

We, Europeans

A European
agenda
for us all

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FRIDAY
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Tell us what you think!

We would like to hear your opinion on our ideas. Do you also feel that the European project needs a second wind in terms of democracy and that the migration issue, our social policy and fourth industrial revolution would benefit from 'more Europe'? Do let us know:

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Executive Summary

The next European elections will take place on 25 May 2019, and the European authorities have good reason to be alarmed by this fast-approaching date. Over the past five years, an overall sense that the European project has failed has been spreading among the population. And it is this alarming feature that has led to the creation of this road map for a new Europe. With one year to go until the elections, the Friday Group wants to open a debate on Europe that would transcend national contexts, to which European issues are all too often restricted. For this purpose, we shall focus on four key themes - democracy, asylum and immigration, and the Union's social policy and industrial policy - and put forward 12 proposals and 22 action items:

I. MODERN EU INSTITUTIONS & DEMOCRACY

1. The people's Union
 - a. Continue to work on the transnational lists project
 - b. Encourage democratic conventions
 - c. Reinforce the European Citizen's Initiative (ECI)
2. The Parliament's prerogative
 - a. End the Commission's initiative monopoly
 - b. Synchronise the European multiannual financial framework with the parliamentary cycle
3. The value of coordination
 - a. Complete the European semester by including the monitoring of sub-inflationary phenomena
 - b. Create a eurozone budget and complete the Banking Union
 - c. Stimulate worker mobility
 - d. Review the Member States' sanctions mechanisms when the latter do not respect the Union's fundamental values

II. DISRUPTIVE EU POLICIES FOR AN INDUSTRIAL REVIVAL IN THE DIGITAL AGE

4. Invest in critical digital assets, technologies, and environments
 - a. Establish a Universal Right to Learn (URL)
 - b. Deploy a European Youth Entrepreneurship and Coding Programme
 - c. Launch EU Flagship initiatives on most critical technologies and industries

5. Adhere to European humanist values
 - a. Establish a European observatory for digital industries and the use of data
 - b. Create a European Technology and Human Ethical Commission (ETHEC)
 - c. Train citizens on data privacy, consent and usage

6. Elaborate a single European digital market thanks to the regulation of the Internet giants

III. A NEW SOCIAL EUROPE

7. Set the minimum duration of paternity leave at 1 month (minimum) at European level
8. Make unemployment insurance rights transferable in the EU for an unlimited period
9. Limit the negative impacts of short-term professional exchanges between Member States on the social rights of European workers

IV. A TRULY EUROPEAN STRATEGY FOR MIGRATION

10. Centralise the management and financing of reception centres for asylum seekers at a European level.
11. Harmonise procedures and eligibility conditions for asylum seekers across the Union.
12. Introduce a mandatory European quota system for asylum seekers in line with the demographic and economic capacity of individual member states.

With these proposals, we hope that the four ills that threaten Europe - populism, nationalist exclusion, growing inequalities and economic downturn - will be replaced by their counterpart. The vicious circle of Europe can be transformed into a virtuous circle, if we adopt the means to fulfil our ambitions. 25 May 2019 does not necessarily have to be a fatal date, when Europe receives its just punishment at the ballot box. If these subjects receive the attention they deserve, these upcoming elections may take a happier turn, and allow citizens to reconnect with Europe.

Over the coming 9 months, the Friday Group aims to meet up with a large number of political parties, movements, civil society organisations, think tanks, etc. in as many EU member states as possible. The objective is to establish whether there is a support base for the selected themes and proposals and to find out how the resolutions can be adapted in order to strengthen this support base and arrive at a shared European programme that includes all Europeans. We aim to bring this document to life over the coming months. It is meant to be a blueprint, a starting point for numerous discussions involving a wide range of organisations, people and visions. If we manage to gain sufficient traction, we will launch a programme for all Europeans 3 months before the elections. This will coincide with the time Brexit takes effect and will be a painful reminder of how important it is for us, Europeans, to be able to enter into dialogue.

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Introduction

A EUROPEAN PROGRAMME: WHY AND HOW?

The next European elections will take place on 25 May 2019, and the European authorities have good reason to be alarmed by this fast-approaching date. Over the past five years, an overall sense that the European project has failed has been spreading among the population. Economic crisis, migratory crisis, Brexit: on many of these topics, Europe does not appear to have answered the call. The gulf is widening between supporters of the European project and its detractors, to such an extent that Europe is now more adversarial than ever. Europhiles and Europhobes are tearing each other to pieces over immigration and the economy, while the European authorities seem content with their 'business as usual' approach, without learning lessons from the past. Constantly presented as the source of all national evils in the media, Europe is finding it difficult to be loved. Worse still: it gives the impression of actually having given up trying to convince those it has disappointed.

And it is this alarming feature that has led to the creation of this road map for a new Europe. It can no longer continue to stick its head in the sand. With one year to go until the elections, we would like to launch a debate on Europe that would transcend the national contexts, to which European issues are all too often restricted. For this purpose, we shall focus on four key themes: democracy, asylum and immigration, the Union's social policy and industrial policy. These four subjects are closely linked. The migration crisis and the growth in social and economic inequalities has reinforced the scepticism of citizens towards Europe. We propose three concrete measures for each of these themes, aimed at reinforcing this weakened confidence. We want to revive an inclusive concept of citizenship, which has always been at the heart of the European project, but seems to have taken a back seat over the years. This implies a humane and efficient asylum and migration policy, a renewed sense of solidarity and, finally, a reinforced economy that is capable of embracing the opportunities of the digital revolution. If Europe succeeds on these three levels, it will win back its credibility among citizens,

and overcome the lack of legitimacy for which it has received so much criticism.

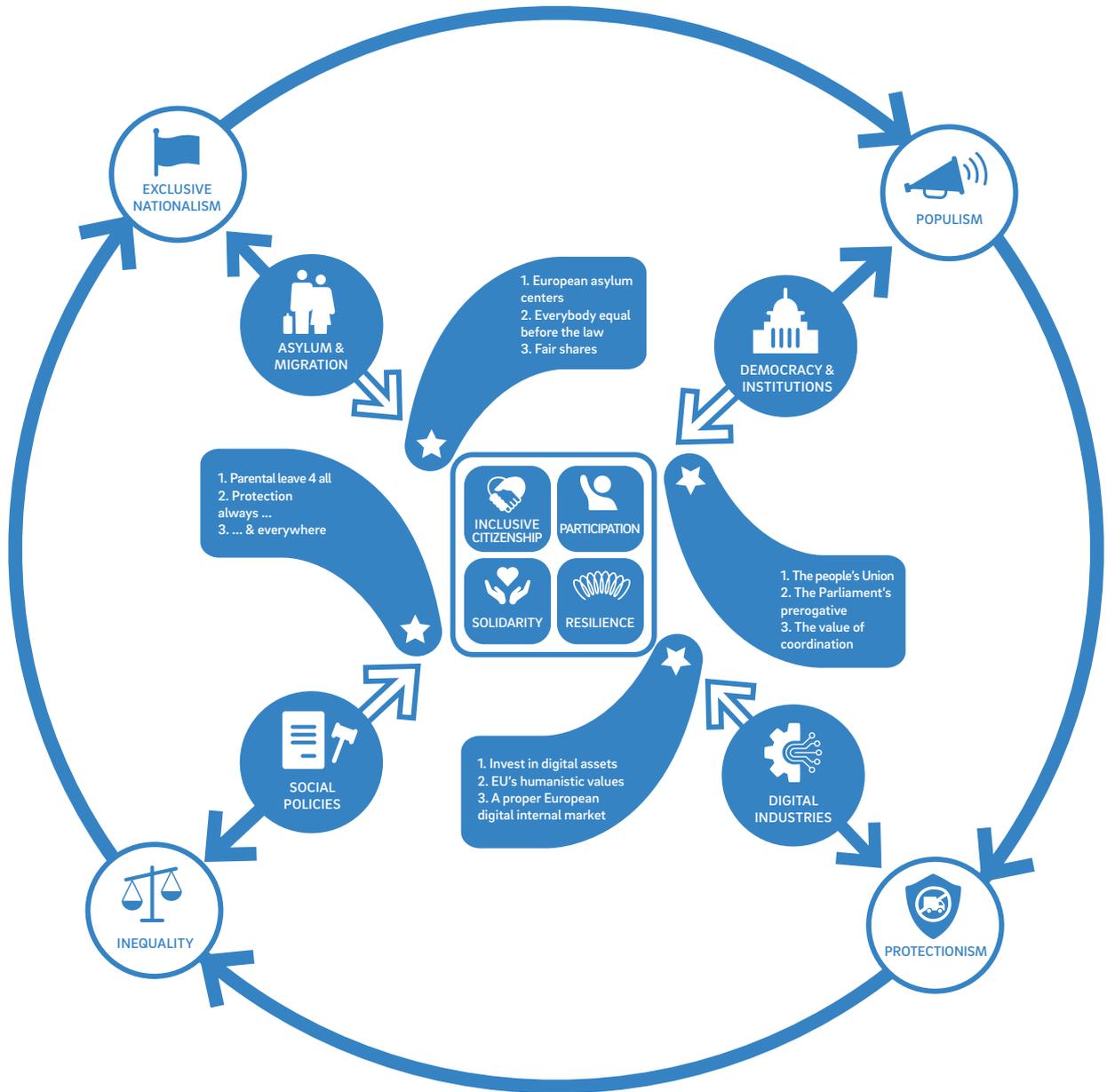
"The Friday Group ventures into Europe with its 12-point plan with the aim of developing a support base for a joint programme across the Union"

