall, people **do not feel represented** in the Union and see decisions as imposed upon them from above.

Volt was born out of a crisis of European integration in a time of mistrust for common endeavours. We came together to affirm the strength of the European project, our commitment to joint efforts, and our belief in our shared future. Ours is a message of hope, of audacity, and of solidarity. A message for all to see that the sirens of division will not tear down what we have patiently built. Volt rose in order to be a pillar of the European project and to re-energise its construction. Volt offers European citizens a new vision for Europe, one that **embraces our common aspirations** and remedies our shortcomings.

We believe in a Europe that balances the freedoms of its single market with **strengthened social protections and inclusion**, where companies and labour can move around everywhere and where this flexibility is not detrimental to workers anywhere. Our vision is therefore that of a **social Europe** that successive leaders have often mentioned but never implemented. We support a Europe where solidarity means supporting each other and accepting joint responsibility for our common future, where we actively support the development of our poorer regions and help **raise their standard of living**, and where citizens across the Union can come together to defend their common interests.

We believe in a Europe that **works equally for all**, not just for the privileged few. A Europe where individuals and companies contribute their fair share wherever they may live in the Union. Our vision is therefore that of a Europe that **guarantees equal access** to education, to healthcare and social protection, and to employment opportunities for

all. One where citizens across the continent have the same rights, and trust that they all **contribute and benefit equally** from their involvement.

Finally, we believe in a Europe that ensures the **full representation** of all citizens and opinions. A Europe where citizens of all States, large and small, have their voices heard and their interests represented. Our vision is therefore that of a Europe where a **vibrant democracy** creates an **open space for debate** and allows for all to participate and be recognised and respected in their **diversity**. One where citizens directly elect all their European representatives, hold them accountable for their positions, and have their needs included in the decisions we make for us all. We believe that this new Europe will enable us to be captains of our lives and choices, and to strive for the achievement of our individual ambitions while being part of a stronger community – a community of values.

Beyond its boundaries and despite its flaws, the European project carries a message for the world. It is a testament that centuries of war and opposition can be overcome by common values, that we have more in common than what divides us, and that we can shape our destiny together. Some support a world of “each country for itself”; we have chosen a different course, one of collaboration, where commonly-agreed rules bind the strong and protect the weak, and we are all the better for it. If history is about the choices we make, then we choose to create a more robust and more sustainable Union for future generations and the world at large.

Through the shared peace and prosperity it has provided, Europe has been a tremendous **force for good** in our lives. We are convinced that current shortcomings can and must be addressed through a better Europe. We believe that with more inclusive and more representative institutions, we can create a **new sense of community** based on common values, and together, united, ensure a **better life for all**.

II. Institutional Reform and Governance

Reform of the European Union must start with the reform of its governance and institutions. A house divided against itself cannot stand, and the EU can no longer remain half-integrated and half-split, economically unified and politically nationalised. Therefore, the solution to the Union’s ongoing troubles is not a question of “more Europe” or “less Europe”, but of a “better Europe”, including better institutions.

We believe in democracy; we believe that democracy is the best political system for protecting our individual liberties, human rights, and the rule of law.

And if we believe in democracy, we cannot circumscribe it to certain areas of policy-making only; we must instead exercise it at the local level, at the national level, and at the European level. This very democracy, at all levels, is the key to restoring the trust of European citizens in their institutions, and in agreeing on common solutions to common problems. As we can already see in our national systems, democracy was never about all agreeing – this we can never do – but about managing our disagreements and building a fair decision-making process that we can all support.

Expanding and ensuring democracy at the European level will require fundamental changes in our institutions: some we can achieve right away, yet others will require treaty changes. Volt is fully aware of the difficulty of reforming EU institutions, but we will not let this deter us from pushing for reform in favour of more transparency, more efficiency, and true democracy. This is the only way to achieve a qualitative change and finally realise a federal Europe.

A. General principles

First and foremost in the establishment of good governance and a good government are guiding principles, which all institutions and organisational decisions must aim to entrench. In its policy proposals, Volt follows six guiding principles.

- **Democracy.** Volt supports institutions that give more decision-making power to the European people. This implies both ensuring that citizens' representatives hold the bulk of the power and that these representatives have incentives to represent the general interests of their constituency.
- **Subsidiarity.** Volt supports increased competencies at the European level only if that is the level at which they are best handled. All matters should be handled by the most appropriate level of government.
- **Efficiency.** Volt supports the establishment of institutions that can act, in particular those that are not gridlocked by the need for consensus.
- **Transparency.** Volt supports popular involvement in political decision-making and believe that the people need to have access to what their representatives discuss and decide.
- **Clarity.** Unlike the current institutional set-up, Volt supports institutions and procedures that citizens can understand and make their own.

- ***Ease of citizen involvement.***⁴⁴⁴ Volt supports a system that, from elections to popular contributions, is designed to simplify and encourage citizens' involvement. Our policy proposals below rest upon these principles.

B. The legislative branch

Expressing the voice of the people through their representatives, the legislative branch is the most important institution in a democratic system. It must be elected democratically and be as close to the people as possible, and empowered to draft, discuss and adopt our legislation. Despite national differences, this is a democratic requirement that all European countries have long adhered to, and enshrining democracy at the European level requires a similar arrangement.

The current European legislature is limited in many ways. The European Parliament is directly elected, but its election modalities differ from country to country, and MEPs are often elected at the national level, not locally. Despite having increased its role among European institutions, the European Parliament also still lacks the basic power to draft legislation. And, for its part, the Council of the European Union is made up of various configurations of national ministers depending on the topic under discussion, and often trumps the legislative power of Parliament. As a consequence, some legislation is only passed if there is consensus among the national ministers, bypassing any involvement from the Parliament. Finally, the European Council, an executive body whose role is limited to strategic decision-making by the Treaty of Lisbon, regularly intervenes in day-to-day decision-making, bypassing the regular legislative process.

- **Give the European Parliament the right to legislative initiative.** A Parliament consisting of directly elected representatives is the best-suited body to design laws that respond to the people's demands and needs. As a first step for a more democratic law-making process, Volt supports allowing the European Parliament to initiate laws by granting it the right to legislative initiative. Empowered with this right, the European Parliament will finally be able to propose and discuss legislative proposals stemming directly from the representatives of the people, and not at the initiative or through the filter of national or European executives.
- **Harmonise the adoption of EU legislation.** Currently, the adoption of legislation depends on the topic under discussion. Volt supports submitting all European legislation to both EU legislative bodies – Parliament and Council – for it to become law when approved by both. In case of lingering disagreements between both houses, a dedicated mechanism will attempt to iron out differences. Should there remain disagreements, the European Parliament, as the direct representative of the people, must have the final say.

⁴⁴⁴ For more details, see [Citizen Empowerment. Strengthen citizens' ability to influence politics. Strengthen ability of citizens to influence politics beyond elections. Empower citizens and government to take concrete action.](#)

- **Reform the election of the European Parliament.** The current “degressive proportionality” negates the core principle of “one person, one vote” which ensures equal say for all citizens in the political system. Volt therefore proposes a voting system that enshrines this principle and combines the election of representatives at the lowest level possible with the proportional representation of political parties in Parliament.
 - In this system, Member States are divided into electoral districts of roughly equal population; this division should be made, as far as possible, along pre-existing administrative boundaries, and will be controlled by an independent electoral commission to avoid attempts at gerrymandering.
 - Citizens will have two votes on their voting ballot: one for their local representative – one for each electoral district, thereby ensuring the election of representatives close to the citizens – and one for national lists of European political parties – filling supplementing seats to ensure fair party proportionality in Parliament. The details will feature in a European Electoral Law and apply equally to all Member States.
 - Volt also support the direct election of the President of the European Parliament by Members of Parliament.
- **Reform the Council of the European Union.** Formerly known as the Council of Ministers, the Council is the EU’s second legislative chamber and currently gathers ministers of Member States in charge of the topic under discussion. In the short term, and in order to bring coherence into the Council’s work, Volt supports abolishing the Council’s system of topic-based configurations and replacing them with a single representative for each State. As is the case in Parliament, the Council’s work will be split between initial discussions in preparatory committees composed of a small group of representatives, and plenary sessions for discussions, amendments, and vote.
- **Turn the Council of the European Union into a full-fledged legislative chambre.** In the longer term, Volt strongly supports further democratisation of the Council of the European Union by organising the direct election of its members by the people. Member States would each have two representatives on the Council, in order to balance better political representation with a limited size of the Council. This would also counterbalance population-based apportionment in the European Parliament and strengthen the representation of smaller Member States. Volt also supports terminating the current practice of a rotating presidency. Under this system, every country leads the Council for six months; despite a welcome alternance in leadership, this system prevents any long-term work and keeps important policies issues from being followed through, since the responsible staff is constantly changing. Volt proposes the direct election of a President of the Council by Council members.
- **Improve transparency provisions.**

- According to our general principles, Volt calls for full transparency of the legislative branch, where discussions are broadcast live and recorded, and each representative's vote is registered and made public.
- As a follow-up measure, Volt supports incorporating an obligation for members of the legislatures to vote, and where they do not feel that any choice is appropriate, they may submit a blank ballot.
- When the vote is for an election, in order to give a proper voice to blank ballots and popular discontent, Volt supports invalidating votes with a majority of blank ballots and re-organising them with new candidates.
- In order to prevent backroom deals and late-night arrangements that are clearly detrimental to the proper functioning of democracy, Volt proposes a seventy-two-hour delay between the online publication of a bill and its vote in either legislative house. This is to ensure that citizens and the watchful press are provided at least the minimum amount of time to review and react to the bills that are voted on by representatives.

