



Reform of the EU institutions – re-democratisation of the EU

1 | Reducing the number of Commissioners

- A reduction of the size of the European Commission would reduce the number of top-level players, making them more visible and, consequently, more accountable. Every Commissioner would necessarily have a further-reaching portfolio, more easily identifiable with key areas where – in line with the concept of subsidiarity – European action is effectively needed. If we want to reduce bureaucracy in the EU, we must submit bureaucracy to rational political needs, and not let it spread because of emotional political demands.

2 | Ending the rotating presidencies

- A first way of answering to the lack of political leadership is putting an end to the rotating presidencies of the Council. Rotating presidencies generate lack of work continuity and lack of recognisability of decision-makers.
 - Giving ministers the power to nominate the president among themselves would be a much more reasonable mechanism. Regaining sovereignty, ensuring subsidiarity.
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3 | Regaining sovereignty, ensuring subsidiarity

- Regulatory capture, an unavoidable feature of power concentration, and secret negotiations would be much harder in the context of a proper, institutional representation of national interests through members of the national parliaments.
- The institutional solution should be a stabilisation of the COSAC in a new chamber, whereby each country would have as many MPs present as their current number of votes in the Council (or the Committees).
- Such a chamber should have mandatory regular meetings and be a key element in the legislative process, not merely a consultative organ, like the Committee of the Regions or the Economic and Social Committee, but actually absorbing powers from the Council. This new high chamber could then fulfil – in a much more democratic and transparent manner – the crucial role of representing national sovereignty, as opposed to the European Parliament that would remain a representation of the people.
- Other, minor, solutions could be thought of, such as the obligation of nominees to the European Commission to receive an approval by their respective national parliaments.
- Reinforcing the role of national parliaments at the expenses of the executives appears to be the only way to guarantee that real national interests are represented in its entirety.

4 | Institutionalising the *Spitzenkandidat* system

- It may generate some kind of primary elections within each European party and debates that galvanise the people more savvy and interested in European politics.
 - It would allow a discussion on European issues, beyond national particularities – something that the vocal defenders of subsidiarity should actually appreciate.
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- It was all in all a political experiment – and its results should be taken as encouraging. We should institutionalise it in a clearer way in the Treaty.
- Finally, with its institutionalisation, citizens from across Europe will be able to see political alternatives in an easy, comprehensible setting.

5 | Establishing a periodic reporting of governments to national parliaments on their work in the Council

- What we suggest is that all governments are recommended to institute a day or days of periodic (such as once every semester) reporting to their national parliaments on their work in the Council.
- Such reporting should allow parliaments to scrutinise the representation of national interests and to elaborate recommendations for future decisions.

6 | Establishing a European constituency

- Establish a pan-European constituency, which would allow for political actors and political parties to at least partially set aside populist debates on national issues that will normally be secondary (at best) in the larger European debate.
 - The European debate itself would be cleansed from peculiar, less relevant topics, and the principle of subsidiarity would find an institutional ally here.
 - Quite importantly, populist parties would be forced to, themselves, forge a common European identity with other populist parties – a process in which they would either be forced to become less populist or at least less isolationist.
 - On the side of citizens, three main advantages are foreseeable. First of all, they would be informed about the real issues to be decided, on what the European Union is really about, and on both potentials and limits of European action. The second advantage would be the possibility to have two votes, and thus influence politicians in a double manner: through the
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national constituency and through the European one. Finally, and as a consequence of this, voters would also have more choices, no longer being restricted to the parties of their countries, given that the European political spectrum is wider and more competitive.

7 | Giving body to pan-European parties

- It is quite natural that national party members will globally continue holding the essential part of the power inside each pan-European party. But individual membership opens a road for citizens from across the Union to share political activism regardless of national citizenships.
- Allowing networking, training, joint political meetings and campaigns, individual membership in European parties gives a concrete body to the idea of a common European political space.