With these 12 proposals, we hope that the four ills that threaten Europe - populism, nationalist exclusion, growing inequalities and economic downturn - will be replaced by their counterpart. The vicious circle of Europe can be transformed into a virtuous circle, if we adopt the means to fulfil our ambitions. 25 May 2019 does not necessarily have to be a fatal date, when Europe receives its just punishment at the ballot box. If these subjects receive the attention they deserve, these upcoming elections may take a happier turn, and allow citizens to reconnect with Europe.

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"We hope that our proposals for 'more Europe' will generate a positive European dynamic"

A VIRTUOUS CIRCLE FOR EUROPE



source: The Friday Group 2018

I. Modern EU institutions & democracy

European integration is a process in constant renewal. Its institutional structure evolves both incrementally, and through the crises it experiences. The latter open windows of opportunity which the Union has taken advantage of in the past to make truly qualitative leaps forward. The forthcoming European elections, combined with the finalisation of the United Kingdom's exit process, could indeed present an opportunity to radically reform the institutional architecture on which the Union is based. Within this framework, we have identified three key priority areas for reform.

1. The people's union

How can the European democratic deficit be eliminated? The question has been raised time and time again over the past few decades. The rise in power of the European Parliament since its creation in 1952 - its election by direct suffrage; its significantly increased powers - hasn't really changed anything. For many of its citizens, Europe remains a technocratic Leviathan devoid of any legitimacy. There is no miracle solution to this deficit. but there are paths to democratisation. They can help make the large construction site that is European democracy advance in the right direction:

A. TRANSNATIONAL LISTS PROJECT

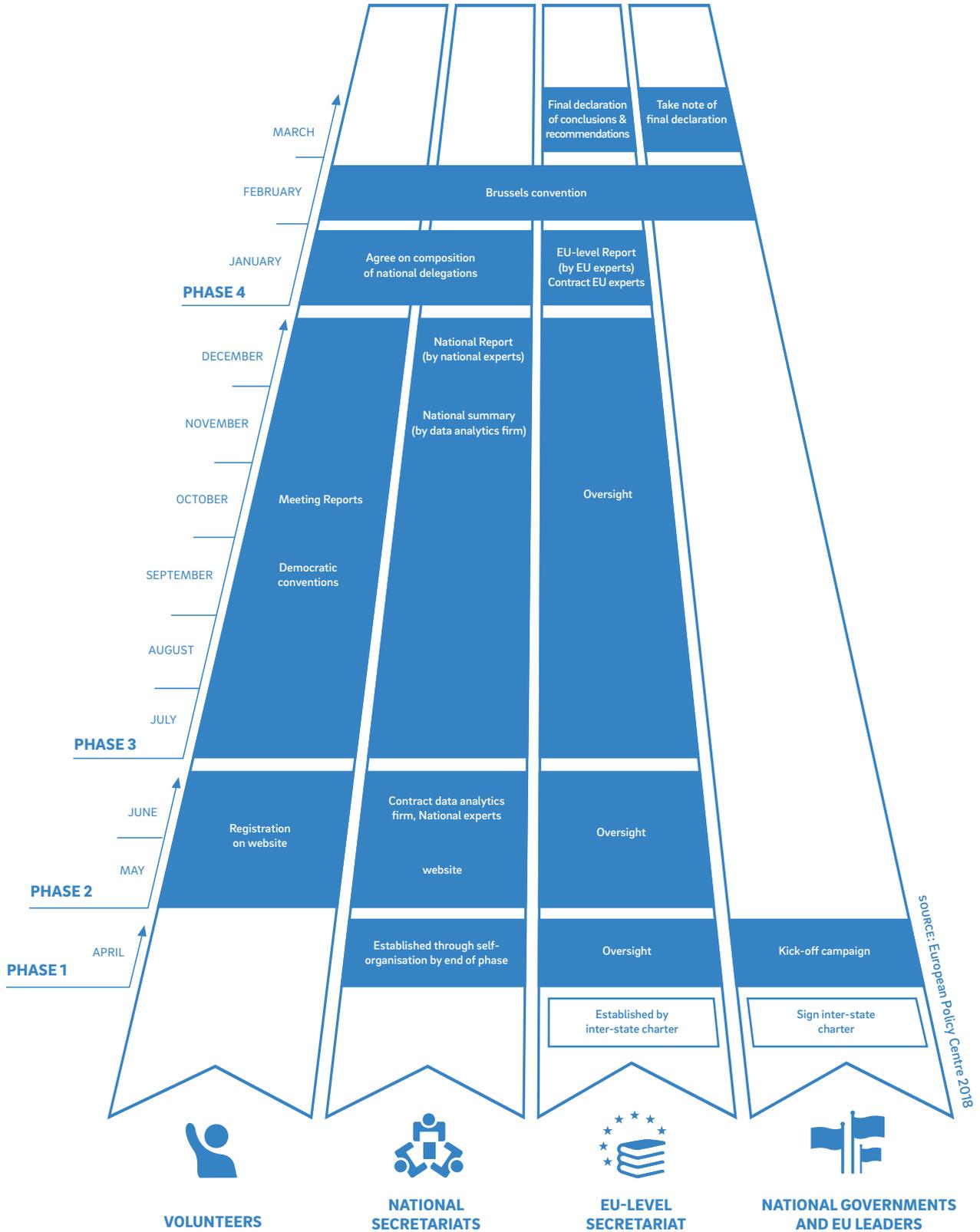
On 8 February 2018, despite the Committee on Constitutional Affairs' favourable opinion, the European Parliament ruled against the transnational lists project (368 votes against 274). This project consists in giving every citizen, in addition to their regular vote for their national MEP, a vote for a list of members of parliament from different member countries who all follow the same political line. The initiative only

concerned 27 of the seats left vacant by the British MEPs. Despite this failure, we remain convinced of this initiative's relevance. The question of the transnational lists is not in itself a question on more or less of Europe - a wayward federalist tendency aimed at breaking up the Europe of Nations. It is a question of setting up an ad hoc democratic platform so that a debate such as the one on Europe, can take place outside national frameworks. This is not a new idea. We hope that it will continue to move forward.

B. DEMOCRATIC CONVENTIONS

France is behind the initiative, although it is not restricted to that country only. The idea is to put together citizens' panels in each of the member countries, where the state of the Union will be debated, as well as the desires and fears it arouses. The conclusions of each debate will then be put online, centralised by each member state, and finally sent to the European authorities at the end of the process. This process is resolutely pluralistic: neither pro- nor anti-European. This project will be a real exercise in participative democracy, which will not only allow citizens to express themselves, but also enable the European authorities to be more familiar with the state of public opinion. Ireland launched these types of citizens' consultations in February 2018. They are held in universities or associations, and themes as diverse as employment, investment or the impact of Brexit are discussed. An online space has also been set up by the Irish authorities, so that any citizen who cannot go to the debate can submit his or her ideas. The first citizens' panel saw the light of day in France on 17 April. We believe it is essential that such panels are set up as quickly as possible in Belgium and in countries where this process still has not been set in motion, upon the initiative of civil society, with the authorities possibly providing logistics support.