C. The executive branch

The executive branch has the crucial role of guiding the implementation of laws and contributing to the policy-making process. In order to carry out its duties, it must be reformed to properly reflect popular opinion and be made more efficient in its actions.

- **Enforce existing limits on, and eventually abolish, the European Council.** The European Council currently consists of the European Heads of State or government. In the short term, Volt recalls that its prerogatives must be strictly limited to those prescribed in the treaties, which are to provide “the Union with the necessary impetus for its development and [define] the general political directions and priorities thereof.” It is clearly stated that “it shall not exercise legislative functions.” The European Council should therefore not be involved in everyday political matters, leaving elected representatives to decide. The European Council also enshrines intergovernmental decision-making, which gives undue power to economically strong countries, who can strong-arm smaller or poorer neighbours. In line with our *democracy* principle, Volt supports executive decision-making by truly European, supranational bodies. In the medium-term, Volt calls for the European Council to be abolished entirely.
- **Make the Commission’s portfolios subject-oriented.** Despite a provision in the Lisbon Treaty to limit its size, the Commission is currently hampered in its functioning by the requirement to include as many commissioners as there are Member States, and to provide a portfolio to each Member State. These constraints – which no country would ever implement for itself – are clearly detrimental to the efficient work of the Commission. Volt calls for a removal of these rules and for the President of the Commission to freely decide on the size,

composition and attribution of his/her/their team, with due regards for gender representation, but no considerations for national citizenship.

- **Strengthen the Spitzenkandidaten.** Following the introduction of the Spitzenkandidaten in 2014, Volt supports the nomination of leaders of parties or coalitions for European elections and proposes the election of the President of the Commission by a vote of the newly-elected European Parliament.
- **Move from Commissioners to Ministers, starting by creating positions for Finance and Foreign Ministers.** As an immediate measure, and in order to strengthen economic governance, Volt supports the creation of the position of finance minister for the Union. Likewise, in order to streamline the governance of foreign affairs, Volt calls for the full integration of the European External Action Service (EEAS) into the Commission and the replacement of the position of High Representative/Vice President (HR/VP) by that of Foreign Minister.
- **Establish a true European government.** To thoroughly reform the European executive and increase citizens' empowerment, Volt supports the creation of a 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. The Prime Minister will be directly accountable to Parliament and depend on its confidence; Parliament will be able to withdraw its confidence upon agreeing on a new Prime Minister. A directly-elected European President will sit above parties, sign bills approved by the legislative branch, and ensure the unity of the EU. In periods of regular political activity, the prerogatives of the President will be mostly limited to a ceremonial role.

D. The Judiciary

The Rule of Law is an essential foundation of democracy and ensures that laws are compatible with our principles and values and, in particular, do not infringe on citizens' fundamental freedoms.

- **Extend the prerogatives of the European Court of Justice (ECJ).** In line with the Court's growth in recent years, Volt calls for the extension of the prerogatives of the ECJ to remove the need for national referral, and include a review of the compatibility of national and EU law with EU treaties, and the settlement of relevant disputes to which the European Union is a party, disputes between Member States, between a State and citizens of another State, between citizens of different States, and other similar cases. Appropriate and dissuasive sanctions must be made available to ensure that Member States abide by EU law.

- **Create regional branches of the ECJ.** Accompanying this increased role of the ECJ, Volt supports the creation of branches of the Court, with each branch covering a few countries, to make it better able to handle an increased caseload, place the court and European law closer to the citizens, and improve its overall efficiency.

E. Dispositions for European elected officials

Ensuring democracy and fair representation at the European level is as much a question of institutions as it is of elected officials.

- **Enforce gender equality on party lists.** Mindful of the importance of promoting gender equality in political representation, Volt proposes that all party lists for list-based elections be gender-alternate in their ranking of candidates, meaning the list would not have twice the same gender consecutively.
- **Reform regulations on European political parties.** Volt calls for a reform of the regulations on European political parties in order to support the creation of real European parties, in lieu of the collections of national parties we see today; this must include the recognition of national branches as part of one single European structure and the possibility of joint financing for campaigns across European countries, with proper regulations and monitoring.
- **Ensure a link between representatives and their constituents.** Within the framework of a reformed European voting system, and with a view to strengthen the link between European citizens and their European-level representatives and avoid parties sending unknown candidates across the Union, Volt supports a requirement for locally-elected MEPs to be residents of the district they seek election for.⁴⁴⁵ Likewise, Volt supports candidates to the reformed Council to be citizens of the State they seek election for, regardless of whether this citizenship was acquired through birth or naturalisation.
- **Regulate elective mandates.** In order to propose the constant renewal of the European elected officials, Volt supports reasonable term limits for all European elective positions. These limits, which will be defined in the electoral law, will aim at allowing for the development of professional and qualified political elected officials, while avoiding the encroachment of politicians to their positions. Volt encourages durations of terms for the various mandates that allow a synchronisation of elections, in order to limit the occurrence of electoral campaigns that alter the regular political process. So as to limit the influence of money in politics, campaigns themselves will have a limited duration, and

⁴⁴⁵ An exception shall be made for MEPs who would have moved their residence from their district to Brussels following their election; they shall be able to run for re-election despite not being residents of their districts of election.

campaign finance, including fund acquisition and limits on spending, will be strictly controlled by an independent electoral commission.

- **Build trust in the people's representatives.** Finally, with due concern for the public trust in its institutions and representatives, Volt proposes strict requirements to prevent conflicts of interest. On the one hand, this means a requirement for all European elected officials and candidates to disclose past and present sources of income and any affiliation with or contribution to private businesses, lobby groups, political parties, and associations, be it in a paid or voluntary capacity. On the other hand, it means barring from eligibility to elective Office individuals duly convicted of certain crimes, including corruption, embezzlement, or wilful misuse of public funds. Considering popular representation as a full-time activity, Volt also believes that it is impossible to combine a European elective mandate with other mandates or positions.

F. Other provisions for good governance

Following these main measures for improved European governance and institutions come supplementary provisions aimed at clarifying and facilitating the Union's functionality.

- **Allow the creation of dedicated new institutions.** The European legislature must be given the power to establish all required agencies for the good functioning of the Union. In particular, Volt supports the establishment of an intelligence agency and the transformation of Europol into a real European law enforcement body. Mindful of the importance of regional development and planned and sustainable urbanisation, Volt supports the Committee of the Regions, as well as a new Committee of European Cities, as consultative bodies and platforms for dialogue and best-practice exchange for local decision-makers.
- **Facilitate working communications.** In order to facilitate the Union's policy work, Volt supports the adoption of English as the single *working* language for European institutions – this is irrespective of the languages spoken by the Member States and relates to our principle of Efficiency.
- **Set more predictable rules for secession.** Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty allows Member States to leave the Union but gives no indications as to the way to reach this decision. In order to strengthen rule-based processes and increase predictability, Volt supports the adoption of harmonised rules for secession at the EU level. Volt recognises the complexity of this issue and calls for an open debate for the adoption of proposed rules.

➤ Establish a clear and harmonised framework for regional self-determination.⁴⁴⁶

- Seeking to bring all Europeans together for the benefit of all and believing that we are stronger when we come together, Volt sees secession from a Member State as a last resort. Volt therefore strongly encourages Member States to take all necessary measures to ensure the full representation of all citizens and to account for the legitimate recognition of regional cultural identities. In this spirit, Volt encourages people to work on living together in good faith and emphasises the need for open and inclusive dialogue between local, national and European levels and for proper subsidiarity and decentralisation.⁴⁴⁷
- Should a genuine effort at dialogue fail, if necessary with the intervention of a mediator, Volt recognises the right of a people to self-determinate via the organisation of a peaceful, legal and transparent process in full respect of the rule of law and with a clear assessment of the legal outcome of secession, including outstanding financial obligations.⁴⁴⁸ Unless under exceptional circumstances, including clear and large-scale violations of human rights,⁴⁴⁹ a region should not unilaterally declare independence from its Member State.
- If a strong will for self-determination is expressed, for instance through a qualified majority and with a turnout threshold, Volt supports a negotiated process of secession between the self-determining region and its member-State; should a genuine and constructive effort at negotiations fail or one party willingly stall, Volt recommends the intervention of a European mediator – for instance, the proposed President of the EU⁴⁵⁰ – to ensure the process moves forward.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁴⁶ In this policy, Volt considers “region” any given determined area within a Member State, whether it formally holds the title of region or not.

