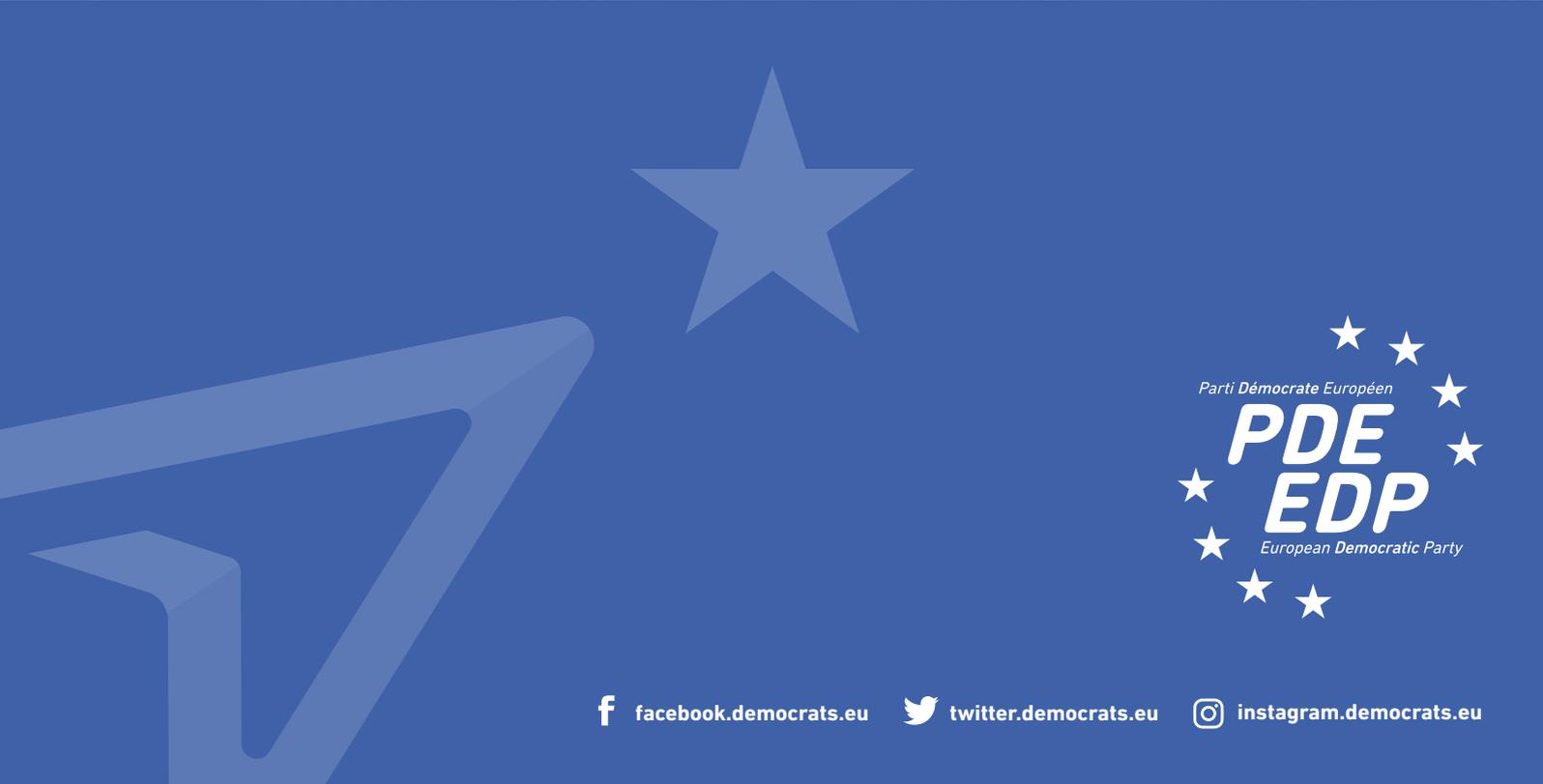




FRANKFURT DECLARATION



INTRODUCTION

We European Democrats are a central political force in Europe and we want to strengthen the European Union (EU). Our humanist traditions drive us to reform Europe, and our belief in political **pluralism** makes us **reject the absurd dichotomy between left-and right-wing politics**. Hence why we debate with all, have political opponents, but no enemies. And like the EU itself, Democrats' biggest strength is our diversity while defending fundamental rights, principles, and freedom of expression, opinion and of the press. We believe in the power of education, culture, reason, lucidity, and dialogue.



Strengthening democracy needs to be put back at the top of Europe's reform agenda. The vote of each citizen has to count equally. We need a more democratic Union at all levels: local, regional, national, and European. This is precisely why transnational political movements and political parties like European Democrats are so important: **we believe in bringing decisions, institutions and officials closer to citizens at all levels of government throughout the EU**. A European Democrat cares about the future of others, is at home wherever s/he is in Europe and champions European solidarity and solutions.