AGENDA FOR THE DEMOCRATIC CONVENTIONS



C. REINFORCEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN CITIZEN'S INITIATIVE (ECI)

The ECI, recognised in Article 11 (4) of the Treaty on the European Union, has been in operation since 2012. Up until now, only four initiatives have gathered the million votes required to be examined by the Commission, and only two initiatives (on consensual issues about the environment) have led to the latter taking concrete measures. In September 2017, the Commission submitted a number of measures to the European Council and Parliament, aimed at making the procedure more accessible and easier to organise. We welcome this initiative but consider, like other observers, that the ECI will not fully succeed as long as the Commission remains the judge and party to the process, supporting citizens in their initiative and examining the ECIs as a last resort. In line with recent observations from the Committee of Regions, we think that it would be a good idea to create an ad hoc council to examine the ECIs, composed of legal experts, academics and representatives of civil society. We also call for the European Parliament to play a greater role in the process. For instance, the Parliament should be able to hear the sponsors of an ECI. Finally, we consider that the ECIs which do not reach the required number of signatures, or do not succeed for any other reason, should receive a detailed reply, so that their supporters do not have the impression that their message has been completely ignored.

2. The Parliament's prerogative

A. END THE COMMISSION'S INITIATIVE MONOPOLY

Within the Member States, the right to initiate the legislative process is shared between the government and parliament. Within the European Union, the Commission still has the monopoly over this initiative (Article 17(2) TFUE). This monopoly was tempered by the 'indirect' right of initiative of the European Parliament, which was recognised by the Lisbon Treaty (Article 225 TFUE), and enables the Parliament to invite the Commission to introduce a proposal. However, symbolically, the Commission's monopoly on initiatives maintains the idea that it is the only guarantor of public interest, despite the fact that the co-decision procedure with the Council of the European Union (composed of Member States' representatives who primarily defend national interests) has become commonplace. Maintaining this monopoly reinforces the accusations of technocracy. Giving parliament a right of initiative would strengthen the feeling that it is the citizens who give a boost to the

legislative process, through their representatives.

B. ADJUSTMENT OF THE PARLIAMENTARY CYCLE AND THE EUROPEAN MULTIANNUAL FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK (MFF)

Currently, the parliamentary cycle and the cycle of adoption of the multiannual financial frameworks (MFF) do not coincide (next elections in 2019; current MFF 2014-2020). This means that at each European election, the new parliament, even though it is called upon to participate in the adoption of every annual budget, nevertheless inherits political priorities translated into figures by the current MFF. This affects the visibility of the Union's expenditure, and the policies to which this corresponds. We consider that these two cycles - political and budgetary - should coincide. Every European election should therefore go hand in hand with the adoption of a new MFF. This would not only help to clarify the procedures in citizens' eyes, but also send out a strong political signal during the induction of the new parliament.

3. The value of coordination

The eurozone entered an unprecedented period of crisis at the beginning of the 2010s, which highlighted its failings in terms of economic governance. The creation of a single currency does, in effect, mean that the eurozone's Member States are deprived of a crucial macro-economic adjustment tool, since they are no longer able to devalue their currency during an economic crisis. This loss of monetary flexibility between Member States is only possible if other economic adjustment mechanisms exist within the eurozone. These mechanisms were and still are largely incomplete. However, their absence can only be perceived if there is an asymmetric crisis within the eurozone, which explains the fact that the eurozone crisis only occurred more than 10 years after its creation, following the 2008 global economic crisis. However, we should not be fooled into thinking that the relative economic calm of the past few years means that all structural issues of the eurozone have been addressed.

In short, the loss of devaluation (or re-evaluation) as an adjustment tool, must be replaced by other adjustment mechanisms, which can be categorized as follows:

1. The flexibility of prices and wages
2. Fiscal transfers (solidarity mechanisms)
3. The mobility of production factors (people and equity)

Prior to the crisis, the eurozone only had a small number of these adjustment mechanisms. Some reforms were initiated in each of these categories, but the trend must be furthered, as additional reforms are still necessary.

A. THE FLEXIBILITY OF PRICES AND WAGES

It is undoubtedly the alternative adjustment mechanism that was the most promoted during the eurozone crisis. The inability of crisis countries to devalue, led to deflationary pressure on wages and prices. Above all, it was a question of institutional reforms within the Member States (reform of labour law, law on competitiveness, tax reform aimed at lowering labour costs, etc.), since these subjects were largely excluded from the European field. Nevertheless, they had a considerable impact on the monetary policy, because these changes had a deflationary effect, particularly in the absence of a policy aimed at the flexibility of prices and wage rises in countries scarcely affected by the crisis.

Institutional reflections at this level subsequently relate to two separate aspects:

- The monetary policy: the European Central Bank's mandate is strictly limited to the objective of price stability. The Bank currently considers this objective fulfilled if it achieves an inflation in the medium term that is 'close to but under 2 %'. There is good reason to question the definition of this objective, particularly considering the inability of the ECB to reach it in the past five years. The combination of a Central Bank with strong anti-inflationary bias and a macroeconomic policy promoting the flexibility of prices and wage reductions in case of an asymmetric shock, very significantly increases the structural risks of deflation in the eurozone.
- Macroeconomic coordination: since the eurozone crisis, a mechanism was set up by the European Commission to monitor (and potentially sanction) Member States' economic policies. The elaboration of this policy quite rightly includes the monitoring of macroeconomic imbalances, in every respect (including countries with an unbalanced lending position). It would appear desirable to complete this European semester by also including the monitoring of sub-inflationary phenomena in terms of wages and prices, so as not to limit the adjustment to reductions alone.

B. BUDGETARY FLEXIBILITY (BUDGET SOLIDARITY MECHANISMS)

In case of asymmetric shock, a second adjustment mechanism would simply consist in relying on fiscal solidarity. If one part of the eurozone is affected by an economic crisis and not the other, mechanisms that would allow budgetary transfers to the affected areas can indeed play a compensatory role, just like devaluation. This is in fact Emmanuel Macron's proposal, which aims to create a eurozone budget.

This political proposal raises three major questions:

- On a microeconomic level: which policies would help achieve such budgetary pooling? We must of course avoid a macroeconomic balancing mechanism that induces microeconomic inefficiencies, i.e. transfers with a negative economic impact (for instance: a simple increase in unemployment benefit in a country leading to a reduced incentive to find work). One of the most coherent policies would inevitably be the employment policy and, in particular, the (partial or complete) pooling of the budget linked to unemployment benefit, or even the training budget.
- On a macroeconomic level: for obvious political reasons, the risk of pooling sums that are too insignificant to have an observable macroeconomic impact is considerable. There is therefore a risk of further complicating public policies (see above) without this being a solution for the macroeconomic stability of the eurozone.
- On the level of political balance: a common budgetary mechanism aimed at stabilising the eurozone in case of asymmetric shocks, shouldn't be translated into permanent fiscal transfers from some countries to others. In this case, it would not be a macroeconomic stabilisation mechanism but an economic redistribution policy within the eurozone. It is important to avoid confusion between these two concepts. It should be possible to introduce budgetary adjustment mechanisms without creating permanent and unilateral fiscal transfers from some Member States to others, which would run a significant risk of coming up against strong political opposition. Up until now, the European Union has partly failed in this respect because the so-called cohesion policies (European structural funds), which have nevertheless enabled a catch-up in many cases, have not succeeded in reversing the budget flows (with the well-known exception of Ireland).

The special case of the Banking Union

The problem of budgetary pooling also has a banking element to it within the framework of a currency area. As well as losing the possibility of devaluating its currency in the case of an asymmetric shock, a country also loses its monetary power and, consequently, increases its risk of defaulting on its debt (in the past, it always had the possibility of obliging its central bank to create money to repay its debt). And yet, a country's main bondholders are generally the banks active within this very country. The result is a situation that can quickly turn into an economic disaster through the following domino effect:

BANKING CRISIS

- Increase in the default rate of companies and households
- Loss in the value of government bonds

BUDGET CRISIS

- Increase in public deficit due to the loss of revenue and increase in expenditure
- Increase in the debt through the need to bail out the banks

Recapitalisation of the banks – Growth of the deficit – Loss of value of government bonds on banks balance sheets – Increase in the risk linked to the recapitalisation of banks – Increase in the cost of financing the banks

Since a bank isn't a company like any other, the possibility of allowing banks to go bankrupt is quite limited because this would result in a loss for all these banks' depositors.