⁴⁴⁷ “A rational discourse about regional identities and economic, social and cultural interests could be a source of strength, draining away much of the peril from the current fractious secession conflicts.” Social Europe, Learning From Catalonia: To Secede Or Not To Secede?, available at <https://www.socialeurope.eu/learning-catalonia-secede-not-secede>

⁴⁴⁸ “The constitutionalization of a right to secede emerges as a means to soothe secessionist tendencies (as with Quebec and Scotland) or prevent political escalation into a potential armed conflict (as with New Caledonia and Montenegro).” Max Planck Encyclopedia of Comparative Constitutional Law, Secession, available at <http://oxcon.ouplaw.com/view/10.1093/law-mpeccol/law-mpeccol-e459>

⁴⁴⁹ “Any attempt to claim legal secession [...] must at least show that: [...] the state from which they are seceding seriously violates their human rights; and there are no other effective remedies”, American Society of International Law, Kosovo’s Declaration of Independence: Self-Determination, Secession and Recognition, available at <https://www.asil.org/insights/volume/12/issue/2/kosovo-s-declaration-independence-self-determination-secession-and>

⁴⁵⁰ In the absence of a President of the EU, a mediator can be agreed by the parties or proposed by the European Parliament.

⁴⁵¹ Newsweek, Europe Must Step In and Resolve the Moves Toward Catalonia Secession, available at <http://www.newsweek.com/europe-must-step-and-resolve-moves-toward-catalonia-secession-693826>

- Should the self-determining region choose to leave the European Union as well,⁴⁵² a negotiated process will take place with the Union. For self-determining regions wishing to remain in the Union, Volt recommends the creation of status of “Territory of the European Union”, where the region would be temporarily placed following its secession from its Member State and before its potential access to full EU membership.⁴⁵³ A Territory would remain subject to EU legislation and would be required to fulfil all obligations of a Member State. It will retain benefits such as full access to the single market and free movement; however, it would not benefit from new EU funding or investments and only have a non-voting representation in the European Parliament and no representation in the Council.⁴⁵⁴ The decision to admit a Territory as a member of the Union would be similar to the regular accession procedure to EU membership.
- **Set up a two-tier integration system.** With the goal of promoting increased European integration and avoiding a blocking need for consensus, Volt supports proposals for a two-tiered integration model that allows willing countries to move forward with the integration of policy competences. This system should aim at deepening integration in a coherent manner, and Volt strongly opposes “à la carte” models where Member States pick and choose the policies they subscribe to. In this system, countries willing to move forward with integration would make up the first tier and uniformly forge ahead together. This system must not seek to penalise members of the second tier but, on the contrary, give them incentives to join the first tier and contribute to a more integrated and unified Europe.
- **Draft and adopt a European Constitution.** Finally, in order to streamline the Union’s functioning, Volt strongly supports the adoption of a European Constitution replacing existing EU treaties and detailing the fundamental rights and responsibilities of citizens and the EU’s institutional arrangements. As a legal and political document, this Constitution should be concise, readable, and understandable by citizens. Unlike current treaties, it should not try and integrate all aspects and provisions of EU law, but focus on core institutional aspects and leave the rest for the legislature to record into regular EU legislation. Volt strongly supports the writing and adoption of this Constitution by representatives of European citizens.

⁴⁵² In case of referendum for self-determination, voters should be provided the opportunity to express whether they wish to remain in or leave the Union.

⁴⁵³ Max Planck Encyclopedia of Comparative Constitutional Law, Overseas Territories, Australia, France, Netherlands, New Zealand, United Kingdom, United States of America, available at <http://opil.ouplaw.com/view/10.1093/law:epil/9780199231690/law-9780199231690-e1076?prd=EPL>

⁴⁵⁴ In either councils, in the current structure of the EU; in the only remaining Council, in Volt’s proposed structure.

III. Economic & Finance Reform

A. Vision

Volt envisions a European economic and financial system that works for all its citizens and for European society as a whole. This means that the European economic system should serve all European citizens and enable them to pursue their individual ambitions and act as full members of European society. Volt believes that we can only flourish as individuals if we respect and contribute to a community based on common values which apply to all of us. These values and principles – solidarity, sustainability, equal opportunities, liberty, justice and human dignity – build the groundwork for our community and must also apply to our economic and financial systems.

Volt believes that a strong Europe requires fiscal and monetary institutions, which (1) are democratically legitimised, (2) act in accordance with our shared norms, and (3) are able to act in the interest of the Union as a whole. Hence, we envision an institutional completion of the Eurozone, creating a better Union for all residents.

In terms of its economic setup, we believe in a European Union that holds true to being a Union of solidarity, in which every country feels responsible for the destiny of the Union. Hence, the individual States need to be responsible for their economic activity, and in times of sovereign debt crisis, States should be able to go into default. At the same time, automatic stabilisers should alleviate the hardship in times of crisis and a Eurozone+ Budget should serve as an emergency insurance to guarantee basic functions, such as unemployment benefits and payment of civil servants, if a State is stripped of its capacity to do so. The economic setup should smooth the buildup of asymmetric shocks, as monetary policy and interest rates cannot be adapted to individual economic conditions in a currency union. In sum, while European economic governance should always aim to function for all its citizens, in times of hardship there needs to be a social safety net that will ensure that the most vulnerable groups remain protected and that a minimum living standard is guaranteed.

B. Euro Summit & Eurogroup

With the creation of the European Monetary Union (EMU), the responsibility for monetary policies was transferred to a new European supranational institution, the European Central Bank, as single monetary authority. However, the economic policy-making decisions remained to be made by national governments. This became particularly evident during the Eurozone crisis, when the Heads of State or Government and the 18 Ministers of Finance and Economic Affairs served as key policy-makers. Economic policy-making was mainly done at the intergovernmental level, excluding the scrutiny of the European Parliament and the involvement of the Commission or EU Member States outside the Eurozone. Institutional manifestations are, for example, the

Eurogroup and the Euro Summit. The Eurogroup entails informal meetings of the Eurozone's finance ministers, and played a decisive role in managing the Euro crisis. The Euro Summit is an informal platform for meetings between the Heads of State or Government of the Euro area.

- **Provide democratic legitimacy to EU economic policymaking and make it work for everyone.** Volt thus proposes economic and financial policy to be decided by the Parliament and Council as co-legislators. First, Finance Ministerial meetings need to be formalised in an entirely transparent setting in preparation for the transition to a two-chamber federal system. Informal meetings of, and decisions taken by, Heads of Governments in general, and in particular of countries in the Eurozone, need to be abolished immediately to ensure the realisation of the principles of democracy and accountability by a clear divide of competency between legislative and executive branches. Therefore, the position of an EU Economic and Finance Minister will be established to increase democratic accountability for EU economic policy.

C. European Central Bank

The European Central Bank's (ECB) primary objective is to maintain price stability of the Eurosystem and of the single monetary policy to enable a "favourable economic environment and a high level of employment."⁴⁵⁵

- **Broaden the mandate of the ECB.** Ten years down the line, the effects of the Eurozone crisis – namely high unemployment, persistently low investment, and minimal economic growth – are still being felt, particularly in the South of Europe. This poses major societal challenges. Europe also faces global environmental challenges, such as environmental degradation and climate change. This is why, for improved monetary governance, Volt envisions an ECB that, while still firmly independent, is empowered with a wider mandate, including considerations of unemployment, sustainable growth, and crisis prevention and mitigation in its policy-making, similar to the mandate of the US FED.⁴⁵⁶

D. Eurozone+ Budget

All Eurozone countries share a common currency with common interest and exchange rates, while their position in the business cycle,⁴⁵⁷ as well as the structure of their

⁴⁵⁵ European Central Bank, Objective of monetary policy, available at <https://www.ecb.europa.eu/mopo/intro/objective/html/index.en.html>

⁴⁵⁶ Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, The Federal Reserve's Dual Mandate, available at <https://www.chicagofed.org/research/dual-mandate/dual-mandate>

⁴⁵⁷ This indicator shows whether a country is doing well or not compared with the past performance.

economies, may differ substantially.

- **Set up a Eurozone+ Budget.** In order to address this, a budget needs to be set up through new EU own-resources, including a common corporate tax and other means. This will have three major features: (1) Given the cyclical nature of the economy and taxes, the EU budget will implicitly smooth business cycles across countries. (2) Such a budget will allow for common European public goods (such as defense and transnational energy networks) to be financed at the European level. (3) Lastly, this budget will serve as an insurance mechanism in times of crises: Volt will allow for emergency funding at the European level to provide basic services such as unemployment benefits and payment for public sector workers, in case a State is incapable to fulfill these obligations. While this budget will be primarily aimed at Eurozone Member States, it should be open for all other EU Member States for voluntary participation – hence, Eurozone+.