8 | Integrating mechanisms of participatory democracy

- Political interaction between citizens can take place through personal contact in local and regional politics, and is easily produced at a national level through political parties, civil society organisations and mass media. But the civil society ties across Europe are too distant, there are no true European mass media and personal interaction on this level, it goes without saying, is just something for the few. Digital citizenship is the only true way people from different member states can cooperate in common political endeavours.
 - Implementing participatory means of choosing electoral lists like several parties are now implementing requires leading political figures to allow members and citizens to rebel from party discipline.
 - Digital participatory democracy does not need to limit itself to elections. It can also translate itself into a structured dialogue (*Themenschmiede*) with citizens and activists.
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Foreign, security and defence – strong cooperation for a stronger Europe in the world

1 | EU Eastern European policy

- Strong political and economic support for Ukraine in the next few years should be the cornerstone of European Eastern policy. The EU should insist on the full implementation of the Association Agreement, demanding profound political reforms in Ukraine and support it fully with technical assistance as well as reasonable financial aid. Success of reforms in this country could be a pattern for the whole region.
 - The EU should make the visa regime for Ukrainians less stringent in order to accelerate the movement of people through the border.
 - The Eastern Partnership Programme should be restarted matched to the changing geopolitical situation.
 - The EU should engage more actively in the process of including the banking system of Ukraine into the SEPA system. To do so, the EU should apply pressure for changes in the whole Ukrainian banking system.
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- European leaders should be firm against any attempts to forcefully redraw borders within Europe. The Kremlin has to be assured that no border changes obtained through violence, threat or political manipulation are going to be accepted by the international community.
- Sanctions against the current Russian regime should be maintained as a firm signal of European Union solidarity against the players that are breaking fundamental rules and values of the Union. Sanctions are also a useful tool to limit Russia's military capabilities as well as the political and economic foundations of the regime.
- Russia's strategists have to perceive that the EU will jointly be caring for the security of all its members. Therefore EU member states should contribute by deploying forces at the Eastern borders of the EU in order to strengthen the current NATO deployment.

2 | Energy security

- Integration: Achieve full interconnectivity by expanding the gas storage capacity in certain regions, especially between the geographical markets from the Baltic Sea to the Adriatic and Black Sea. In addition, harmonise and liberalise the regulatory environment across the EU in order to remove systemic bottlenecks.
 - Technological advancement and increasing own production: By applying novel technologies for cleaner, safer and cheaper exploration and production of natural gas from conventional and non-conventional deposits.
 - Regulation: Both supply side and demand side measures and regulatory policies should be pursued in balance to accelerate and deepen the integration of EU energy markets, to substantially improve energy efficiency and the effective decarbonisation of the EU's economy.
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3 | EU Mediterranean (FRONTEX)

- Setting benchmarks for minimum contributions for all EU member states. By keeping the contributions to the external border patrols voluntary but with strings attached (e. g. minimum amount of vessels, personnel deployed on a yearly basis per participating member state) and strengthening the coordination with Europol, Frontex can be more effective without raising issues of national sovereignty.
- Extreme securitisation within EU agencies might lead to questionable counter-terrorism measures that may invade the privacy of EU citizens or pose problems with regards to civil liberties of individuals.
- Frontex is sensitive to depoliticisation as well, and can be used as a scape-goat by national politicians in order to deflect shared political responsibility for the increasing influx of immigrants. This bears the risk of over-stretching shared responsibilities up to a point that no member state (or government) is held politically accountable for their actions.
- From a liberal perspective, it is important to remain vigilant whenever it comes to both securitising and depoliticising practices. Securitisation might lead to questionable counter-terrorism measures that may invade the privacy of EU citizens, while a high degree of depoliticising leads to less political accountability for politicians.

4 | European Defence market (pooling and sharing / procurement)