The solution is based on setting up a banking union at European level, that has several elements to it:

- A transfer of responsibility at European level by entrusting the supervision of the banks to the European Central Bank rather than to national regulators
- The subsequent transfer of budgetary responsibility if a bank defaults on a European level

These important reforms have already been put in motion since the ECB is now responsible for supervising the major banks. Nevertheless, budgetary responsibility is still national for the moment, despite proposals aimed at a gradual transition to a European level. There are two elements to this budgetary mutualisation:

- The first step is aimed at partial or complete pooling of deposit insurances, which is the insurance premiums paid by the banks (at national level) in case one of them goes bankrupt
- The second step aims to set up a fiscal backstop in order to deal with the cost of recapitalising the bank, in case a bank defaults and has a deposit insurance shortfall

The reluctance towards such mutualisation results from the fact that the supervisory responsibility at European level is only very recent and that the possible costs of recapitalisation at present are the result of a lack of national supervision. Therefore, such mutualisation can only be gradual.

C. WORKER MOBILITY

The third major form of flexibility that can compensate for the rigidity of a common currency is the mobility of production factors within that common area. In other words, when an economic crisis occurs in a country or part of the currency area, the best solution for residents of that country is to have the right and ability to travel to an area where the economic situation is better. It is a fact that the mobility of people in Europe remains limited. By comparison, according to some studies, mobility between states within the United States is still more than ten times higher than in the European Union. A number of European policies touch on this issue (Erasmus, Portability of rights, etc.) but efforts are clearly too modest to allow a substantial increase in this mobility. A number of suggestions in this regard are developed in the section on European social policy.

D. PROTECTION OF THE UNION'S FOUNDING VALUES

The European Union is more than just a large market, and the integration project it intends to embody is not simply commercial and economic. The Union is also a political community. It implies a certain model of society and is based on a set of common values - its political and constitutional DNA - now explicitly identified by the European treaties: democracy, the rule of law and the protection of the fundamental rights of the individual (Article 2 TEU). Respect for these values is not only a precondition for membership, but also an ongoing commitment. The Union must therefore be able to act when one of its Member States undermines its founding values. The question has long remained theoretical, but today it is posed in very concrete terms. In several Member States, we are indeed witnessing a questioning of the classical model of liberal democracy in the name of national sovereignty, and a full-scale attack on the traditional watchdogs (the judiciary, the press and civil society). The situation, regularly described as a rule of law crisis, must prompt reflection on

the role that the EU must play in preserving its founding values, and on the modalities of its action in this context.

First of all, we wish to reaffirm what might in many respects be taken for granted: the Union has a role to play in dealing with this problem, which cannot therefore be left solely to the Member States, guided by a purely intergovernmental logic. Not only is its legal capacity to do so explicitly enshrined, it also has the political legitimacy to do so. Of course, the context of such an intervention is delicate, because more often than not, the question of the preservation of common values arises in areas that are still exclusively under national jurisdiction (their institutional structure, their territorial organization, etc.). The Union's action can therefore only be envisaged in accordance with certain basic principles of proportionality, subsidiarity and respect for national sovereignty. In promoting and preserving its founding values, the Union must also ensure unity, integrity and dialogue within its borders.

As for the Union's means of action, the mechanism currently provided for by the Treaties – the famously nuclear Article 7 TEU – has revealed all its limits in the cases of Hungary and Poland. Its main limitation lies in its intergovernmental nature, the leading role played by the Council, and the natural tendency of Member States to cover each other for essentially political reasons. In this context, the mechanism must, in our view, be reviewed. On the one hand, with the obvious aim of depoliticizing it, by abandoning the requirement of a unanimous vote currently necessary to activate the mechanism. The move to qualified majority voting would thus seem appropriate to us. Secondly, by giving the European Commission – as the institution responsible for promoting and defending the European interest (and its values) – possibly supported by the Court of Justice of the European Union, an autonomous capacity for action, particularly in the early stages of the procedure. In this respect, the use of all possible means of action, including financial ones through the introduction of conditionality, and the logic of diversification that underlies it, seem to us fully desirable.

II. Disruptive EU policies for an industrial revival in the digital age

1. The opportunity of the digital revolution

Digitalization and automation are critical for Europe's growth, but will have important social implications. The digital revolution will transform Europe's society and economy in the coming years, raising fundamental questions about how businesses, governments and other organizations can be designed to satisfy human needs and achieve the values to which Europeans aspire. The digital revolution offers many opportunities for Europe, and is critical for Europe's future economic growth and ability to compensate for demographic change. Taking Germany as an example, early adoption of automation could add 2.4 percentage points to annual per capita GDP growth to 2030 – significantly more than the annual drag of 0.6 percentage points anticipated due to ageing.

2. The challenges of the digital revolution

Europe will need to act quickly if it is to capture the economic benefits of new technologies. Many European firms and countries are lagging behind not only the US but also increasingly China in developing the digital tools and skills needed for future success. Already, roughly half of all working hours could be automated using current technology, which supports productivity growth but risks leaving behind those who cannot adapt. Globally, approximately 35% of skills and qualifications required in different industries will change because of automation by 2030.

European citizens are anxious about what the digital transformation means for their future. In most European countries surveyed, less than half of the generation over 50 years old believe that children will be better off financially than their parents, though young people are more positive. Almost three-quarters of all Europeans expect technology to destroy more jobs than it creates, less than half believe they are sufficiently skilled in the use of digital technologies to do their jobs.

These worries are legitimate. Those with low skills or occupations that will not transact easily will be particularly affected. Disparities may be further widened as many digital platforms have “winner-takes-all” dynamics, enabling individuals and organizations that lead the digital transformation to accrue even greater wealth. Besides, emergence of exponentially growing innovation such as Artificial Intelligence will create an unprecedented race for knowledge and talent as these tend to aggregate and concentrate rapidly, therefore widening the existing skills gap.

3. The way forward

We must therefore create the necessary ecosystem for Europe to embrace and be ahead of the digital transformation. Our children's Europe should lead the world in developing new technologies and maximizing their impact on well-being, economic growth, innovation and job creation through investment and lifelong learning. This new European social contract should ensure that all citizens participate in and trust a secure digital society that adheres to fundamental liberties and values and build social

and fiscal frameworks fit for the digital economy. Europe can fulfil this ambition by following three pillars. For each pillar, we put forward measures that could complement existing EU initiatives on lifelong learning, investment in technology, data protection, taxation and welfare systems, and competition policy.

3. Invest in critical digital assets, technologies, and environments

Europe should pursue research and large-scale investment in technologies that drive growth and benefit society, and create environments in which digitized and digital companies can emerge, flourish

and prosper. It must invest in its people to acquire the skills and bring the most advanced innovations to life.

A. ESTABLISH A UNIVERSAL RIGHT TO LEARN (URL)

Citizens will need to upskill and continuously reskill to participate in the digital economy's fluid job markets: digital skills, entrepreneurship, emotional and social skills that are hard to automate. We therefore need a pan-European commitment to lifelong learning for all kinds of workers, with governments, business, civil society and individuals taking collective responsibility. Building on Europe's ongoing commitments to education, such as the Erasmus program, upskilling should be a core component of a humanist economy. Standardized professional qualifications should be a part of this strategy too.

The Universal Right to Learn: an operationalization

Universal Right to Learn (URL): Major investments are needed from the private and public sectors to build human-specific skills such as creativity and interaction with others, and entrepreneurial and technological skills. To encourage these investments, Europe could create a new Universal Right to Learn (URL) system: every year, as part of a new social contract, the European Union would give all adult citizens URL tokens that could be redeemed for skills training. The training could be done with any provider – an educational institution, business or individual – in any European country, or online. The URL system would ultimately be paid for by businesses, through a scheme that draws inspiration from the carbon tax: each employer would have an annual training quota, and would have to either return its specified amount of redeemed tokens or pay a fee. Employers could opt to offer training themselves or buy tokens from others who have provided training. Token redemption and trading could be tracked and verified using blockchain. To maximize incentives to provide training with real economic utility, tax data could conceivably be used to identify and devise rewards for those trainers whose trainees experience the highest average increases in income after the training.