E. European Stability Mechanism

The European Stability Mechanism (ESM) is the Eurozone's bailout fund and a key mechanism for the stability of the Eurozone. It is currently run by national governments and thus works as an intergovernmental mechanism. Volt supports the ESM becoming an institution under EU law supervised by the European Parliament. The transformation of the ESM should respect the following three key aspects:

- **Make the ESM a credible backstop for banking resolution.⁴⁵⁸** The Single Resolution Fund lacks a fiscal backstop and is limited in its financial capacity. Whilst this may be sufficient for individual bank failures, the risk of this fund draining in a systemic crisis remains. As this would in turn reinforce the bank-sovereign nexus, there needs to be a credible European fiscal backstop. The ESM should provide this function by providing a standing credit facility backed by the ECB.
- **Integrate the ESM into regular EU law.** The current form of the ESM is dysfunctional and undemocratic. Decisions to provide financial assistance to a member country are not taken by a majority vote but by unanimity and require prior approval by some national parliaments. The European Parliament in contrast has no rights in this regard. The governance of the ESM should reflect common voting procedures in the EU (qualified majority voting), and should become a full EU body, subject to EU law and fully embedded in EU accountability mechanisms under the watchful eye of the European Parliament. In the short term, regarding governance, the ESM board should be comprised of national Finance Ministers as well as Euro area officials appointed by the

⁴⁵⁸ Rolf Strauch, Speech at EBI Global Annual Conference on Banking Regulation, available at <https://www.esm.europa.eu/speeches-and-presentations/%E2%80%9Ceuro-area-banks-deepening-mone>
[ty-union%E2%80%9D-speech-rolf-strauch](#)

European Council and elected by the European Parliament. In the long term, the ESM should fall under the competency of the EU Finance Minister, who will be accountable to the European Parliament.

- **Provide for debt restructuring under certain conditions.** Volt opposes any automatic debt restructuring, as it may give rise to self-fulfilling speculation against a State's insolvency. However, Volt acknowledges that there may be room to codify IMF practices concerning debt restructuring within the ESM, if debt sustainability is threatened. Nevertheless, any such move forward should be conditional on the completion of the banking union, the creation of a European safe asset and a solution for legacy debt.

F. Banking Supervision

The single supervisory mechanism (SSM) is the first pillar of the banking union. Under the SSM, the ECB is the central prudential supervisor of financial institutions in the euro area and in non-euro EU countries that choose to join the SSM. The ECB directly supervises the largest banks, while national supervisors continue to monitor the remaining banks. The ECB and national supervisors work closely together to check that banks comply with EU banking rules and to tackle problems early on.⁴⁵⁹

- **Create a fully European banking supervision system.** Europe has progressed significantly with respect to banking supervision. The approval of a Single Supervisory Mechanism (SSM) allows for a harmonised approach to regulation, where the ECB and national central banks share responsibility and labour. 118 banks, comprising 82% of total banking assets in the Euro area, are now under direct scrutiny of the ECB.⁴⁶⁰ Volt strongly supports the Europeanisation of Banking Supervision, as it creates a level playing field for European banks and increases financial stability through harmonised rules and increased transparency.

G. Competences of an EU Economic and Finance Minister

Currently, executive decisions in Eurozone and EU economic policy-making are being made in an opaque manner involving the Commission, the Eurogroup and Euro Summit.

- **Create an EU Economic and Finance Minister.** As a first step of economic governance reform, Volt supports the Commission's proposal to create a

⁴⁵⁹ European Commission, Single supervisory mechanism, available at https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/banking-and-finance/banking-union/single-supervisory-mechanism_en

⁴⁶⁰ European Central Bank, The Single Supervisory Mechanism, available at <https://www.bankingsupervision.europa.eu/about/theSSM/html/index.en.html>

European Minister of Economy and Finance. This will strongly increase accountability and transparency in EU economic governance. In the short term, with the current institutional structure, this Minister would be both a European commissioner and chair monthly meetings of eurozone finance ministers – the so-called Eurogroup. The position should be created as soon as November 2019, when a new European commission takes office. The Minister will have to report to the European parliament and represent Europe on the international economic stage, such as the International Monetary Fund. Significantly, the ministerial role would be a pan-European job, rather than a Eurozone-only one - a sign to stress unity.⁴⁶¹ The inclusion of non-Euro countries under the representation of the EU Finance Minister will have to be subject to their compliance over the proposed EU fiscal policy reform. In the long term and with the abolishment of the Eurogroup, the position of EU Finance Minister will have its own ministerial staff, guide the implementation of economic and fiscal laws, and contribute to the policy-making process under the scrutiny of the legislative branches.

H. EU Corporate Tax

In order to stop tax evasion and generate tax revenues at the European level that feed a European Budget, Volt proposes to introduce an EU Corporate Tax. The tax implementation will centre around three critical issues:

- **Introduce an EU-wide definition on how to calculate corporate taxes to reduce avoidance opportunities.** An EU-wide definition of what constitutes taxable profits or revenues needs to be introduced. Clear accounting rules that are equal across Member States will determine how taxable income is calculated, which is needed in order to allow taxation where revenue and profits are generated. Companies active in one country and lacking agility due to limited financial and legal resources should not be subject to unfair competition with multinationals. Introducing a common corporate tax base at the EU level should be the first step, although a global deal is the ultimate goal. In particular, common definitions on what can be accounted for as Research & Development expenses, Debt and Equity financing, as well as Investments and Depreciation need to be established. Clear rules to link tax payments to the origin of the income need to be created, as do geographical rules that allow for the nations to benefit from profits that are made within their jurisdiction.
- **Introduce a baseline corporate tax rate to fight tax havens.** Volt supports a baseline corporate tax rate across the Union and to be levied by EU institutions; Member States will be able to supplement this with a State-level rate.

⁴⁶¹ The Guardian, Europe should have its own economy and finance minister, says EC, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2017/dec/06/europe-should-have-its-own-minister-of-economy-and-finance-says-ec>

- **Implement monitoring practices within large corporations.** A full-scale review of corporate tax systems across EU countries should be implemented to monitor practices within large corporations, in particular transnational corporations, that aim at reducing their tax burden through sophisticated legal structures with no real economic purpose. This effort is complementary to the OECD's BEPS initiative and aims at monitoring and countering new tax evasion practices.
- **Register beneficial owners of every company, organisation, and trust.**⁴⁶² Tax evasion comes at a dramatic cost for societies and therefore cannot be tolerated, especially when perpetrated by large and profitable corporations. A first step in fighting tax evasion is to force offshore/mailbox companies, organisations, and trusts to register their beneficial owners in a compulsory and public registry.

I. Concentration charges

Within the Eurozone, the fate of a State and its banking sector are intimately linked to each other due to the so-called “home bias”. This “home bias” describes a situation in which banks hold significant portions of their own State’s debt (e.g. government bonds), creating a situation where failure of any of the two parties can easily lead to the failure of the other. This vicious dependency of banks and States is called the “sovereign-bank nexus”.

- **Break the sovereign-bank nexus.**⁴⁶³ If a sovereign restructuring regime is to be credible, then the sovereign-bank nexus must be broken for good. In order to build on efforts of reducing contagion from banks to States, Volt proposes the introduction of concentration risk charges for sovereign exposures to reduce contagion from States to banks. This could take the form where banks would have to diversify their national bond portfolio and also hold bonds from States other than their ‘own’. Introducing capital charges for concentrations to sovereigns will incentivise a diversification of banks’ sovereign portfolios across Eurozone Member States. This allows for risk-sharing and an orderly default, if necessary.

J. European deposit insurance

- **Create an EU-wide deposit insurance.** A European Deposit Insurance will add to breaking the sovereign-bank nexus. This is because the risk of bank runs is no longer dependent on the solvency of the sovereign that provides the deposit

⁴⁶² Financial Action Task Force (FATF), Recommendations 24 and 25, available at <https://rm.coe.int/international-standards-on-combating-money-laundering-and-the-financin/16807150db>

⁴⁶³ Nicolas Veron, Bruegel & Peterson Institute for International Economics, available at http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=IPOL_STU%282017%29602111

insurance. Such a Europeanisation of deposit insurance consequently reduces the likelihood of bank runs and thereby increases financial stability. Due to moral hazard concerns, its introduction must be conditional on a prior diversification of sovereign exposures and a risk reduction in balance sheets. This means that a bank has to demonstrate it has invested in a wide range of areas, so that its risk on investment is responsibly spread out. Otherwise, banks might use the new insurance scheme to pile into riskier investments, undermining financial stability.

K. The Stability and Growth Pact

The Stability and Growth Pact (SGP) is an agreement, among the 28 Member States of the EU aimed to facilitate and maintain the stability of the EMU by ensuring fiscal discipline and agreeing on common limits on government deficits (3% of GDP) and debt (60% of GDP).