- Accept that the defence industry is different from any other industry, an industry where standard market rules do not apply. The price is not only fixed by an interaction between supply and demand, but strongly influenced by national interests. This means that effectiveness rendered in the defence industry will always be imperfect compared to other industries.
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- Before member states can see any profit coming from pooling and sharing (P&S), it requires a substantial initial financial investment.
 - The most successful P&S projects are those comprising a maximum of 2–4 participating member states within regional proximity (shared military doctrine, *esprit de corps* and regional interest). Thus far, long-term projects that have existed over decades and have grown “naturally” by a bottom-up approach are most effective.
 - As a direct consequence thereof, niche capacity building within the NATO framework has led to a relatively high degree of specialisation within the EU member states, e. g. Dutch/Spanish/American missile defence niche, Norwegian mine clearing, UK free-fall nuclear weapons, etc. This will enhance EU interoperability since operational cooperation has become the rule rather than the exception.
 - As long as there are nation states and national interests driving the choices thereof, operational responsibilities will remain a member state prerogative.
 - Due to inflation and rapid technological developments, it is necessary to reserve additional funds within the defence budgets for R&D to meet the demands of rapid current day developments (e. g. cyber, radar capacities and missile defence). Otherwise it will be difficult to ascertain a healthy 20% benchmark.
 - In order to maintain a healthy international cooperation environment, NATO member states need to step up to the plate. The extensive free-riding within NATO will lead to the cannibalisation of the Alliance, and therefore undermine European strategic interests in the long run. Those countries spending less than 2% of their GDP on defence should present a roadmap towards re-establishing the bare minimum.
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Protecting civil liberties – a liberal footprint for Europe

1 | Ensuring compliance with European values and fundamental rights in EU member states

- The EU should ratify the European Convention of Human Rights in order to guarantee citizens access to the protection of their fundamental rights and freedoms. The EU should be bound by the same obligations as EU member states.
 - In order to have an alternative to the unlikely use of Art. 7 of the EU Treaty, a progressive mechanism of credible sanctions must be created. The aim is to serve as a preventive and corrective arm before the application of the Art. 7 procedure.
 - An EU scoreboard for democracy, rule of law and fundamental rights is to be set up. It shall set out a set of indicators/criteria for different types of violations of fundamental rights and freedoms. Violations of fundamental rights in EU member states shall be assessed by the European Commission according to these criteria and categorised as minor or major breaches to fundamental rights. An annual monitoring report will be compiled out of the scoreboard's findings.
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- The scoreboard shall apply not only to newer EU member states, but to all EU member states equally.
 - On the basis of the annual monitoring report a dialogue mechanism between the EU Commission and the institutions of the EU member state in breach of the rule of law and fundamental rights shall be created (called "DLR Semester" in the "EU Democratic Governance Pact"). This mechanism shall include other actors in the field of the rule of law and fundamental rights such as the EU Parliament, national parliaments, the EU Council and the European Fundamental Rights Agency. In case of inconclusive consultations it shall result in a binding mechanism initiated by the EU Commission on its own or upon recommendation from the EU Fundamental Rights Agency.
 - The budget and prerogatives of the Fundamental Rights Agency to support local projects promoting the rule of law and fundamental rights in EU member states should be increased. Similarly to what German political foundations, the Open Society Foundations and other non-governmental organisations already do, local organisations (media, NGOs, civil society groups, etc.) should be supported in their efforts to promote fundamental rights in EU member states where they are especially threatened. Decision of funding for campaigns, capacity building, civic education and other types of activities shall be based upon the results of the annual monitoring reports and progressive worsening of the situation.
 - In case of serious breaches to the EU Charter of fundamental rights according to the scoreboard, funding from the EU budget in form of structural and regional funds could be withheld. A system of negative incentives could thus pressure EU member states in rethinking their policies regarding the rule of law and fundamental rights.
 - All of this will be used before Article 7 is brought into play. If a member state is consistently found in breach of its obligations by the scoreboard and during the consultations, sanctions should apply as per Art. 7. The ultimate "nuclear option" should not be the penalties applied under Art. 7, but rather the exclusion from the EU.
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- If Art. 7 sanctions are repeatedly applied with no cessation of violation on the part of the member state, the threat and finally carrying through of the ejection from the EU should exist for the Commission to apply *in extremis* to member states that cannot conform.

2 | Privacy and data protection

- New challenges that arise in the framework of digital technologies should be approached with an open mind, trying to offer security for users without limiting possible benefits through too many prohibitions. The legal framework should offer possibilities for new technologies to develop as far as possible.
 - The assessment of whether citizens can have links to information about them removed should be balanced with the necessity for citizens to have access to information as a basis of the well-functioning of a democratic system. The decision to delete links to information (the right to be forgotten) should apply only to private citizens and should be possible after a certain period of time (e. g. a five-year period). For people deemed public persons, no right to be forgotten should apply.
 - Currently the burden to assess a claim to be forgotten lies upon the search engine operators (Google, Yahoo, etc.). In case of doubt, however, the providers will always rather accept a claim than to assess the public interest in having access to this information. Thus the balance between the right to be forgotten and the right to information is not guaranteed. To assess the validity of a claim to delete a link to information on a webpage, citizens should be able to send their complaints to their Data Protection Authorities, which would assess their complaints according to a set of criteria (private vs. public person, public's interest in this information, etc.). The national Data Protection Authorities should be coordinated at EU level in order to guarantee high standards of protection and an exchange of best practices.
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3 | Self-determination and separatism