We want a Europe that is fair, open, engaged and admired by the world for its culture and values. Short-termism is something we fundamentally reject: we believe in long-term solutions, policies that reform Europe and investing in the future of the next generation. We therefore put teaching and education at the heart of all our policies so that young people know their past and are equipped with the tools to build Europe's future.

Carried out with the financial support of the European Parliament. The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Parliament.

OUR PRIORITIES



The EU needs to adapt to the enormous impact of the Covid-19 crisis whose long-term consequences on our societies are still unfolding. We must rebuild our economies and politics; Democrats need to be at the forefront of this process. Hence why we're staunch supporters of Biden-Harris Administration's first **Summit for Democracy** taking place on 9-10 December. President Biden rightly said that "**Democracy doesn't happen by accident. We have to defend it, fight for it, strengthen it, renew it**" – this is exactly what we stand for.

Our new shared vision, based on several strands of work cover sustainability, digital, democracy, culture, youth, social policies and Europe's role in the world.

This feeds into **our new political vision**: rebuilding a political Europe, coupled with institutional reforms and priority areas for our party. **Democrats call for** the EU to adapt to this 'Darwinian' moment: Europe must become sustainable, fair, competitive, engaging, working with allies worldwide and pointed towards the future.

PRIORITY # 1

DIGITALISATION AND THE GREEN RECOVERY THROUGHOUT EUROPE'S CITIES AND RURAL AREAS

The recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic is a unique opportunity to recover better. **Digital and sustainability need to be Europe's new coal and steel: they both need to be central to our strategy.** Transforming the European economy to make it carbon-neutral and making the most of the digital revolution is complex. Yet it is so clearly needed not only to stand by the Paris Agreement, but also for Europe to remain competitive. We must continue to be leaders in not only the services sector, but also in industrial production by making the most of the first-mover advantage. The EU can achieve this twin transition through ambitious investments in innovation and new technologies which will allow us to reap the benefits quickly and set the direction for global development. Democrats want to complete this transformation quickly, and without leaving anyone behind.



Harnessing the advantages of digitalisation throughout Europe's industrial strategy is vital. Yet we are conscious that **Europe is not just cities and factories: small farms, villages and rural areas are too often left behind.** Instead, we need investments and public policies that allow sectors like agriculture and other sectors to make the most of digitalisation. We need to have a vision, not an ideological approach that is a 'one-size fits all'. We cannot afford to have whole industries or parts of Europe left alone and then face unfair competition. We need a transition that is balanced, focussed on research and investments, tailored to regional differences, and geared towards the latest technologies that make Europe a leader.

Democrats also believe that Europe's prosperity is directly linked to our role in the world, and that the world can benefit from Europe's presence. Our allies want an EU that is united, stronger, and engaged on all the key challenges we share. This is why we must continue to promote open, balanced and fair commercial relations, ensuring the protection of the environment, respecting human rights and enabling sustainable development. **A more open world, if well governed, can bring numerous benefits both to our continent and to our trading partners.**

Europe now has a big responsibility: we need to be a driver for change, through investments in sustainability, digitalisation and making the most of our global role in trade.

PRIORITY # 2 A SOCIAL EUROPE THAT PROTECTS AND IS READY FOR THE FUTURE OF WORK

The world of work has changed faster than ever before, and it will continue to do so. We must therefore **adapt the rules, safety nets and policies so that the EU is ready for the future of work.** Europe's future will also be defined by the way it prepares, organises and adapts its workforce. We refute the 'choice' between socialists and conservatives: Democrats stand for a Europe able to adapt to new ways of working, making our economies more sustainable and investing in both people and new industries. We do not to leave anyone behind.



Our Union must ensure that our social rights are respected for new forms of work both online and offline; pushing for both social justice and gender equality while allowing start-ups and new industries to emerge. Our EU values and social rights must be embedded in the digital economy, and the opportunities provided by new types of work are both sustainable and fair. This means boosting internet coverage Europe-wide and training the more elderly workers so that no one is left behind.

Europe must provide all its citizens with a decent life, and create an environment where social convergence becomes a virtuous circle. For example, every European worker must be entitled to a decent minimum wage. In addition, we must guarantee a **safety net** to support those who cannot take advantage of the opportunities of a constantly changing labour market. **Combating social exclusion and strengthening support for the most disadvantaged is** also necessary to ensure that no one is left behind.

PRIORITY # 3

EUROPE'S CULTURAL RECOVERY WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AT ITS HEART

The EU needs to give equal importance to investments in culture as it does in security. Culture is the glue that brings citizens together, in addition to being one of the pillars of Europe's economy and diversity. **Democrats believe that for every 1€ spend on security, another 1€ should be spent on culture.** We believe that this will help to strengthen our European identity, but also be a real step forward for our prosperity and security.