- **Reform the SGP.** The Stability and Growth Pact proved to be ineffective at preventing the buildup of unsustainable debt levels. The pact is too inflexible to allow for strong countercyclical policies once a crisis materialises, and its rules prevent necessary smart and sustainable investment across Europe and lead to unnecessary and harmful reductions in public service provisions. This stifles economic growth, leading to social and political instability, distrust, and alienation. Volt proposes transparent fiscal rules which incentivise prudent fiscal policies and allow for flexibility in counteracting cases of macroeconomic shock.

IV. Justice & Home Affairs

A. Vision

Volt wants a Europe that ensures citizens' rights are respected throughout the Union. Citizens must be able to participate fully in the democratic process. This includes the right to vote for and stand as a candidate wherever they are registered as a resident, be it in local, regional, national, or European elections. Citizens must not be discriminated against on the basis of their nationality, sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, or sexual orientation.

Volt wants a Europe in which citizens shall be able to move and reside freely within the EU. This is one of the four pillars on which European integration rests, and is essential for a prosperous, free, and inclusive European society. To guarantee free movement internally, external borders need to be managed more effectively, efficiently and humanely. This is a common challenge that should not be left to individual States, but one that Europe should take on as a community respecting the common principle of solidarity.

Volt wants a Europe whose Member States adhere to the principles of democracy and the rule of law, building on the European Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights. These principles are the bedrock of the political community: both aspiring and current Member States need to fully respect them, and if these are violated, Europe must have the power to restore them.

Volt wants a Europe that protects its citizens and makes them feel secure. Europe needs more than just police cooperation and intelligence sharing between Member States; it needs its own capacities and legal competence to safeguard the security of its people. This is much more important than the sensitivities and prestige of national elites. At the same time, threat perceptions by political leaders should not be exaggerated; the level of objective security is unprecedented in European history, and it is the responsibility of political actors to act on objective facts and not exaggerate threats to pursue their own political agendas.

B. Border protection

The protection of European borders should become an exclusive competence of the European Union. Current national border protection should be integrated into a coherent and efficient European border protection system. The EU needs a political community that supports all its Member States when necessary to protect common borders. Volt believes we must insist on a political community that ensures human rights are upheld throughout its jurisdiction, including on its borders and beyond.

A functioning protection of the EU border is a prerequisite for the free movement of people within the EU. Therefore, we want to create and support a system that upholds the integrity of EU borders, fights cross-border crime, and ensures the safety of European residents. We want an EU border protection system that provides initial reception of asylum seekers in an orderly and humane way, upholds European values, and makes sure that first points of contact with refugees exemplify what European citizens stand for.

- **Develop the capacities of a fully operational European border protection agency.** Volt supports developing the European Border and Coast Guard Agency from an intergovernmental agency that largely coordinates national services to an integrated European agency with a full mandate and capabilities to act and react. The European agency will be staffed with its own border guards and equipment through new funds from the EU budget, to act independently of Member States' contributions. Initially, it will conduct joint trainings for national border guards. Later, this will develop to integrate national structures into the European agency in order to avoid the inefficiencies that come from duplication.

- **Ensure European Parliamentary scrutiny.** Competencies and budgets need to be clarified between EU institutions and Member States in order to increase transparency, while ensuring that mixed accountabilities between national and European parliaments are a matter of the past. Ultimately, there needs to be clear parliamentary control by the European Parliament of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency and the future European border protection agency.
- **Ensure the protection of values at our borders.** The protection of our borders goes hand in hand with the protection of our shared values. It is here that people from all over the world receive their first impression of Europe. Their aspirations for building a better life in Europe must be encouraged by how we welcome them; they must always be treated with respect and dignity, as well as with respect to the rule of law. Therefore, the European Charter of Fundamental Rights should be a guidepost for the agency, incorporated in its mission statement, compliance system and accountability to the European Parliament. The disruption of human smuggling and trafficking networks should always go hand in hand with search and rescue operations, as well as welcoming operations for asylum seekers and refugees.
- **The ongoing intra-Schengen border controls should stop as soon as we have a functioning external EU border.** The personnel involved in controlling intra-Schengen borders should instead be deployed to external borders, including internal external borders (e.g. international airports), on a rotating basis, with extra compensation for being far away from home. Countries without an external border should commit a quota of personnel to the external border based on their population size. Where this turns out not to be feasible, countries should provide extra funding for the protection of the external border instead.

C. European police, intelligence, and cyber security

Volt supports the unification of national police, intelligence, and cyber security services across Europe, starting with automatic information-sharing, to identify and address cross-border crimes and threats. As the EU's law enforcement agency, Europol's competences in these areas should be gradually extended, its capabilities strengthened, and it should be brought under tighter parliamentary oversight. In the long term, the agency should develop into the EU's federal-level police department.

- **Extend Europol's competences.** Cooperation between European police agencies on information sharing should be strengthened. There should be more binding mechanisms for sharing information that is vital for combating cross-border crime, terrorism and cyber security threats. Europol's direct access to relevant information from Member States' police forces should be considered. In the long-term, Europol should be given exclusive competence for fighting cross-border crime, terrorism and cyber security threats.

- **Build up Europol's capabilities.** Europol's independent operative capabilities should be strengthened gradually. At first, building up cyber security capabilities must be a priority; Member States should channel their resources into common European cyber security capabilities instead of building up national cyber security agencies. Capabilities should also be developed to support each Member State's fight against cross-border crime and terrorism. This would be the basis for an independent federal-level operative capability.
- **Strengthen European parliamentary oversight.** As Europol's competences and capabilities are expanded, its democratic accountability must be strengthened. There should be a committee to account for Europol's operations, as well as a Commissioner in charge of Europol. Interior ministers of the Member States should be involved in this process as well, especially with regard to cooperation between national police services.
- **Establish a European corps** to close the gap in the internal security architecture. New threats like military-style terrorism or large scale natural disasters are borderless and bring our current security authorities to their limits in manpower and competences. In order to cope with these challenges, we need a new security agency, a European corps, which will support national and local forces by performing civilian, police and partly military tasks. This corps will consist of reservists, and can be requested by any Member State for assisting local security forces, including stepping in after terrorist attacks to ensure public order and protect strategically important and representative facilities and places. It will also help in the event of natural disasters, such as floods, earthquakes, forest fires, or epidemics with equipment, coordination, and manpower. Furthermore, this European corps can fulfil representative tasks like giving honour at State visits on a European level. National equivalent, such as the newly-formed French National Guard, should be merged in this European corps.

D. Migration and refugee policy

Volt believes that we need a common EU Migration and Refugee Policy to define a unified approach to manage inward migration and refugee flows. Member States need to take major steps towards a common system to handle applications and appeals, resettle migrants among Member States, and return rejected applicants to their countries of origin. But there is more scope for the EU to use its leverage to sign readmission agreements with countries of origin, or to support Member States in brokering readmission agreements. The EU can also deploy a wide range of incentives to secure readmission agreements, from visa policies to bilateral aid.

This common policy approach should operate as part of a larger framework for international cooperation on the prevention and mitigation of refugee crises. This is why

the Dublin system needs to be reformed and a new settlement system defined, for instance based on population, population density, wealth, age, and growth. The amended system should provide for penalties for contravening countries.

1. Abiding by the UN Refugee Convention

A common EU asylum agreement must include binding mechanisms to ensure that all EU Member States follow the provisions of the UN Refugee Convention.⁴⁶⁴ This includes:⁴⁶⁵

- **Work together with the developing world**, which is hosting more than 80% of the world's refugees,⁴⁶⁶ to reform the international refugee system.
- **Anticipate future refugee movements**. It is necessary for the EU to not simply respond to, but also plan for refugee movements.
 - Put aside a budget for refugee protection every year, even when there is no refugee movement. In the long term, it will definitely be necessary to have this, because, for example, of the rising number of climate refugees the EU will have to process.
 - Identify, inventarise, and register possible accommodation for future refugee flows. The EU should have an accessible database of housing where refugees can stay for five to seven years to ensure continuous protection.
 - Create burden-sharing allocations in advance of refugee movements. Volt advocates quotas for Member States to allocate refugees.
- **Strengthen cooperation with UNHCR**. The EU must increase its support for UNHCR and create increased synergies between its own refugee management frameworks and the work of UNHCR.

2. Principle of country of first arrival

- **Immediately abolish the 'Dublin principle'** that refugees must apply for asylum in their first EU country of arrival. A burden-sharing settlement system must come in its stead.

