

On the future of Europe

**German Delegation of the
EPP Group in the European
Parliament:**

**Position paper for the
beginning of the Conference
on the Future of Europe**

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I. Introduction

The remaining four years of this electoral period will be decisive for the future of Europe. The EU is still the largest single market and it has political weight. Our values of individual freedoms, the rule of law and democracy are still attractive, but our model is no longer unchallenged. Emerging powers are claiming economic and political influence, and China in particular is competing with the West in its promise of prosperity. At the same time, the complex negotiation processes of the European federation of states, the lack of focus on the essentials, a weak connection to the will of the voters and, last but not least, the difficulty in amending EU law have created the impression among many citizens that Europe is failing. This has undermined the European Union's legitimacy and created an existential threat to a united Europe.

European integration remains an immutable constitutional obligation. In sharp contrast with the individual nation-states, membership of the EU is, however, not accepted as an end in itself, but subject to a cost-and-benefit analysis. This evaluation, as Brexit has shown, is not based on rational choice, but remains a reality nonetheless. Therefore, the EU needs to demonstrate the surplus value gained from membership more clearly in order to further develop and, ultimately, survive. That is why today's question is not about more or less Europe, and certainly not about old ideas of a federal order. Nor is it about Europe's constitutional finality, but rather the question of why Europeans need the European Union in the 21st century foremost. They need it to assert themselves in a world of unilaterally acting superpowers with which no European state can compete alone. They need it to find shared, and effective, answers to the existential challenges of our time, such as climate change, the migration crisis or digitisation. Compared with the age of Schuman, this involves a change in paradigm from an inward orientation to an outward orientation. Instead of restricting ourselves to an 'ever closer union' internally, we ought to focus on the construction of a more capable union in the international sphere; a union which is able to confront the big questions of today's world with a joint response.

Citizens' expectations towards the European Union exceed what is possible under the current treaties. In a first step, we ought to define those global challenges which cannot be tackled individually by member states, but require a co-ordinated approach. The European Union's instruments, then, need to be adapted accordingly in order to widen the institutions' scope of action in the respective policy areas.

Therefore, our expectation for the Conference on the Future of the European Union is for it to initiate a far-reaching reform process. It ought to both ascertain which changes are possible based on the current treaty framework and identify which tasks need to be addressed by a new Convention to ensure that the challenges of the future are adequately met by a revised constitutional framework. We have want to enter this Conference with an ambitious programme; one which is not limited a priori on the grounds of what is presumed doable, but reflects our deeply held beliefs.

In order to realize our vision of a Europe united, capable to act, we need a new departure, an impetus such as the one that came from the Schuman Declaration 70 years ago. The Conference on the Future of Europe is a good opportunity to achieve this.

Seventy years ago, in the face of devastated European cities, Robert Schuman showed resolute courage and determination by reaching out to the erstwhile opponent of war and hereditary enemy. The crises of our time call on us to demonstrate similar resolve and commitment to far-sighted action in order to embark on a new chapter in the history of the unified Europe.

Unlike the United States of America, the European Union does not want to make one out of many – e pluribus unum – but attempts to be united in diversity. An important source of such diversity is our shared cultural heritage in Europe: Hellenic philosophy, Roman law and the values of Christianity, humanism and the Enlightenment. It finds expression not just in a myriad of regional and national traditions, languages and symbols, but in various common approaches and forward-looking ideas.

If we recognise the potential of this vibrant diversity, manage to put it together at a supranational level and reap economies of scale, we will be able to make sure that Europe, despite currently falling behind in some areas, remains the most liveable continent, today and in the future.