- Liberals should support the wish (and right) for every individual to choose how to be governed, to be governed fairly and to hold the government accountable. Individuals have the right to decide upon their government and its policies; the state's *raison d'être* being that it serves the will of the citizens and no other.
 - Proper devolution mechanisms and subsidiarity should be the underlying principle when developing a state structure that would satisfy many claims of self-determination. In times of shared national sovereignty, especially in the EU, it is ridiculous to cling to nation states that were built hundreds of years ago. Liberals should support the application of subsidiarity and devolution of powers to the lowest level possible. By accommodating demands of minority rights, decentralising competences and devolving greater decision-making power to new or existing subunits or autonomous areas, states might also prevent claims of secession.
 - In cases, however, where parties or governments oppose any accommodation of regional, national or autonomous self-government, it is understandable that these citizens radicalise and look at independence as the only way out. There again liberals should not out of principle oppose such claims based on the argument that liberals do not support nationalism. People defending the *status quo* and advocating against secession are very often nationalists, too. Democracy should be the ultimate test. If a party gets into power under a mandate to have a referendum on separation, the referendum in question should be allowed to happen and the result should be legally binding.
 - Claims of possible newly created states to remain in the EU should be accommodated. Firstly, the citizens of these newly created states are European citizens and the European Court of Justice could denounce the position of the members of the European Council opposing newly created states joining the EU, as it would *de facto* revoke their European citizenship
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rights. Secondly, if all other accession criteria are met and the blocking only aims at "punishing" the Catalan or Scottish people for their choice or avoiding further regions to split, their position in the Council would be abusive insofar as the EU is also a union of citizens and not only of member states.

- For liberals it is important to distinguish between the right to decide (either through vote or negotiation) and the possible outcome of the vote or the negotiations. European observers should not oppose procedures or mechanisms aiming at facilitating a decision on self-government. A liberal observer has to recognise the legitimacy of such a democratic process.

4 | Freedom of movement, migration and asylum

- Asylum and migration should be treated and tackled separately, but never from a security point of view. The EU should uphold principles of open society, tolerance and protection for the persecuted. If it fails to do so, European soft power could be eroded. The EU has to ensure respect for the basic rights of immigrants and asylum seekers in the EU.
 - Migration should be seen as an opportunity for societies to develop from both an economic and a social point of view. Liberals should openly advocate open and tolerant societies, promoting the principle of cultural and economic exchange as enrichment of civil society and building a mechanism for migrants to legally enter the EU for work.
 - The European asylum system should be urgently reviewed, especially the Dublin regulation. Quotas on the amount of asylum seekers and the distribution amongst EU member states should be set up based on the populations of each member states and its GDP per capita. Also, in order to prevent risky passages across the Mediterranean and other dangerous routes towards Europe, the EU should open asylum offices in countries of origin to assess claims for asylum swiftly and to combat smuggling.
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- The capacities in terms of financial resources and competences of the Frontex agency should be significantly increased in order to better tackle the influx of migrants and asylum seekers.
- Liberals of all people should advocate the continuance of freedom of movement as a central defining feature of the European Union.
- Liberals support the principle of having users pay for services provided by the state, providing that they are not universal rights and applying criteria of solidarity to avoid discrimination. In this sense access to certain social benefits and unemployment benefits should be limited to citizens that have previously contributed to them.
- In order to facilitate newer, less financially well-off accession countries being allowed to join the Union in future, placing restrictions on newer member states in terms of freedom of movement should be allowed – provided it is understood that full rights in regards to freedom of movement will become available at a time agreed prior to ascension or on completion of a laid out set of criteria.