It is culture that makes citizens feel more European, and this cannot be considered a luxury one can do away with. Investing in culture across Europe nurtures our formidable diversity, multilingualism, creative thinking and jump-starts a sector badly hit by the pandemic.

Culture starts with young people in schools. Given the plurality of our history, we call for investment in education to build our common future and to strengthen truly *European* media. This would be good news for all, but especially for **young people who are the linchpin of Europe's future.** 2022 will mark the 35 years of the Erasmus+ programme and the European Single

Market will celebrate its 30th anniversary on 1st of January 2023. These are important milestones for all Europeans, but especially for the Erasmus generation who need to become the EU's best ambassadors. Democrats want to help young people make the most of Europe, discover its diversity, and become the driving force behind the EU project. We must ensure that they have access to quality education and jobs where their skills and determination can be fully used.

PRIORITY # 4

A EUROPEAN APPROACH TO HEALTH POLICY



The human cost of the Covid-19 crisis must lead to effective measures to make sure that Europeans are better equipped to deal with global health risks. **Democrats want to address this head-on: boosting 'European health sovereignty' and make a health Union possible.** The EU needs to be more active in the field of public health because major health scourges obviously do not respect borders. We cannot afford to be limited to recommendations, reports and incentives. We must learn from previous mistakes, strengthen European resilience, and give the EU the tools to act.

PRIORITY # **5** REFORMING EUROPE WITHOUT TABOOS: THE CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

The time has come for a sovereign and democratic Europe. Europe's political union needs to move beyond the idea of an association between States: 'strength through unity' is no longer enough. **We need a political community of solidarity.** Pro-European reformists must claim back terms like *sovereignty*, *power* and *autonomy*. The reason is simple: the only effective way to defeat populism is by bringing results to those who vote for populist movements. **Democrats must be the ones calling for Europe to 'take back control'**, not nationalist parties driven by isolationism.



Yet taking back control over major transnational issues requires a new transnational politics. It will enable Europeans to regain the necessary capacity for action at European level. There are two fundamental conditions: a new political vision, taking into account the principle of subsidiarity, promoted by a dynamic group of political forces and leaders, and engagement through new forms of participation at various levels, together with citizen debates. This is why the *Conference on the Future of Europe* is crucial: **Democrats want the Conference to be a success, with citizens engaged from the get-go and clear outcomes.** Our member parties, during the Conference, must ask citizens for their opinion on the choices to be made. Democrats across Europe are driving this process forward by getting people engaged and collecting their proposals and we must be ready to ensure a full implementation of the key decisions and orientations of the Conference.

As Democrats, we have always pushed for Europe to be closer to its citizens, so we have a decisive role to play. We must ensure that the Conference is not only a success in terms of citizens making their voices heard, but that it then results in reforms being implemented as a result. It is a historic opportunity for citizens from all over Europe to discuss and debate European issues, and this is particularly important for young people.

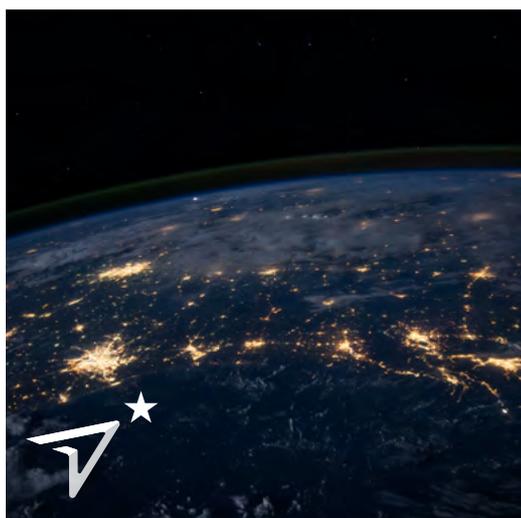
Tackling the Covid-19 pandemic, the refugee crisis, climate change, protecting biodiversity, security threats... The challenges are piling up and **governments ask the EU to do more without giving it the tools to do the job.** Health has been the most obvious example: the EU had to respond to a pandemic without having any formal competence on health. Yet the need for continent-wide action was clear. Buying of masks, vaccines, properly allocating hospital beds – all of these should have been done much faster.

To get results we need to do away with vetoes and give the EU the means to act decisively. **Democrats want Europe to act, not be paralysed by vetoes.** We need to be the ones showing why the EU needs the capacity to act.

DEMOCRATS AROUND THE WORLD SHOULD WORK TOGETHER

No village, region, country, or continent can afford to be inward-looking. This is why Democrats are constantly working with others: European Democrats engage with like-minded lawmakers worldwide. **There is no major policy challenge that can be effectively tackled by Europeans alone:** cybersecurity, defending human rights, standing up to China, tackling foreign interference, making our democracies more resilient... All these challenges require global cooperation, starting between Europe and the United States.