The URL system would establish lifelong learning as a social norm and incentivize individuals to invest more in developing their skill sets. It would also incentivize businesses to offer non-employees the kind of training currently offered only to employees: this benefits the business by creating a pipeline of potential new employees, while addressing social inequality by widening access to high-quality training with real-world workplace relevance. Policymakers would need to integrate this program into the existing education system, potentially by involving universities and vocational schools as training providers, and manage the financial burden this would place on European businesses; for example, through tax incentives. The programme would also require rigorous quality-assurance mechanisms, potentially including reviews tracked through blockchain, EU regulations and close monitoring of the outcomes of upskilling to ensure relevant skills are being learned.

B. DEPLOY A EUROPEAN YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND CODING PROGRAMME

Programs such as Erasmus+, eTwinning, the vision for the European Education Area and Erasmus Entrepreneurs are helping to create educational and business exchange links among different European countries. Europe's students would benefit from further opportunities to experience working across cultures, learning digital skills and using online tools to collaborate. A new European Youth Entrepreneurship Program could have a much broader scope and scale, by giving every student aged 16 or above the opportunity to learn about entrepreneurial skills and use them to collaborate on a project, ideally with peers in other countries. Prizes would be given to the best projects. The program would promote a cross-fertilization of students and business and inculcate a healthy approach to entrepreneurship and risk-taking among European youth. A new European Coding Programme could be designed to offer students the opportunity to follow a 3-months curriculum to study a new coding language, for instance over the summer, with a partnering European institution. Leveraging the success of the Erasmus programme, it would foster digital skills among students and cross-fertilize digital knowledge across European countries.

C. LAUNCH EU FLAGSHIP INITIATIVES ON MOST CRITICAL TECHNOLOGIES AND INDUSTRIES

While initiatives such as Horizon 2020, the European Innovation Council pilot and EuroHPC are a welcome start, cutting-edge companies in promising technologies still find it harder in Europe than elsewhere to obtain the capital needed to expand. Recently, the EU Commission has called for a €20 billion cash injection for artificial intelligence research and innovation amid concerns that the EU is losing the race against China and the US. Besides, health, transport and agriculture are among the areas the Commission would like researchers to focus on. In collaboration with industry players, the European Commission must shape EU flagship initiatives to coordinate policy actions and public funding in these selected technologies and industries, deemed to have the potential to create jobs and drive European well-being. A first lever is the strengthening of a European Fund for Risk Capital to support the growth of start-ups which have achieved significant scale already. This would avoid these digital ventures to expatriate due to the lack of available funding typically in SeriesB funding. As an additional way to unlock funding for emerging companies, Europe could use public procurement. For example, some of Europe's healthcare budgets could be condensed to

facilitate large-scale investment in digital solutions to improve the quality and cost of healthcare, or municipalities could co-invest in developing digitized transport. Finally, a proper coordination across the European Commission divisions is critical to carry on a program cross-silo. The appointment of a Commissioner to Digital Europe would be a good step in that direction.

5. Adhere to European humanist values

Europe must ensure technology works for humans and respects the values and social contract it preserves. This includes addressing open questions on privacy and data protection as well as the ethical and legal principles governing new technologies and their effect on society. It also covers welfare and taxation. Europe needs to accelerate existing efforts to define a new social contract, including tax rules that ensure businesses pay their fair share, and social security provisions, labour market rules that ensure citizens are not left behind.

A. ESTABLISH A EUROPEAN OBSERVATORY OF DIGITAL BUSINESS AND DATA USE

The question of data privacy and how citizens will be able to preserve the privacy of their data has been a heated topic over the last months and years, following repeated data privacy breaches, data leaks and suspicions on data abuse. Cases of data breaches like Cambridge Analytica, Yahoo, eBay or JP Morgan highlights the increasing vulnerability of citizens in the digital world. Setting up a European observatory of digital companies and data usage would enable to define and update a new framework on data privacy and how to realistically implement it, while ensuring a role of watchdog in the case of data regulation breaches. It would complement existing European efforts on the protection of personal data, in which General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is a first step. This can guide policy-makers on where free access to certain data is warranted, and which datasets should not be commercially available for certain uses. A second step would be forward-looking as to the best ways to ensure safe and legal data, typically by involving large digital players which have the footprint and technological horsepower to establish, for instance, centralized repository with authorized-only access. Finally, the European Commission should continue to support the launch of private privacy-protecting products and services to support further data protection.

B. CREATE A EUROPEAN TECHNOLOGY AND HUMAN ETHICAL COMMISSION (ETHEC)

The rapid adoption of innovations in areas such as artificial intelligence, drones, self-driving cars, the Internet of Things (IoT) and CRISPR/Cas9 gene-editing technology is creating new threats to human rights and dignity as well as new opportunities to protect them. Machines are increasingly taking ethical decisions that affect human lives, which necessitates clear thinking about how to integrate technological and organizational innovation with individual and collective well-being in order to underpin a new social contract. EU institutions and member states could create a new, multi-stakeholder body – the European Technology and Human Ethical Commission (ETHEC) – charged with anticipating threats and opportunities and formulating forward-looking ethical principles to address them; establishing methodologies to assess human-technological interactions in organizations and enterprises, and guidelines to improve them; and managing multi-stakeholder experimentation programmes to generate evidence on solutions. It would also comprise the European observatory of digital companies and data usage.

ETHEC could build on and support organizations initiating elements of this work at a national and pan-European level, such as Germany's Ethics Commission on Automated and Connected Driving, and multi-stakeholder efforts such as the Partnership on AI. ETHEC would be made up of citizens, companies and other stakeholders, making Europe a world leader in putting humans at the centre of the digital age. As well as making recommendations to European policy-makers, ETHEC could propose an international treaty on AI – similar to a non-proliferation treaty – to seek to minimize the potential risks of negative cross-border effects from powerful AIs that could be created in the future.

C. TRAIN CITIZENS ON DATA PRIVACY, CONSENT AND USAGE

Recent studies have shown that one citizen out of 2 in the UK is not aware of its own data protection rights. Every day, millions of citizens provide consent to the usage of their data without understanding the exact scope, breadth and extent of the data that will be used and shared about them. While GDPR will change the way data is collected,

stored and used, citizens must be better informed on their rights as to data privacy. A short module, for instance by video, to be deployed through local authorities, employers and direct marketing campaigns by the European Commission would enhance the knowledge of the citizens and help them manage their data privacy with more caution.

6. A single European digital market thanks to the regulation of web giants

The digital economy leads to numerous disruptions and inequalities that have an impact not only on market structures but also on the tax revenues of the various states of the European Union. Indeed, having limited physical assets, web giants are offered the possibility of repatriating income to countries with low taxation that are disproportionate to the digital presence they maintain in the various countries and the added value they generate there. So, we have local players who are taxed and digital players who are not subject to any tax, while they compete with those players in the traditional economy who are subject.

Thought must therefore be given to thoroughly reviewing our tax treatment of these companies, if only to target companies that set up outside Europe in order to escape our tax systems. The proposal to tax digital players on the basis of the turnover achieved in each country and no longer on the basis of profits received in low-tax countries should be taken further. To respond to the reluctance of the countries that have become champions in welcoming these players, a reconversion model must also be devised.

Finally, there is also the question of the size and monopolistic tendencies of certain players which could permanently damage the fabric of European SMEs and our social cohesion in view of their abuse of a dominant position. Particular vigilance at European level must be maintained thanks to a specific digital competition policy and fair and rigorously applied sanctions.

III. A new social Europe

1. Background

Under Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union, one of the aims of the Union is to promote the well-being of European citizens, for example by combating social exclusion and discrimination and promoting social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and the protection of children's rights. Moreover, in accordance with Article 9 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, the Union must take into account, in the definition and implementation of its policies and actions, requirements relating to the promotion of a high level of employment, the guarantee of adequate social protection, the fight against social exclusion and a high level of education, training and protection of human health.

Consequently, on 17 November 2017, at the Gothenburg Social Summit, the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission proclaimed the European Pillar of Social Rights. It is a set of 20 key principles and rights designed to provide the European Union with fair and well-functioning labour markets and social protection systems.

Within this European Pillar are included the various principles linked to access to employment, which are:

- The right to receive active employment support which states, inter alia, that "Everyone has the right to transfer his social protection and training rights during periods of occupational

transition". (Article 04 of the Pillar)

- The right to secure and adaptable jobs, with the provision that "Professional mobility must be facilitated" (Article 05 of the Pillar).

