A Union that strives for more

My agenda for Europe

By candidate for President of the European Commission

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POLITICAL GUIDELINES FOR THE NEXT EUROPEAN COMMISSION 2019-2024

A Union that strives for more

For the generation of my parents, Europe was an aspiration of peace in a continent too long divided.

For my generation, Europe was an aspiration of peace, prosperity and unity that we brought to life through our single currency, free movement and enlargement.

For the generation of my children, Europe is a unique aspiration.

It is an aspiration of living in a natural and healthy continent. Of living in a society where you can be who you are, live where you like, love who you want and aim as high as you want. It is an aspiration of a world full of new technologies and age-old values. Of a Europe that takes the global lead on the major challenges of our times.

The people of Europe made their voice and their aspirations heard in record numbers at this year's European Parliament elections. They presented Europe's institutions and leaders with a clear task to be bold and to be decisive.

To match this aspiration with action, we must rediscover our unity and inner strength.

If elected, I will strengthen the links between people, nations and institutions. Between expectations and delivery. Between words and deeds. My Commission will listen to the people of Europe and be bold where it makes sense for us to act, leaving national, regional and local actors to deliver where they are best placed to do so.

Today's world feels ever more unsettled. Existing powers are going down new paths alone. New powers are emerging and consolidating. Changes in climate, technology and demography are transforming our societies and way of life. This has left a feeling of unease and anxiety in many communities across Europe.

In the next five years, we have to work together to allay fears and create opportunities.

Europe must lead the transition to a healthy planet and a new digital world. But it can only do so by bringing people together and upgrading our unique social market economy to fit today's new ambitions.

As we embark on this journey, we must make the most of all of our strengths, talent and potential. We must focus on equality and creating chances for all, whether for women or men, whether from East, West, South or North, whether young or old.

We must defend our common values and uphold the rule of law. And we must give ourselves the resources we need to achieve our ambitions, notably through our next long-term budget which should be agreed as swiftly as possible.

We have the foundation from which to achieve all of this. We have record high employment and sustained economic growth. We are the world's trading superpower. We set standards that others follow. We have moved out of the era of crisis management and can now look forward.

We should not be shy about being proud of where we are or ambitious about where we want to go.

As we move forward together, I want a more inclusive and open approach to the way we work. I want to strengthen the Commission's partnership with the European Parliament, the voice of citizens.

In this spirit, I have consulted far and wide and have inspired myself from my discussions with the political groups in the European Parliament, as well as from the European Council's Strategic Agenda for 2019-2024.

These Political Guidelines draw on the common ideas and priorities that unite us. They are not an exhaustive work programme but rather aim to frame our common work. Within each chapter you will find the policies I intend to use to help us deliver on our goals. The Political Guidelines focus on six headline ambitions for Europe over the next five years and well beyond:

- ✓ **A European Green Deal**
- ✓ **An economy that works for people**
- ✓ **A Europe fit for the digital age**
- ✓ **Protecting our European way of life**
- ✓ **A stronger Europe in the world**
- ✓ **A new push for European democracy**

We will adapt and update as challenges and opportunities inevitably emerge, but we will always stick to the principles and the aspirations outlined in these guidelines. **I see the next five years as an opportunity for Europe – to strive for more at home in order to lead in the world.**

1. A European Green Deal

I want Europe to strive for more by being the first climate-neutral continent.

The message from Europe's voters – and those too young to vote – is loud and clear: they want real action on climate change and they want Europe to lead the way.

I have been inspired by the passion, conviction and energy of the millions of our young people making their voice heard on our streets and in our hearts. They are standing up for their future and it is our generational duty to deliver for them.

Becoming the **world's first climate-neutral continent** is the greatest challenge and opportunity of our times. It involves taking decisive action now. We will need to invest in innovation and research, redesign our economy and update our industrial policy.

To help us achieve our ambition, **I will propose a European Green Deal in my first 100 days in office.**

This will include the **first European Climate Law to enshrine the 2050 climate-neutrality target into law.**

I have been inspired by the passion, conviction and energy of the millions of our young people making their voice heard on our streets and in our hearts. It is our generational duty to deliver for them.

We are on track to meet our ambitious **Paris Agreement** goals and 2030 targets. But we need to go further and faster if we are serious about climate neutrality in 2050.

We currently have a goal of 40% emissions reduction by 2030. But we have to be more ambitious. Carbon emissions must have a price. Every person and every sector will have to contribute.

I will propose to extend the Emissions Trading System to cover the maritime sector and reduce the free allowances allocated to airlines over time. I will also propose to extend this further to cover traffic and construction. The different systems will have to converge by 2030 if we are to be climate neutral by 2050.

To complement this work, and to ensure our companies can compete on a level playing field, I will introduce a **Carbon Border Tax** to avoid carbon leakage. This should be fully compliant with World Trade Organization rules. It will start with a number of selected sectors and be gradually extended. I will also review the Energy Taxation Directive.

A just transition

To help drive the change we need, I will put forward my **plan for a future-ready economy, our new industrial strategy.**

We will be a world leader in **circular economy** and clean technologies. We will work to decarbonise energy-intensive industries.

Europe is an industrial economy, and for many parts of our Union the local manufacturer, plant or factory is the hub for our communities. This is why I believe that what is good for our planet must be good for our people, our regions and our economy.