3. Other provisions

- **Empower the European Asylum Support Office** to be the primary centre for decision-making on asylum issues across the EU and achieve EASO's

⁴⁶⁴ UNHCR, Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, available at <http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10>

⁴⁶⁵ Open Global Rights, A global solution to a global refugee crisis, available at <https://www.openglobalrights.org/global-solution-to-global-refugee-crisis/>

⁴⁶⁶ UNHCR, Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2016, available at <http://www.unhcr.org/5943e8a34>

transformation into a full-fledged Agency for Asylum, as proposed in 2016 by the European Commission. Additionally, the EASO should offer more trainings for asylum officers to ensure a more humane treatment of refugees.⁴⁶⁷

- **Ensure that asylum seekers' and refugees' rights are respected** and that countries uphold their obligations arising out of international treaties.
 - Put an end to the practice of detaining asylum seekers and refugees (on Greek islands, in Hungary, etc.) and work on an alternative solution.⁴⁶⁸
- **Continue the practice of protecting refugees for the duration of the risk.**⁴⁶⁹ However, offer permanent residence to refugees after a certain period if they are still at risk (five to seven years) when certain criteria are met.⁴⁷⁰ However, refugees should always be encouraged and supported to return to their home countries, if they are safe, to be part of the rebuilding efforts. Immediate permanent integration, however, is required for certain types of refugees, such as unaccompanied minors or refugees with severe trauma from, for example, a conflict situation.
- **Strengthen legal channels for migration.** The EU needs to strengthen its legal channels for migration through visa programmes, scholarships, and work permits to avoid readmission agreements, which will in any case only be struck if the EU provides additional development funding to source countries. EU aid could be paid in instalments, and returns could be limited to future arrivals only, so that States would not have to worry about a sudden spike in returns when people that are already in Europe are sent back to their country of origin.
- **Establish a long-term strategy.** The EU needs a long-term strategy to reduce incentives to migrate. In the long run, migration can only be reduced by ensuring security and economic opportunities in countries of origin. But the number of people attempting to reach Europe will continue to increase until the potential prospects of a better future in Europe due, for instance, to income differences between sub-Saharan Africa and EU Member States, will not be addressed.

V. Foreign & Neighbourhood Policy Reform

⁴⁶⁷ The continuing failure of the Common European Asylum System, available at <http://thomasspijkerboer.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/den-heijer-rijpma-spijkerboer-CMLR-def.pdf>

⁴⁶⁸ Asylum in Europe, Boundaries of liberty: Asylum and de facto detention in Europe, available at <http://www.asylumineurope.org/sites/default/files/shadow-reports/boundariesliberty.pdf>; Human Rights Watch, Greece: 13,000 Still Trapped on Islands, available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/03/06/greece-13000-still-trapped-islands>

⁴⁶⁹ See more details at [Migration](#)

⁴⁷⁰ For example, clean track record, language skills, and knowledge of key elements of the country.

A. Vision

Volt believes that European integration is one of the biggest achievements of international politics in the 20th century. However, the ongoing destabilisation of the global order calls for a far more proactive and coherent EU foreign policy. Our vision is that of an outward-looking Europe that plays a constructive and stabilising role in the world and does not shirk responsibility but uses its political and economic weight to stand up for multilateralism, peaceful conflict resolution, and a coordinated response to global challenges such as nuclear proliferation, climate change, or economic imbalances. The EU should tell its success story of integration and achieving peace and prosperity after centuries of conflict to promote integration and diffuse tensions in other parts of the world. Europe must be an example of how former enemies can become friends and partners in a common project, and of how democracy can be organised beyond the nation-state for the benefit of citizens. The EU should encourage the replication of its success elsewhere through the promotion of regional integration across the world and support to multilateral institutions, most notably the United Nations. At the same time, the EU must recognise that some challenges, including in its own neighbourhood, cannot be solved in the short term or by the EU alone. Volt thus supports the adoptions of a two-pronged approach to increase its capacity to withstand crises it cannot solve in the foreseeable future, while working within multilateral institutions and with key partners towards a solution of these crises in the longer term.

Apart from supporting multilateral institutions, the EU should also seek to engage bilaterally with key partners around the globe. For this, the European External Action Service (EEAS) should be strengthened and EU representations around the world should be transformed into EU embassies. The EU also needs to step up its efforts to stabilise and integrate its immediate neighbourhood.

B. EU Institutional Capacity - Reform of the EEAS

- **Adopt a common foreign policy through a bolstered EEAS.** In the longer term, Volt calls for foreign policy – as trade policy before it – to become an exclusive EU competence. This new EU competence will be managed by a strengthened External Action Service (EEAS). EU delegations must become EU embassies, be extended wherever necessary, and replace Member States' embassies. However, Member States may retain representation to further their interests. The guiding principles of this new EEAS' work will be to uphold and promote the above-mentioned European values and interests, and support the global implementation of development agendas, including the global Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals. Consequently, EU representation will replace member-State representations in all international fora, including through a single UN ambassador.

- **Strengthen the role of the European Parliament in matters of EU foreign policy.** Volt calls on the European Parliament to decide on all cases of political and economic sanctions, including trade embargoes, imposed by the EU on third countries or individuals. This would help make the EU's foreign policy more democratic, making it easier for Member States to transfer powers in this area to the European level and to make Parliament the forum for debates on Europe's role in the world, thus raising its visibility and profile.

C. EU relationships with the United Nations and other multilateral institutions

Highly connected to the rest of the world, Europe is also highly exposed to its lingering problems; Europe therefore stands to directly benefit from multilateral action in favour of increased development and a greater respect for human rights, in particular in the Least Developed Countries.

The United Nations, through its work on the peaceful resolution of disputes, humanitarian aid, development and global health, is the cornerstone of the international system. Volt shares and supports its values of peace, justice, human rights, and shared prosperity. With its near-universal membership, it is by far the most legitimate actor for global action. Yet, we are not blind to its shortcomings and the limitations triggered by its organisational set-up and financing mechanism. Volt therefore supports reform efforts that better enable the United Nations to fulfill its ambitious mandate and give it the tools to act more decisively and more efficiently. As supporters of democracy, Volt also believes that no transfer of power should take place without ensuring democratic control of those powers. Volt therefore supports increased democratic control of the UN by its Member States.

Likewise, Volt supports cooperation and multilateral action in other fora, from development and economic governance with the various "G" formats, the OECD, regional organisations, and international financial institutions, to security cooperation with the OSCE, NATO and other ad-hoc fora with like-minded countries.

1. Relationship with the United Nations

- **Honour and strengthen commitments to the United Nations.** As a trustworthy and rule-bound global player, the EU must uphold its financial commitments to the UN regular budget and support efforts to increase this budget. Volt calls for an increase in voluntary contributions to the UN and its agencies, funds, and programmes, with particular attention given to increasing the share of its non-earmarked contributions. Volt encourages all UN Member States to act likewise. Volt also supports increases in in-kind contributions, as well as of support for peacekeeping missions through funding, training, and contributions in civilian and military personnel.

- **Take pragmatic steps for an improved Security Council in the short-term.** As long as fundamental reforms of the UNSC have not been implemented, pragmatic reforms must be pursued to make the Security Council more effective in the short term. For instance, as other countries have already proposed, Volt supports suspending the right of veto in cases of human rights violations and humanitarian emergencies. Moreover, for more transparency and accountability, Volt proposes that, whenever permanent members vote down a resolution, they be required to publicly state their reasons for doing so, underlining how their decision aligns with the purposes and principles of the Charter, in accordance to which the Security Council and its members are bound to act.⁴⁷¹ In cases where the Council fails to uphold international peace and security, Volt supports the General Assembly stepping in, according to its “Uniting for Peace” Resolution,⁴⁷² and ensuring that remedial action is taken. Finally, Volt calls for Security Council meetings to be more open to non-members, who should be provided an opportunity to speak on issues relevant to them, including Troop-Contributing Countries and non-governmental organisations.
- **Increase democratic representation through a Parliamentary Assembly.** The current General Assembly comprises government appointees representing the interests of Member States. In addition, Volt calls for the creation of a democratically-elected Parliamentary Assembly (UNPA), comprised of directly-elected representatives of citizens around the world. The UNPA’s competence, rooted in the principles of subsidiarity and democracy everywhere, will be expanded over time as its democratic legitimacy increases. In the long run, Volt wishes to see the UNPA as a world parliament, adopting universally binding regulations. Volt therefore strongly supports the “Campaign for a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly”.⁴⁷³
- **Fundamentally reform the UN Security Council.** The Security Council’s structure is outdated and no longer suited to the UN’s mission of maintaining international peace and security. Volt calls for strengthening the effectiveness and democratic legitimacy of the Security Council. In particular, Volt supports abolishing the status of permanent membership, together with the right of veto, which run against the principles of equality and democracy. Conversely, Volt opposes the addition of new countries as permanent Council members, as this would only make deadlock more likely. Volt calls on EU Member States themselves to refrain from pursuing permanent membership on the UN Security Council. Instead, with the UK’s departure from the EU and as long as the status of permanent membership of the Security Council has not been abandoned, Volt

⁴⁷¹ UN Charter, Chapter V, Art. 24, para. 2, available at

https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Charter_of_the_United_Nations#Article_24

⁴⁷² UN General Assembly Resolution 377, 1950, available at

[http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/377\(V\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/377(V))

⁴⁷³ UNPA Campaign, Giving the World’s Citizens a voice, available at <https://en.unpacampaign.org/>

calls on France to cede its permanent seat in the Security Council to the European Union, along with the creation of a single EU ambassador to the UN. These reforms are crucial to revitalising the UN and doing away with gridlock and inaction; they are also essential in strengthening legitimacy and regaining popular support for the organisation. However, UNSC Resolutions legitimising military action should be carried out with broad support; Volt therefore support the introduction of a qualified majority for such a resolution, following the abolition of the veto right. Members of the UN Security Council must have equal voting rights. In order to boost democratic legitimacy and accountability, Volt supports, in the short term, the election of Council members for a renewable term by the General Assembly, and, in the long term, by a UN Parliamentary Assembly. A reformed quota system will ensure regional representation in the Council.