5 | Gender equality

- Liberals agree that equal work for equal pay is a key goal for any society. We accept that affirmative action may be necessary as a short term measure in order to even the playing field. This must be balanced with the requirements of economic liberalism.
 - Liberals believe in the individual's right to decide upon his or her life, including reproductive rights and the right to end his or her life. To prevent abuses or mistakes, regulatory frameworks have to set clear rules. But tough questions should never be a reason not to regulate.
 - We are by principle open towards new technologies and progress, including in the medical field, thus not shying away from bioethical questions that might arise.
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6 | Freedom of religion vs. cultural relativism

- Liberals continue to recognise the right of every individual not to be persecuted as a result of their religious beliefs.
 - But we also note that cultural relativism should not be used to trump liberal democracy in any instance. Liberals recognise certain values as universally applicable – and no religious or racial grouping should be exempted. To exclude people from respecting those values on the basis of culture or ethnic origin is a terrible precedent to set.
 - It is crucial to safeguard freedom of speech worldwide, but also in Europe. In the areas of conflict with religious freedom, freedom of speech is often limited in the name of respect and tolerance. But liberals, though respect is a fundamental pillar of interaction in society, do not believe that openly criticising certain religious beliefs, practices or to make fun of certain issue is an offence against individuals. Caricatures and humour are not aiming at individual believers, but at the religious institutions. As liberals we believe that only a society where it is possible to openly discuss, criticise and laugh about religious and all other institutions can guarantee that the institutions do not become more important than the individual. We thus believe that blasphemy laws should be immediately abolished both in Europe and worldwide.
 - We believe that religious beliefs, though they shape our society, are a private matter. Liberals thus do not consider it to be a matter of the state to either promote or finance religious education or practices.
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Financial and economic crisis – liberal solutions for a Europe that works

1 | Financial reform

- Give the ECB a clear mandate to act as a last lender institution towards the euro zone.
 - Implement a broader Single Supervisory Mechanism (SSM) where all banks in the euro zone participate as a way to combat fraud and simplify the regulatory framework.
 - Create a safety net and a resolution mechanism coordinated by the ECB in which all banks in the euro zone take part in order to prevent future crises.
 - Allow the creation of a formal virtual currency bank that would have access to an insurance fund to stimulate the reduction of transaction costs of banking operations to a very minimum.
 - Create a supervised virtual currency insurance system with a 0.1 % fee collected from every transaction. This would facilitate third-party exchange and transmission of virtual currency.
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2 | Compliance with international agreements – economic sanctions

- Usage of mixed strategies in case of violation of international agreements, adjusted to how severe the non-compliance is.
- Integration of other partners outside Europe in implementing soft power measures.

3 | Education

- IT skills have to be part of the curricula; just like everyone should learn at least two foreign languages, everyone should also learn basic programming languages. Of course doing this will take a long time, because we also have to train the teachers. But we have to start it and the EU could support the initial stages.
 - Everyone should receive rudimentary education in entrepreneurship skills. This means receiving basic notions of accounting (useful in any case even to our civic life – knowing how a budget works would make many citizens less vulnerable) and project management.
 - Because you cannot be an entrepreneur in emptiness, our mandatory schooling should give everyone some professional skills, not only theoretical ones. A critical mind is a practical mind. Whenever possible, these professional skills should be introduced also via dual education programmes. Regardless of individuals choosing to accept a normal job or deciding to create their own company, we have to prepare them while at school.
 - The European Union can and should promote benchmarking tools, finance studies on best and worst practices, and assist member states in designing their own educational systems. In more complex issues like training the teachers in new skills like coding, it could even act as a fire starter, financing the initial stages. Without tackling the issue of unemployment (which also
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includes topics like professional training at later stages in life, re-training of unemployed workers, etc.) we are not really going to achieve economic growth and make this continent a competitive one to face its global challenges.

4 | Energy and environmental reform

- Review the ETS system (2003/87/EC), introducing the Clean Tech Transfer approach.
 - Implement a closed-loop taxation system to address environmental policies (e. g. reform the energy taxation directive).
 - Implement a mechanism to curb down absolute GHG emissions, applying the Demand Side Transfer to electricity and water bills with a progressive internal transfer system so that heavy users would pay more per unit consumed and light users would pay significantly less per unit consumed.
 - Focus not only on economic growth, but define sustainability indicators like life cycle assessment methodology and recycling indexes to assess how valuable new projects are.
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