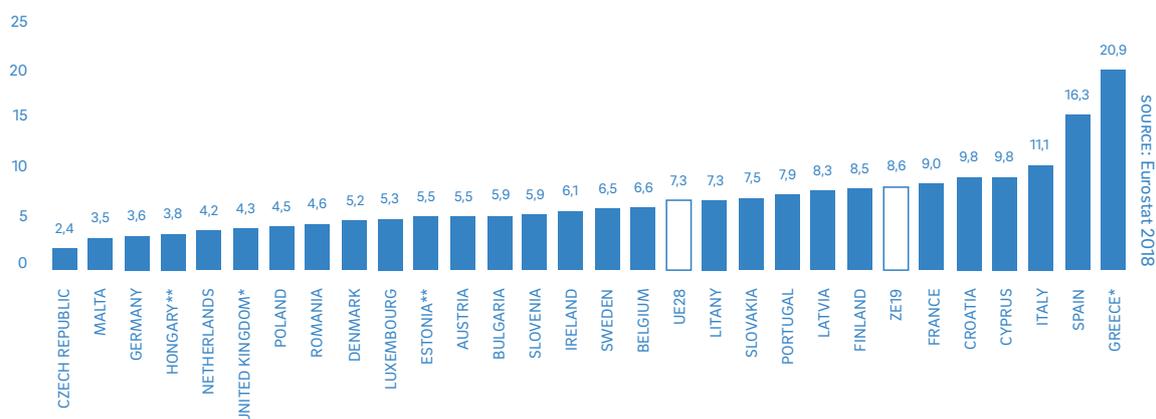
The Pillar of Social Rights also recognizes the right to work-life balance: "Parents and persons with family responsibilities have the right to appropriate leave and flexible work arrangements, as well as childcare services. Women and men must have access to special leave on an equal basis in order to meet their family responsibilities. Balanced recourse to these forms of leave should be encouraged".

To be enforceable, however, the latter require, according to recital 14 of the preamble to the Basel Convention, concrete measures or legislative acts to be adopted at the appropriate level, either by the Member States or by the Union itself, "within the limits of their respective powers" and "in accordance with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality" (Recital 17 of the Basel Convention).

2. Challenges

In concrete terms, the opportunities offered in terms of access to quality work still differ greatly for European citizens depending on their country of origin or residence. The Member States of the European Union have extremely different levels of unemployment (Eurostat, News Release 34/2018 - 1 March 2018):

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IN JANUARY 2018, DATA CORRECTED FOR SEASONAL VARIATIONS *NOV. 2017 **DEC. 2017



Furthermore, concerning the balance between private and professional life, the European Commission notes that "In 2015, the employment rate for women (aged 20 to 64) was 64.3% compared to 75.9% for men. **The employment rate gap between men and women** in the labour market is particularly striking for parents and people with other family responsibilities. On average, by 2015, the employment rate for women with children under 6 years of age is almost 9% lower than for women without young children, and in several countries the difference is over 30%. Similarly, women are significantly more likely than men to be non-professional caregivers of elderly or dependent relatives. Women are also much more likely to work part-time because of family responsibilities. This situation contributes substantially to the **wage gap between women and men** (which amounts to 28% in some Member States), which accumulates throughout working life and becomes a **retirement gap between women and men** (40% on average in the EU), increasing the risk of poverty and social exclusion for women, especially older women. According to the projections in the baseline scenario, the above problems will not be sufficiently solved without EU intervention. The employment rate gap between men and women would still rise to 9 percentage points in 2055" (Explanatory Memorandum to the Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the work-life balance of parents and carers).

We therefore propose the following three reforms to enable all European citizens, regardless of their sex or national origin, to benefit from the European social model reaffirmed by the European Pillar of Social Rights.

3. Set the minimum duration of paternity leave at 1 month (minimum) at European level

We appreciate the first legislative initiative taken by the European Commission to implement the Pillar, which on 26 April 2017 tabled a Proposal for a Directive on work-life balance for parents and carers. The aim of this proposal for a directive is to facilitate women's access to the labour market by offering men more opportunities to assume their share of family responsibilities. The decision to withdraw the previous proposal, which related solely to maternity leave, and to approach the issue of

gender equality and access to work for women in a comprehensive manner, taking into account in particular the low (possibility of) participation of men in family responsibilities, seems to us to be an excellent thing. We believe, however, that the Commission's proposal to impose (minimum) 10 days paternity leave in all EU Member States does not go far enough.

The European Commission proposes to introduce a right to paternity leave because "throughout the European Union, women and men currently do not have the same opportunities to take leave when a child is born. While EU law provides minimum standards for women taking maternity leave, there is no right to paternity leave at EU level. The result is an unequal distribution of work and time spent with children among parents, and men are denied the opportunity to spend time with their babies. Paternity leave contributes to the creation of a first close link between the child and the father and has a positive influence on the development of the child" (European Commission, Fact sheet published on the realisation of the European Social Rights Base, MEMO/17/1005).

However, 10 days is not enough to allow fathers to spend time and create a close first bond with their child. A 10-day period does not allow fathers to acquire the skills and care habits that will enable them to adopt their rightful role with their child.

We propose to impose a minimum paternity leave of 1 month. Such a minimum duration imposed throughout the European Union would indeed constitute a measure likely to have an influence on the distribution of roles within families and women's access to the labour market under conditions similar to those of men.

4. Making unemployment insurance rights portable in the EU without time limit

Currently, the portability of unemployment rights is limited to three months, which may be extended once (i.e. for a maximum of six months), under Article 69 of Council Regulation (EEC) No 1408/71 of 14 June 1971 on the application of social security schemes to employed persons, to self-employed persons and to members of their families moving within the Community.

However, the average time to find a job is well over 6 months. Thus, for example, the French Pôle Emploi

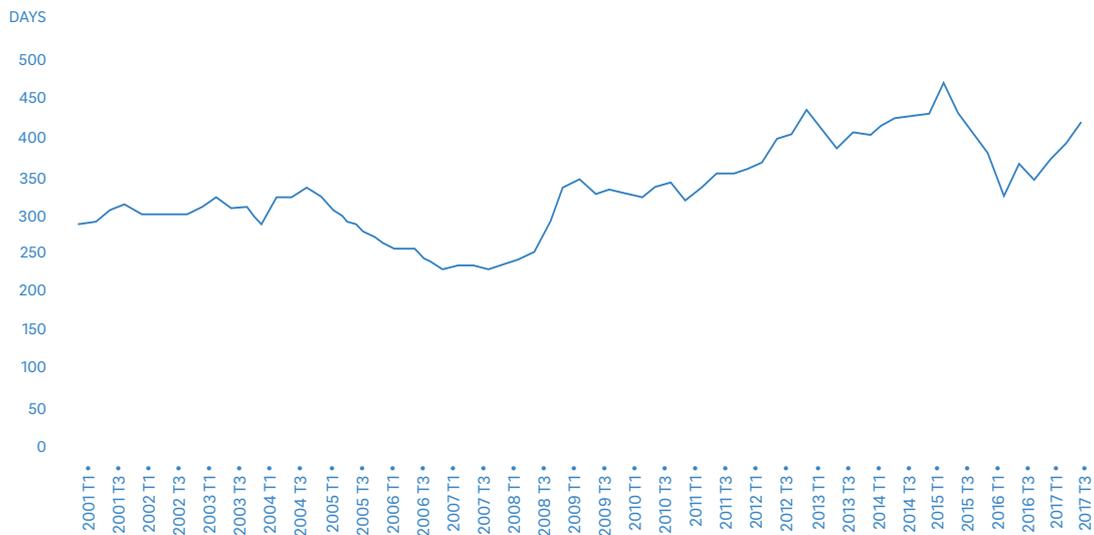
indicated that in the third quarter of 2017, the cyclical unemployment duration indicator was approximately 14 months. The average job search time has been stable at over 300 days since 2008.

We therefore propose to abolish the duration limitation linked to the portability of unemployment rights in order to enable European citizens to make

the most of the employment opportunities offered in the various Member States.

Such a measure, without having an impact on the unemployment rights open in the various Member States, would effectively enable European citizens to use their freedom of movement to develop genuine occupational mobility.