2. Relationship with other multilateral institutions

- **Increase support for regional and global multilateral institutions.** In line with our commitment to multilateralism, Volt encourages the Commission, through EEAS, to step up its engagement with other regional blocs, including the African Union and ASEAN, and support their strengthening. This should concern political, social, economic, security, and environmental cooperation. In order to strengthen multilateralism, Volt also calls for increased support to international institutions – including the World Trade Organisation, the International Criminal Court, and UN entities - and civil society. The European Investment Bank must scale up its activities abroad in support of the EU's external policy objectives, including to support international security, promote international cooperation, and develop and consolidate democracy, the rule of law, and human rights globally. These increased investments are a way to strengthen the EU's soft power and therefore our ability to spread our values. Taken together, these measures aim at strengthening multilateral institutions and promoting democracy at all levels, in accordance with our core values and the principles of the UN Charter.
- **Support global non-proliferation and disarmament efforts.** The massive presence and availability of both weapons of mass destruction and small arms and light weapons, fuel conflicts worldwide, in particular in the world's poorest regions. Volt calls on the EU to step up its support to the Arms Trade Treaty and other disarmament treaties and actively contribute to their strengthening, through measures including, but not limited to, tighter controls and monitoring of production, trade, and possession. Volt also fully supports efforts for both the non-proliferation and active disarmament of weapons of mass destruction via the strengthening of international treaties and conventions – including, but not limited to, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological Weapons Convention, and Nuclear-Free Zones – and relevant UN Resolutions. In particular, Volt underlines that non-proliferation is not an alternative to disarmament, and that nuclear States, under the NPT, have already committed to disarming. Disrupting decades of passive practice and

understanding the cost and unacceptable danger of nuclear weapons, Volt calls on EU Member States themselves to lead the fulfillment of these commitments.

- **Invest in cross-border exchanges of youth, work placements, academics, and science with third countries.** Volt supports significant increases to EU exchange programmes and links around the world to strengthen global cooperation and mutual understanding and promote a people-centred approach to globalisation. Youth programmes, such as Erasmus+, and collaboration with third country organisations and individuals under the completion of the Horizon 2020 research framework programme must be continued, simplified and scaled up to include more participants from third countries.
- **Act as one on the international scene.** In line with our call for foreign policy to become a competence of the Commission and our proposal to have one EU ambassador to the United Nations, Volt calls on the EU to act as one – and, therefore, to seat as one – in all international fora. This includes economic, development, and cooperation institutions – the G7, G20, OECD, international financial institutions, etc. – as well as security organisations – including the OSCE and NATO. Furthermore, Volt supports the extension of the network of EU delegations to all countries the EU entertains diplomatic relationships with, as well as their strengthening, as an incentive for EU Member States to pool their resources in one location. Over time, Volt supports the transformation of EU delegations into EU embassies, which would replace most Member State embassies throughout the world.

D. EU neighbourhood policy

Volt supports the principle of “more-for-more conditionality”. According to this concept, Volt encourages closer ties with its neighbourhood, but conditions these ties to concrete reforms in line with the EU’s standards and values: more proximity for more reforms. Volt encourages independent governance and democratisation reforms in the EU’s neighbourhood, including through reduced dependence on foreign powers. In particular, Volt outlines five core elements: the **promotion of our values** (human rights, democracy, and the rule of law), **energy security, trade and economic growth, migration, and crisis and conflict management**.

As it does more broadly through its foreign policy, Volt calls on the EU to **promote its values** in neighbouring States and encourage them to pursue the democratic reforms necessary for accession to the Union. Beyond the issue of values, it is also in the EU’s own interests to be surrounded by stable democracies governed by the rule of law. Human rights violations must be strongly condemned and be considered a red line for accession to the EU.

Volt seeks to **reduce the EU's dependence on non-renewable energy, in particular foreign oil and gas**; this is particularly important in relation to energy reliance towards Russia so as to protect our independence and that of our immediate neighbourhood. A core objective is the successful implementation of the European Parliament's 2008 "20/20/20" plan, which focuses on an energy transition from fossil fuels to renewables and on the creation of a single energy market – the Energy Union. This measure would prevent foreign energy providers from pitting Member States against each other for cheap prices.⁴⁷⁴ Similarly, Volt supports neighbouring countries in reducing their dependence on foreign energy suppliers and accompany energy transition in potential future Member States and other neighbouring countries.

Trade and economic integration should be further encouraged in the neighbourhood. Volt aims at extending Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTAs) to other parts of the Neighbourhood, as a means to bring those countries closer to the EU's standards in terms of food quality, economic diversification, and the rule of law.

Migration is a key factor to consider. In the Southern Neighbourhood, this mainly takes the form of migration across the Mediterranean through human trafficking; in the Eastern Partnership and Western Balkan, the main subject of interest here is visa liberalisation. As proposed in more detail later, Volt supports using visa liberalisation as a soft power instrument in their Neighbourhood Policy.

The many **crises and conflicts in Europe's neighbourhood** need to be treated purposefully and individually. The EU should try to act as an intermediary in conflict resolution if requested by neighbourhood countries, and, in that case, support mediation efforts between all parties involved and foster dialogue between them.

1. Western Balkans integration

- **Continue the EU accession negotiations that were already launched.** Volt supports continuing the existing efforts for access of Western Balkan countries; new candidates should be admitted as soon as appropriate. Accession should remain conditional on meeting rule of law and democratic standards. However, Volt calls for negotiations to start with the necessary judicial reforms, rather than postponing them to the end of the accession process as was the case in former negotiations.⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷⁴ The New Geopolitics of Natural Gas, pp.150-151, Agnia Grigas

⁴⁷⁵ International Monetary Fund, Reforming the Judiciary: Learning from the Experience of Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe, available at

<https://www.imf.org/~/media/Files/Publications/REO/EUR/2017/November/eur-reo-chapter-2.ashx?la=en>
The IMF uses the example of Romania, where emphasis was made on facilitating foreign investment and attempts to reform the judiciary were resisted. Serbia's approach to judicial reform is also considered flawed and incomplete.

- **Implement measures to combat corruption.** In line with our strong stance on the rule of law and transparency, Volt supports strong penalties for corruption or soliciting bribes, as well as the introduction of digital tools for certain services to limit the possibility of bribery and corruption. Such measures must be a prerequisite for accession to the Union in order to ensure transparent and accountable governance. The Western Balkan States need to be encouraged to tackle the problems of corruption and organised crime, especially in relation to drugs and weapons trafficking.⁴⁷⁶ Volt also supports **increased contacts and working partnerships** between Western Balkan law enforcement agencies and Member States, in order to intercept illegal traffic flows and strengthen the rule of law.
- **Support the resolution of ongoing border disputes.** Border disputes mainly occur between the Western Balkan States themselves, while only some of them involve EU Member States, such as disputes between Croatia and Montenegro over the Prevlaka peninsula and between Croatia and Serbia over land on the Danube.⁴⁷⁷ Volt encourages the use of mediation or arbitration mechanisms, either through EU institutions or through the Permanent Court of Arbitration.
- **Encourage reconciliation between ethnic groups.** Ethnic tensions remain a serious issue in the Balkans and must be resolved. Whenever possible, Volt calls for the EU to act as an intermediary to permanently diffuse tensions. Certain countries, in particular Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, continue to experience worrying tensions. These should be monitored by the EU during the accession negotiations and their peaceful solution needs to be a hard requirement for accession.

2. Eastern Partnership

- **Actively apply more-for-more conditionality.** Volt encourages increased cooperation for countries seeking to implement reforms in line with EU values, such as Moldova and Georgia. Accordingly, each reform bringing a positive impact should be met with more openness and support from the EU.
- **Resort to less-for-less conditionality.** Conversely, Volt supports limiting cooperation for countries sliding to more authoritarian rule, such as Azerbaijan or Belarus. Reforms moving away from democracy and the rule of law should be

⁴⁷⁶ Transparency International, Corruption Perceptions Index 2017, available at https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2017. CIA, World Factbook: Albania and Serbia, available at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/al.html> and <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ri.html>

⁴⁷⁷ European Western Balkans, Serbia-BiH border demarcation: A contentious matter?, available at <https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2017/11/03/serbia-bosnia-border-demarcation-contentious-matter/>; Balkan Insight, Border Disputes Still Bedevil Ex-Yugoslav States, available at <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/border-disputes-still-bedevil-most-ex-yugoslav-states-07-01-2017-1>

met with less openness and support from the EU. Meanwhile, Volt calls for continued support to civil society groups calling for democratisation.