We are convinced that US and EU democrats must intensify their cooperation for a democratic and progressive strategy on the global scene.

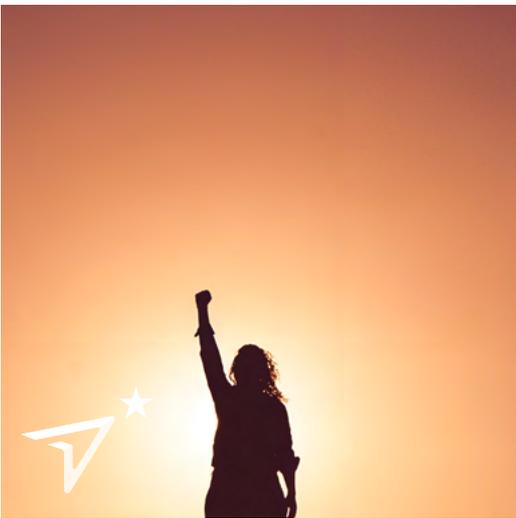


On digital policy for example, legislators on both sides of the Atlantic have everything to gain from working together. **Currently, Facebook and others make money from disinformation, shocking content and lies because they go viral.** It weakens our democracies, makes it impossible to facts or science to be given airtime and makes us vulnerable to foreign interference. This is not right: what is illegal offline should also be illegal online. More transparency on the ways these online algorithms work is needed, and we can only achieve that by 'opening up the box'. Lastly, we need to give ourselves the means to fight those who exploit these tools through illegal financing of online disinformation campaigns: Russia, China, Iran, Venezuela and others.

Democrats want to engage with legislators around the world on this since it is obviously a shared challenge. There is no silver bullet. We need to advance in parallel on legislation, share best-practices and set a clear global standard others can learn from.

The same goes for **defending our values and interests.** Our Union needs to build "an arsenal of values" so autocrats do not claim the 21st century and we are then able to champion what we believe in. The EU should not be naïve: soft power is important but hard power is also needed. We publish menacing press releases and yet we have no sticks to wave – leaving Putin and Erdogan unchallenged. NATO's shield has shown cracks recently, even though the Alliance needs two legs to stand on: one on each side of the pond. This means a solid European component, and in addition real European defence. Our American allies, including US Democrats, have been calling for us to step up our efforts here: a strong Europe in defence is both of our interests and does not undermine NATO's importance.

EUROPEAN SOLUTIONS



Democrats believe in the power of local solutions. The freedom of local decision-making goes hand in hand with local responsibility. The EU should work in a bottom-up approach: both be visible locally and learn from solutions found in regions across Europe. We want to work outside the Brussels bubble and **go local**. That's why the *European solutions* campaign is so important: it's an opportunity for European Democrats to establish our **distinct voice, gain visibility, galvanise our network** across Europe, for **our parties to work more closely together** and **contribute to the Conference** on the Future of Europe.

The campaign will **put a spotlight on the numerous innovative solutions** that have been found to tackle environmental, social and cross-border issues throughout Europe. It will also highlight projects that **have benefitted from EU support**, and therefore raise awareness of solutions that exist and how they could be brought up to the EU level. It will be structured around a series of events in local communities with our member parties and MEPs, but also NGOs, local officials, business leaders, civil society and local press. **There is no shortage of projects: our regions are full of solutions and Democrats want to give them centre stage.**

CONCLUSION

We believe that our Union is at a crucial turning point and that everything is to play for. The stakes could not be higher: the European Union is at risk, and we need to act. The inequalities caused by poorly regulated globalisation, the Covid-19 pandemic, an unprecedented technological revolution, and the chaotic management of migration flows, have led to extremist forces seeking to exploit citizens' concerns and fears.



Yet the EU is about co-responsibility for all these common challenges. It's why walls are wrong not only because they go against our principles, but because they are fallacies. They give us a false sense of control.

It's time for European Democrats to assert themselves: the traditional parties who have dominated the European scene until now are no longer able to renew the pro-European momentum the founding fathers had sparked. We're united by our determination to strengthen democracy at European level: building the central pillar upon which European democracy is based on and strengthening European citizenship.

The role of Democrats is to be in the centre of European politics. For us, the political centre is not just an ideal, but a method of governance. It's about treating political opponents like possible allies, not enemies. Our responsibility as Democrats is to build alliances, finding a balance and then building the momentum needed for reform.

The European Democratic Party must inspire a new political constellation to transform the EU and strengthen our European democracy. It is a major challenge, a matter of urgency. So, from this day onwards and right up to June 2024, we will be relentless flagbearers for reform. We will rebuild Europe. We will drive our priorities forward with more resolve than ever before.