DURATION OF REGISTRATION WITH *POLE EMPLOI*, MEASURED BY THE BUSINESS INDICATOR OF DURATION OF UNEMPLOYMENT



SOURCE: fichier historique des demandeurs d'emploi (Pôle emploi) Données cvs, France entière

5. Limiter les impacts négatifs des échanges professionnels de courte durée entre États membres sur les droits sociaux des travailleurs européens

La mobilité des travailleurs est garantie par les traités européens. Pourtant de nombreux

obstacles persistent de fait et limitent concrètement les possibilités de mobilité au sein de l'Union européenne, en particulier en ce qui concerne les séjours de courte durée dans un autre État membre de l'Union.

Or, ces courts séjours (i.e. échanges, missions ou même emploi de 6 mois à 2 ans) nous paraissent une excellente porte d'entrée vers une plus grande mobilité des travailleurs au sein de l'Union.

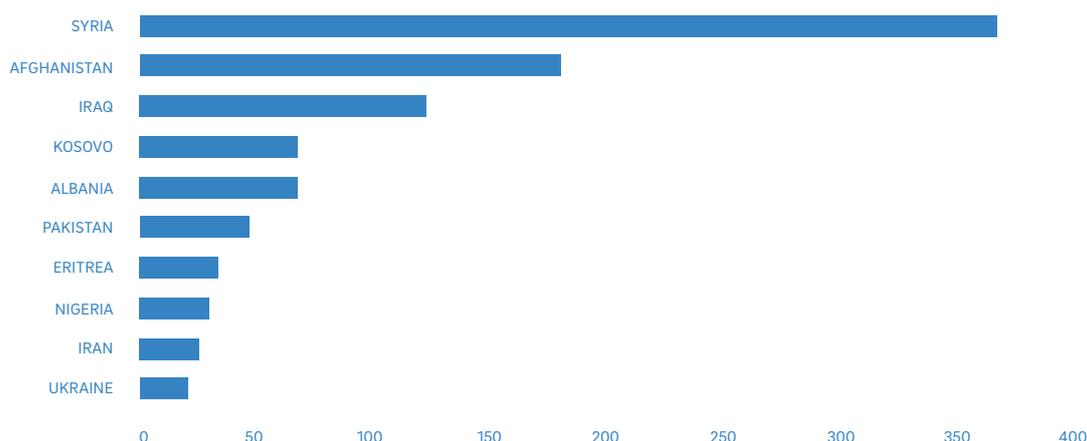
IV. A truly European strategy for migration

1. Background

More than a million migrants and refugees have tried to enter Europe every year since 2015, driven by hopeless wars in Syria, Afghanistan and Yemen, a desperate economic outlook, ecological

catastrophes, political threats, etc. In 2016 more than 362,000 people attempted to cross the Mediterranean with more than 5,000 reported missing or dead. The most recent report of the International Organisation for Migration is quite blunt: Europe is by far the most lethal destination in the world².

TOP 10 ORIGINS OF PEOPLE APPLYING FOR ASYLUM IN THE EU first-time application in 2015, in thousands SOURCE: Eurostat



Governments have found it difficult to manage this influx, whilst those same member states cannot agree on how to distribute the refugees amongst themselves. Politically this has had significant consequences. From the voluntarist “Wir schaffen das” (We can do it) of Chancellor Merkel on the most progressive side of the political spectrum, to the spectacular rise of anti-European, xenophobic and populist politicians and measures on the other side: the asylum and migration crisis has directly or indirectly dominated the political agenda of the EU and its member states in recent years.

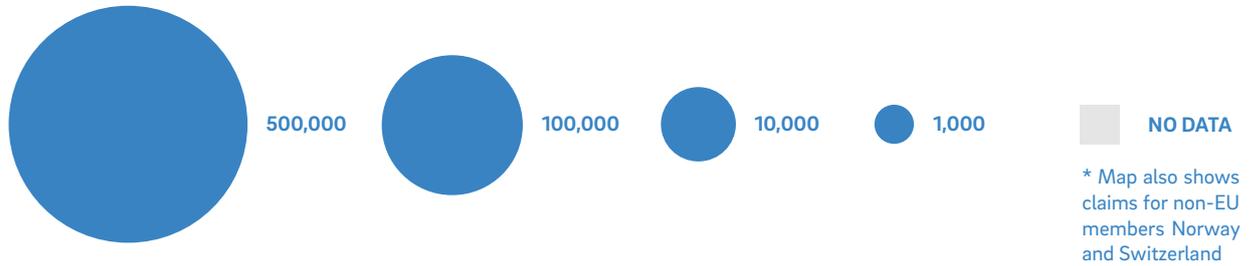
Nevertheless, according to the latest Eurobarometer (2017), the humanitarian disaster that brought this out-and-out population migration to Europe, combined with the fear of an influx

of people with different cultural values and the political inability to provide a sustainable solution to the problem, is motivating 73% of Europeans into doing more to try to manage the situation.

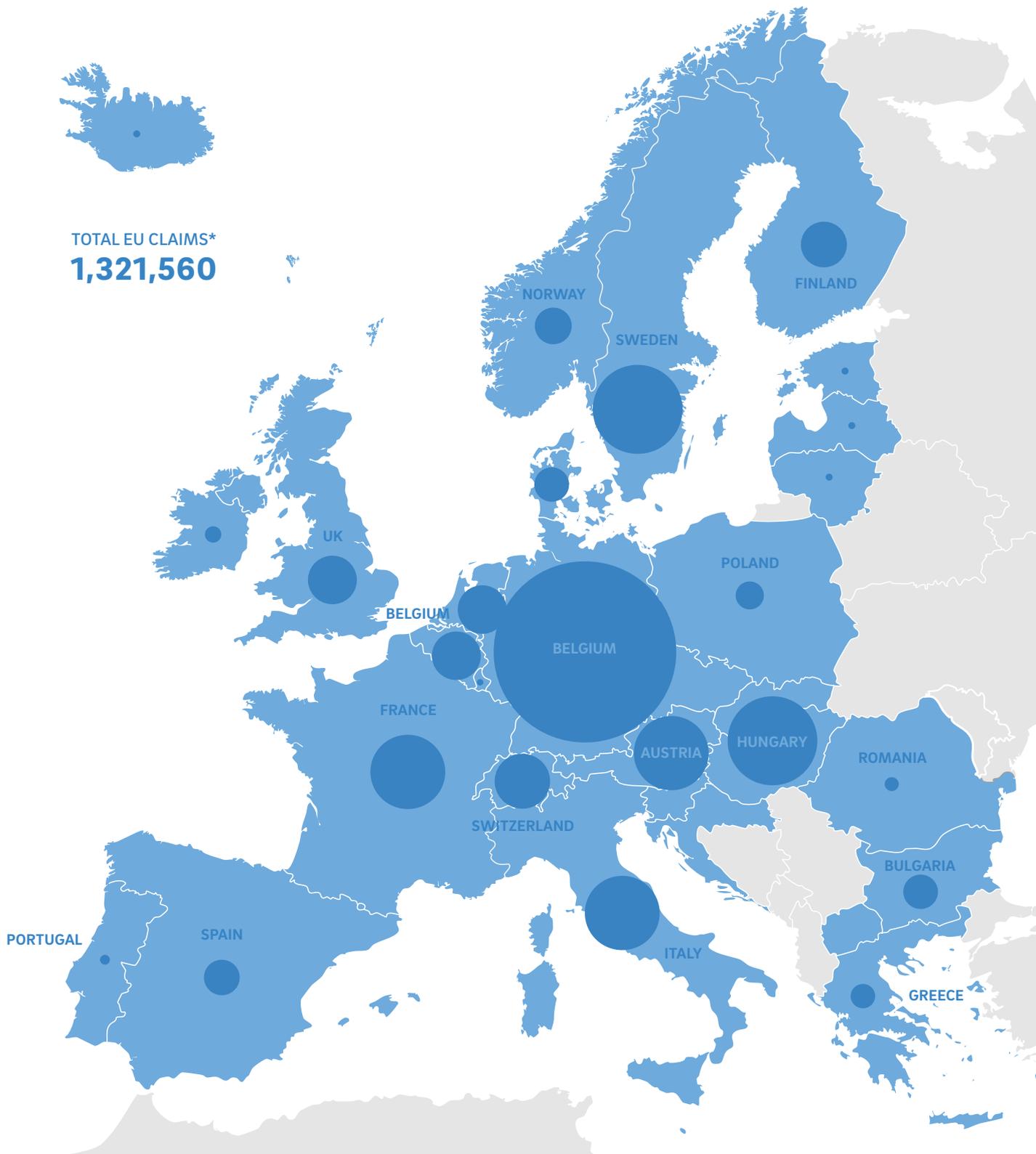
“We can no longer refer to it as a crisis,” Dimitris Avramopoulos, European Commissioner for Migration, recently wrote in Politico, “migration is our new reality”. This means that, contrary to previous years, we can no longer be satisfied with solving the most urgent problems, for example by making deals with countries such as Turkey and Libya, which have taken over a share of the European migration policy (as a matter of fact quite often in a rather dubious manner when it comes to human rights). We need to come up with sustainable solutions.