II. Objectives and implementation proposals for the Conference

1. Safeguarding Europe's ability to act and democratic legitimacy

Our objectives

- a clearer **division of competences** between the Member States and the supranational level; to make political responsibility clearer, the number of joint responsibilities should be drastically reduced
- structural reforms to strengthen the EU's **capacity to act**
- greater reconnection of European politics to the electorate (responsivity)
- simpler **modifiability of Union law**
- a **European Executive**, sustained by and responsible to a parliamentary coalition
- **equal rights and duties for Parliament and Council**; a clear decision on which policy areas are to be dealt with in a bicameral process
- a strengthening of the **rule of law** and the role of the European Court of Justice
- adherence to the subsidiary principle and demanding of subsidiarity

Our ideas

We demand:

- the merger of the European Council and the Council of the European Union in favour of a new, legislative upper chamber called the European Council; this will increase efficiency, public visibility and member states' accountability
- a full **right of initiative** as part of the law-making process for both chambers and **budgetary rights** for the European Parliament; this includes the initiation, amending and revocation of all proper acts of law
- the introduction of a **constructive vote of no-confidence** mechanism to strengthen the Parliament's ability to control the executive; Parliament also received the right to invoke impeachment proceedings against individual Commissioners
- to **legally establish the Spitzenkandidat principle**
- the reform of the **rapporteur system** to reflect coalition majorities and, thus, the wishes of the electorate as part of the political process
- the creation of a **uniform and EU-wide voting system** consisting of a geographical and a proportional subcomponent; constituency sizes in those geographical subcomponents are to reflect the current minimum number of MEPs in respective member states; the proportional subcomponent reflects the principle of 'one man, one vote'
- the differentiation of the **set of competences**, so that clearly defined competences are those of the EU alone, whereas all remaining ones are primarily those of member states
- voting by qualified majority to become the default in all decisions of the Council
- the **acceleration of the law-making process** with the introduction of deadlines, especially for the Council, and the reform of rules of procedure for the Council and the European Parliament
- the creation of the Parliament's **full right to summon and conduct inquiries**

- the conversion of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) into secondary law and adoption of some of its elements into the Treaty of European Union
- the reform of the European Court of Justice by the introduction of **individuals complaint procedures** and of **litigation procedures between Union bodies**; this allows the ECJ to become a constitutional court in its own right with fundamentally changed procedural arrangements
- the simplification of subsidiary complaint procedures
- the creation of **legal sanctions proceedings** for violations of the rule of law in individual member states; this includes measures as far as the **exclusion of a member state from the EU**

2. A Security Union which truly protects us

Our objectives

We want:

- a sovereign Europe which is able to preserve the **security of its own borders** and citizens without dependence on third-party help
- resilience and effective answers to symmetrical (i.e. military) and asymmetrical (i.e. terrorist threats, cyber-attacks) threats to the EU
- **a transnational fight against crime** in the face of transnational organisation of crime

Our ideas

We demand:

- the use of PESCO to create **common armed forces with land, air, and sea components** by 2030
- the participation of as many member states as possible in the **defence union** and extension of the existing civil and military structures of strategy and leadership to become a strategic headquarters
- the reform of **Europol** to become a European FBI with rights of investigation and detention
- a **fundamental reform of judicial co-operation** with the possibility of using active legal remedies in the European sphere
- better transnational co-ordination of measures to tackle **right-wing and left-wing extremism as well as Islamism**
- the creation of a European sanctions system of human rights violations based on the American Magnitsky Acts
- the setting-up of a European **cyber defence** agency which protects European networks and critical infrastructure against cyber attacks
- the creation of a joint scheme to share the burdens of registering, allocating and repatriating migrants, and a **harmonised migration laws**
- the more extensive sharing of intelligence data in a **Union of Secret Services**
- a binding co-ordination of national **civil and disaster protection capacities** and a joint **European operation and emergency capacity**
- the creation of a European **capacity in the health sector** to better prepare for future pandemics

3. A Europe which sets standards in the world

Our objectives

We want:

- a European Union which speaks with one voice on foreign policy
- the preservation of the **multilateral order** and export of our standards through treaties and co-operation
- the **ecological renewal of the Social Market Economy** and a **leading role in the fight against climate change** to inspire other countries to follow suit
- an **organised neighbourhood policy** with **privileged partnerships** to reap the full potential of existing treaties on association, free trade and co-operation for a comprehensive partnership
- a new and **more ambitious partnership with Africa** based on a change in paradigm in favour of socio-economic development and effective governance
- a bold and constructive **answer to China's rise as a global superpower**

Our ideas

We demand:

- the far-reaching authorisation of the European **executive in foreign policy**
- **Free Trade Agreements** and economic partnerships to be intensified as the cornerstone of European foreign trade policy; this includes investment protection and ambitious climate change and labour security targets to prevent regulatory dumping
- a resolved plan to admit the Western Balkans to the EU once they meet the Copenhagen criteria
- the consistent **charging of ecological externalities** and **fixing of the trade with greenhouse gas pollution under international law**; this needs to maintain our principle of openness to technological ideas
- the foundation of an **Energy Union without barriers for the Single Market**
- an ambitious and **rapid implementation of the European hydrogen strategy** and the creation of cross-border value chains in the area of Power2Gas
- the resolute defence of European interests in any **dealings with China** by means of an extension to the **EU's Trade Defence Instruments** and detailed **review of direct foreign investments** in the EU
- the joint development and implementation of a European strategy for **dealing with Africa, based on the goal of an intercontinental free trade area**
- the transmission of **competences on and resources for development policy** to the European level

4. Creating a continent of knowledge and innovation leadership

Our objectives

We want:

- to realise the **European Research Area** (ERA)
- to **close the innovation gap** vis-à-vis East Asia and North America
- to **protect civil rights in our digital age** and harness the potential presented by digitisation
- to reap the **research potential** and **economies of scale** inherent in European co-operation
- to realise the **digital single market** and create a **shared data room**
- to reduce brain drain within the EU

Our ideas

We demand:

- the creation of an **Educational Union** through improved mutual recognition of certificates and qualifications; in order to achieve this, criteria need to be developed which ensure comparability in all sectors (schools, universities and vocational training) without undermining existing, and proven, structures
- the co-ordinated **development of high tech clusters** and transfer zones for innovations based on the example of the European aerospace industry
- the foundation of European **Marie Curie Institutes** modelled on the Max Planck Institutes in some defined areas of science
- the harmonisation of legal norms in the area of research to simplify the Europe-wide exchange of findings and information; this includes the foundation of an **EU research data centre**
- the creation of a **Digital and Data Union** with modern competition law based on the Social Market Economy, first-class digital infrastructure, European storage and computing capacities, uniform data protection law and common digital education standards
- the self-commitment of the EU and member states to annually spend 3% of GDP on R&D
- the creation of a joint telecommunications market with pan-European development of new generations of technology such as 5G and, in the near future, 6G
- the consistent application of European antitrust laws to **disentangle** market-dominating structures in the **digital industry**
- a joint approach to research in and regulation of AI technologies
- the extension of European space policy

5. Securing our wealth for future generations

Our objectives

We want:

- a **financially sustainable and robust Economic and Monetary Union** to prevent the falling apart of responsibility and liability for government spending and moral hazard resulting thereof
- a cohesion policy based not on social transfers but on structural changes to competitiveness everywhere in Europe
- the consistent application of European laws at the national level, especially on **worker protection**
- a sustainable financial architecture of the EU based on the principles of the **Social Market Economy**, subsidiarity and individual responsibility
- to overcome the **north-south divide** within the Eurozone
- equal infrastructure provision, both digitally and analogically, in the EU
- to maintain the capacity of agricultural self-sufficiency in the EU in order to preserve the sufficient production of high-quality food in the long term

Our ideas

We demand:

- a dedicated **Commissioner for Monetary Affairs with a right of intervention** in national budgets to secure sustainable fiscal policy in the Eurozone
- the realisation of the recovery instrument as a European project with joint use of funds and the prioritisation of investment in infrastructure and innovation to enhance member states' competitiveness
- the no transfer of European funds into member states' welfare programmes, in light of social disparities between individual regions
- **European executive agencies** wherever the principle of subsidiarity calls for competences to control and enforcement of European norms, especially in the areas of worker security and the fight against corruption; for this, the EU should be allowed to delegate its own, autonomous officials to member states' administrations and receive extended competencies on the fight against fraud
- the creation of sustainable **European own resources** at its own disposal via pre-defined proportions of tax
- the creation of '**one in, one out**' principle with regard to regulations in order to reduce the bureaucratic burdens for European enterprises
- the creation of an independent **European regulatory control council** to achieve better legislation and the prevention of redundant regulations
- the creation of a **European Investment Arbitration Court**