- **Encourage Eastern Partnership countries to invest in renewable sources of energy.** Volt promotes the expansion of renewable energy sources and the diversification of providers of oil and gas, in line with the EU's environmental policy and the aim of energy independence. Building on the EU's own success in promoting renewable energy at home, Volt supports infrastructure projects for renewable energy as a part of more-for-more conditionality and a global renewable energy transition.
- **Continue the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTA).** Volt supports DCFTAs with Moldova,⁴⁷⁸ Georgia,⁴⁷⁹ and Ukraine,⁴⁸⁰ and their deepening whenever possible. Volt also calls for pursuing Association Agreements and trade integration with Belarus, Azerbaijan, and Armenia, should these countries be interested and meet existing requirements.
- **Use visa liberalisation in limited cases.** In line with the “more for more” approach, Volt supports the use of a visa liberalisation agreement as a reward for democratisation reforms.⁴⁸¹

3. Southern Neighbourhood

- **Support preparations for DCFTAs with Southern Neighbourhood countries.** Volt supports DCFTAs with the EU's Southern Neighbourhood, should these countries first fulfil the requirements to strike an Association Agreement. In particular, Tunisia is the closest to fulfilling the requirements; as such, after continued reforms and should Tunisia so desire, Volt supports the creation of a DCFTA with this country, which could be a model for future agreements.
- **Continue and deepen mobility partnerships.** Likewise, Volt supports an increased mobility partnership with Tunisia, on the basis of more-for-more conditionality. Mobility partnerships with Morocco and Jordan should be viewed from the same principle.⁴⁸²

⁴⁷⁸ Official Journal of the European Union, Association Agreement with the Republic of Moldova, available at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22014A0830%2801%29&from=EN>

⁴⁷⁹ Official Journal of the European Union, Association Agreement with Georgia, available at [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22014A0830\(02\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22014A0830(02)&from=EN)

⁴⁸⁰ Official Journal of the European Union, Association Agreement with Ukraine, available at http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2016/november/tradoc_155103.pdf

⁴⁸¹ Cambridge Review of International Affairs, 29:4 (2016), pp.1259-1278, Visa liberalization processes in the EU's Eastern neighbourhood: understanding policy outcomes, available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2016.1233936>

⁴⁸² The Economist Intelligence Unit classified Morocco as a “hybrid regime”, Jordan as an “authoritarian regime” and Tunisia as a “flawed democracy.” See The Economist, Democracy Index 2017, available at http://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/Democracy_Index_2017.pdf.

- **Encourage local multilateralism.** Volt encourages continued cooperation through multilateral approaches and calls for an increased role for the Union for the Mediterranean and the Southern Mediterranean Civil Society Forum.

4. Bilateral relations with Turkey

- **Continue the strong partnership.** Volt supports the partnership between the EU and Turkey, building on already high economic integration and strengthened political and civil society links.
- **Clearly voice concerns.** In line with its principles, Volt raises concerns about the human rights and political situation in Turkey, and actively supports those who stand for the rule of law, democracy, and human rights.

VI. External Security & Defence policy Reform

A. Vision

In a challenging geopolitical environment, the EU's cooperation on external security and defence should be strengthened. Future EU defence policy should aim at protecting the EU and its citizens by building a common defence system that deals effectively with external threats. Pooling our financial, human, and intelligence resources will be more efficient and make our lives safer. The security of Europeans is more important than the prestige and power of national political and economic elites.

Our vision for European security & defence has three building blocks: **(1) Independent military and non-military capabilities.** This means having fully integrated defence forces – a European army – that ensure that Europe can take care of conventional and non-conventional threats to its territory. This also means having expeditionary forces that can, if necessary, act autonomously of other actors and as part of a comprehensive security approach that includes civilian instruments of conflict resolution (e.g. humanitarian operations, disarmament, and state-building). While command structures will be unified, Integrated European military forces can be located decentrally throughout the continent and European citizens can enlist irrespective of their country of origin. **(2) Democratic decision-making.** European capabilities need to be accompanied by European decision-making. Matters of European security and defence shall be decided on the European level as part of the democratic, parliamentary process, with no backroom deals between national governments when it comes to the security of European citizens. **(3) A new security paradigm.** Volt calls for a system that limits the scope of security policy: a system that questions when someone with power tries to define something as a security issue. Labelling something as a 'threat to our

'security' is not an innocent move: it can create fear and intimidation among citizens, usually comes with demands to deal with it as a matter of priority, often takes place outside the normal democratic process, and usually involves significant resources. Volt calls for a system of checks and balances to limit the scope of security policy in European society.

B. Military & non-military capabilities

- **Establish a European army.** Volt supports moving from existing multilateral cooperation to integration of defence forces that will make European security and defence (1) more effective, by adding a credible military component to the EU's comprehensive security approach, (2) more efficient, by removing duplication in governance structures and equipment, and (3) benefiting from economies of scale in military procurement. Volt calls on willing Member States to move ahead with permanent structured cooperation, as set out in the Lisbon Treaty, with other Member States able to join at a later point.⁴⁸³ Ultimately, there will be permanent forces under a unified EU military command with permanent military headquarters.
- **Integrate civilian command into a European Defence Ministry.** Integrating European military forces and command structures must go hand in hand with the integration of European civilian command. As an immediate step, Volt calls on EU defence ministers to strengthen their collaboration through a dedicated Council configuration for defence, including defence working groups. Ultimately, EU military command must be under the civilian control of a European Defence Minister who presides over a European Defence Ministry – replacing the current 28 minister roles and ministries.
- **Establish a European Intelligence Agency.** Volt supports moving from a system of voluntary sharing of information to a binding system where the coordination and direction of lower-level intelligence activities takes place at the European level.
- **Transform the EDA into a Procurement Department.** The work of the European Defence Agency needs to be upgraded into a Procurement Department within the European Defence Ministry. This means moving from coordination of national procurement to central procurement by the EU and loose working groups to permanent EU staff drawn from experts currently working within Member States.

⁴⁸³ European Parliament, Implementation of the Lisbon Treaty provisions on the Common Security and Defence Policy, available at http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/573285/EPRS_BRI%282016%29573285_EN.pdf

- **Establish a Cyber Security Department.** A Cyber Security department within the European Defence Ministry will pool Europe's external cyber security efforts. It would be the external pillar of Europe's cyber security, working closely with internal cyber security institutions of the police.

C. Parliamentary oversight of armed forces

- **Transform parliamentary oversight.** Volt wants to achieve full parliamentary oversight by requiring a qualified majority in the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers for any deployment of military forces. A full-fledged Committee on Security and Defence should be created in Parliament – building on the existing sub-committee – to ensure that Parliament holds the European Defence Minister accountable. The European Parliament should also decide on military spending: in the short-term, a defence component should be included in the Multiannual Financial Framework, which would develop into a defence budget in the long term.

D. Common security culture

- **Create a European Security & Defence Academy.** Volt supports the creation of a highly professional European military core through the education and training of high-ranking EU military personnel and civil servants, on a wide range of security issues. This must be based on the latest research and taught by the world's most eminent experts. In particular, Volt encourages the opening of the traditional, military-centric security curriculum to insights from the broader security studies, including, but not limited to, critical security theory, in order to create reflective and responsible security actors. At the same time, common training will support the development of a European esprit de corps and a common security understanding.
- **Formulate a White Book on Security & Defence.** On the basis of the EU's Global Strategy, Volt calls for the formulation of a White Book, under the auspices of the EEAS, setting out the EU's shared outlook on the security environment, defining ambitions and establishing a roadmap for further integration.

E. Relationship with other security actors

- **Review the EU-NATO relationship.** Volt believes that NATO remains a relevant alliance, not just for collective defence but also as an expression of common values that bind members across the Atlantic. At the same time, the EU cannot blindly rely on territorial defence through NATO, but must develop an independent ability to defend itself. By closely coordinating with NATO, the EU

would avoid duplication and make the Alliance stronger. In the long term, the relationship between NATO and a reformed EU needs to be revisited.

- **Strengthen the OSCE as a forum for Europe-wide security.** Renewed conflict with Russia, such as the annexation of Ukrainian territory, means that the EU needs an effective forum to deal with security issues in its neighbourhood. Volt calls for enhancing the role and capacities of the OSCE, both to deal with ongoing crises, as is currently the case in Ukraine, and to establish permanent dialogue on security-related matters between the EU and its OSCE partners, most notably Russia.

WORK IN PROGRESS