ASYLUM CLAIMS IN EUROPE, 2015

SOURCE: Eurostat



TOTAL EU CLAIMS*
1,321,560



2. Challenges

The intake of migrants and asylum seekers is unevenly divided, as shown quite clearly in the illustration below. Countries such as Greece and Italy, which are facing economic problems anyway, cannot adequately accommodate all the migrants coming across the various Mediterranean Sea routes and comply correctly with the appropriate asylum procedures and terms. Sweden, Germany and Hungary, on the other hand, are having to deal with a disproportionately high number of asylum applications, particularly when considered in proportion to their population.

This imbalance in distribution, which also fuels populism and xenophobia, is rooted in two interconnected aspects of European migration policy. It is governed by the Dublin III Regulation, which determines that the country of first arrival in the EU is the only country that can investigate the dossier of the person concerned. This puts huge pressure on the countries on the external borders of the EU and results in large differences between member states in terms of the allocation of asylum status. Secondly, there is no redistribution mechanism to compel EU countries to accept a share of the asylum applications and asylum seekers in proportion to their demographic and economic capacity.

According to ECRE⁴, the European Council on Refugees and Exiles, the current system consequently does not offer fair, coherent and effective protection to asylum seekers. The Dublin III system is responsible for the unequal distribution of asylum applications and asylum seekers between the various member states, thus undermining European solidarity. At the same time, however, fortress Europe cannot afford to allow the migration crisis at its borders to flourish, if it is to prevent an upsurge in IS like factions that would represent a threat to its internal security. In brief, there is a need for sustainable solutions that will not only guarantee systematic and humanitarian accommodation and support for every refugee, but also streamline the approach to, and distribution of, migration flows.

We envisage 3 long-term solutions to manage the above-mentioned challenges associated with European migration policy within the current context.

3. Centralised management of the migrant accommodation centres

The large influx of migrants at the southern borders of Europe has brought the

accommodation facilities in these countries to a breaking point. Despite partial subsidies, the institutions are organised and financed by the countries in question themselves. Since the asylum crisis exploded in 2014, the situation in many of the reception centres has become desperate and there are no immediate signs of improvement.

And this happens despite the fact that FRONTEX was established in 2004 to help steer EU border policy in the right direction. Directive 2016/1624/EU⁵ recently even introduced an actual European border and coast guard. The basic structures and regulations are actually already in place. We are also proposing that the management and financing of accommodation centres for asylum seekers be centralised at a European level. That way sufficient resources can be jointly invested by Europe in a humane accommodation system for asylum seekers. It will also prevent a few countries having to bear the largest share of the organisational and budgetary load on behalf of the entire Union.

4. Defining a European asylum statute

These centrally managed centres could also be a stepping stone to a joint European asylum statute. A first significant step was taken in June 2013 with the approval of the Asylum Procedures Directive, which sets out the benchmarks for the conditions for the accommodation of asylum seekers, the combined characteristics of procedures for the handling of asylum applications and the basic rights of asylum seekers when they arrive in the EU.

However, the directive is particularly vague when it comes to awarding the asylum statute. For example, Art. 10, 2 of directive 2013/032/EU states⁶: "When examining applications for international protection, the determining authority shall first determine whether the applicants qualify as refugees and, if not, determine whether the applicants are eligible for subsidiary protection." There are, however, major differences between member states in how this qualification should be made. Member states consequently still have considerable discretionary power, resulting in major inequalities between countries⁷. We therefore propose, for example via the European agency that is responsible for the accommodation of asylum seekers, to further harmonise the asylum procedures and allocation conditions to ensure that the likelihood of obtaining the statute is no longer largely dependent upon the location where the statute is applied for.

⁴ ECRE Comments on the Commission Proposal for a Dublin IV Regulation COM(2016) 270: <https://www.ecre.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/ECRE-Comments-Dublin-IV.pdf>
⁵ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32016R1624&from=EN>

⁶ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32013L0032&from=en>

⁷ This can be quite clearly derived from the Eurostat figures: the number of allocated asylum statutes is only dependent upon the number of applications to a limited extent.

5. A European refugee policy based on quotas

In May 2015 the European Commission proposed to redistribute the huge influx of refugees across the whole of Europe on the basis of quotas. The Visegrad countries (in Central and Eastern Europe Ed.), however, vehemently opposed the proposal resulting in the system becoming voluntary in July 2015. Again, the lack of European solidarity is obstructing a long-term approach to the migration challenges. Unless we bury our head in the sand and pretend that the waves of refugees will come to an end, we need to introduce a mandatory European quota system based on economic and demographic clout.

Obviously, the EU has already taken quite a few

steps to arrive at a more integrated migration policy and it is also a question of forcing member states to respect European rules (which Germany does not intend to observe with respect to family reunion). Moreover, Europe cannot manage the problems of the world on its own. The migration crisis in recent years is closely linked to momentous events in the rest of the world. Obviously, Europe has to join the effort to find a solution for global problems, via its more unified foreign policy, similar to the Paris agreement on CO2 emissions. On the other hand, Europe and its member states must also recognise that their ability to rectify problematic political and humanitarian situations outside its European borders is limited. These solutions must primarily come from the countries of origin themselves. Only then will it be possible to drastically reduce the migration flow and will a European approach prove to be all the more meaningful.

Conclusion

A last chance for the Union?

Between Brexit and the rise in nationalism in several Member States, the European institutions have not been spared over the past few years. Europe is tempted by a national backtrack and has been exposed to the storm of populism. Made the scapegoat regarding the consequences of globalisation, the institutions are entangled in bureaucracy and inefficient political functioning, rendering them incapable of offering structural answers to the problems experienced by Europeans, which are nevertheless very actual. This inability to act at European level increasingly exposes the institutions to populist cynicism as every day passes. But, above all, it prevents them from demonstrating that the major challenges of our times, which are transnational in nature (energy transition, security, employment, immigration), can only be solved at a transnational level by more integration and by more Europe, and not by reverting to a protectionism that is bound to fail.

2019, momentum for a fresh start?

2019 will be a significant year for the Union. The elections that will be held in every Member State in spring 2019 will probably decide the future of its institutions. Paradoxically, as is often the case in the history of European construction, it is when the core of the European project is under attack and the fundamental freedoms threatened that a sense of urgency appears and the conditions for a quantum leap towards more integration can be assembled. Hence, from among the populist flurries and nationalist temptations, certain voices emerge to inject new life into the European project. Citizens

groups are mobilised. Bridges are built between national political parties to construct common agendas. Certain government leaders of the Union's founding members readily oppose the overarching Euroscepticism, defending a sovereign, united and democratic Europe. Regarding the division that structures our political landscape, between those who recommend a national backtrack and those who defend a step forward towards integration, a reconstruction of the European parties cannot be excluded. Just like the political quake observed in France, we can bet that the spectre of participacy in the next European hemicycle will no longer be structured on the basis of the traditional 'left-right' axis, but on the basis of a simple, yet fundamental question: "Do we want more or less of Europe?". The underlying question is therefore the sovereignty that is currently being stretched between the national and European level.

A common platform for political realignment?

This reconstruction of the European political landscape can occur in two ways: either new alliances will form after the elections to reform groups, based on political calculations and arrangements to take up power, or these alliances will be formed before the elections, based on sharing a common political platform. With the Friday Group, it is our firm belief that Europe has always built itself around projects and strong ideas, and rare are the political strategies that have ever led to ambitious visions with a strong popular support. Subsequently, the aim of this report is to lay down the first stones to build this common platform for a radical reform of the European model based on concrete proposals. This text is not a detailed roadmap, but an initial working basis to rally the progressives who have not lost faith in the ideals of the European project.

TITLE

We, Europeans – A European agenda for us all

Cette publication est également disponible en français sous le titre: Nous, européens – Un agenda européen pour tous

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