Cohesion Funds play a crucial role in supporting our regions and rural areas from

East to West, from South to North to keep up with the transformations of our world. But we need to do more.

We need a just transition for all.

In this transition, we must recognise and respect that we do not all start from the same point. We all share the same ambition but some may need more tailored support than others to get there.

I believe that what is good for our planet must be good for our people, our regions and our economy. We will ensure a just transition for all.

We will support the people and regions most affected through a new **Just Transition Fund**. This is the European way: we are ambitious and **we leave nobody behind**.

We also need more education and motivation. To this end, I will propose a **European Climate Pact** – bringing together regions, local communities, civil society, industry and schools. Together they will design and commit to a set of pledges to bring about a change in behaviour, from the individual to the largest multinational. This will be a key part of the just transition for all.

A Sustainable Europe Investment Plan

Those who act first and fastest will also be the ones who grasp the opportunities from the ecological transition.

This is why we will invest record amounts in cutting-edge research and innovation, using the full flexibility of the next EU budget to focus on the areas with the greatest potential.

But public finances alone will not be enough. We need to tap into private investment by putting green and sustainable financing at the heart of our investment chain and financial system. To achieve this, I intend to put forward a **strategy for green financing** and **a Sustainable Europe Investment Plan**.

As part of this, **I will also propose to turn parts of the European Investment Bank into Europe's climate bank.**

The bank is already the largest multilateral provider of climate finance worldwide, with 25% of its total financing dedicated to climate investment. I want to at least double this figure by 2025.

The Sustainable Europe Investment Plan will support €1 trillion of investment over the next decade in every corner of the EU.

More ambitious targets for 2030

We have to be more ambitious when it comes to our 2030 targets. I want to reduce emissions by at least 50% by 2030. However, to achieve real impact the world has to move together. **The EU will lead international negotiations to increase the level of ambition of other major emitters by 2021**.

By this date, I commit myself to putting forward a comprehensive plan to **increase the European Union's target for 2030 towards 55% in a responsible way.**

This plan will be based on social, economic and environmental impact assessments that ensure a level playing field and stimulate innovation, competitiveness and jobs.

Preserving Europe's natural environment

Climate change, biodiversity, food security, deforestation and land degradation go

together. We need to change the way we produce, consume and trade. Preserving and restoring our ecosystem needs to guide all of our work. We must set new standards for biodiversity cutting across trade, industry, agriculture and economic policy.

As part of the European Green Deal, we will present a Biodiversity Strategy for 2030.

Our environment, our natural jewels, our seas and oceans, must be conserved and protected. Europe will work with its global partners to curtail biodiversity loss within the next five years. I want us to lead the world at the 2020 Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, just as we did at the 2015 Paris Climate Conference.

We must preserve the vital work our farmers do to provide Europeans with nutritious, affordable and safe food. This is only possible if they can make a decent living for their families. We will support our farmers with a new **"Farm to Fork Strategy" on sustainable food** along the whole value chain.

Our rural areas are home to more than 50% of Europeans. They are the fabric of our society and the heartbeat of our economy. The diversity of landscape, culture and heritage is one of Europe's most defining and remarkable features. They are a core part of our identity and our economic potential. **We will cherish and preserve our rural areas and invest in their future.**

European citizens' health and the planet's health go together: it is the quality of the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat and the safety of the products we use.

For the health of our citizens, our children and grandchildren, **Europe needs to move towards a zero-pollution ambition**. I will put forward a cross-cutting strategy to protect citizens' health from environmental degradation and pollution, addressing air and water quality, hazardous chemicals, industrial emissions, pesticides and endocrine disrupters.

A sustainable Europe is one that opens up opportunities, innovates, creates jobs and offers a competitive edge to its industries. The circular economy is key for developing Europe's future economic model.

I will propose a **New Circular Economy Action Plan** focusing on sustainable resource use, especially in resource-intensive and high-impact sectors such as textiles and construction.

I want Europe to lead on the issue of single-use plastics. By 2050, there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish. We need to get serious about how we turn the tide. European legislation already applies to the ten most found plastic items on European beaches. I want to open a new front in our fight against plastic waste by tackling micro-plastics.

2. An economy that works for people

I want Europe to strive for more when it comes to social fairness and prosperity. This is our Union's founding promise.

I am proud of our unique European social market economy. It is what allows our economies to grow – and what drives poverty and inequality to fall. It ensures that social fairness and welfare come first.

Strengthening our social market economy is acutely important at a time when we are redesigning the way our industry and our economy work.

Our goal for a climate-neutral and healthy planet must be built on a strong and resilient social market economy. What we want to spend on this transition, we first need to earn.

Supporting small business

This starts with strengthening the backbone of our economy: our **small and medium-sized enterprises** (SMEs).

They represent 99% of all businesses and account for 85% of new jobs created in the last five years. They are our innovators and entrepreneurs. They provide vocational training to our young people. They represent everything that is good in our economy.

We need more young and nimble innovators with breakthrough technologies, like this generation's tech giants were only a decade ago.

I want to make it easier for small businesses to become large innovators. We must continue developing the growth finance market for the innovative companies of the future.

This is why I will put forward a **dedicated SME strategy** to ensure they can thrive by reducing red tape and improving their access to the market.

We will **complete the Capital Markets Union** to ensure SMEs have access to the financing they need to grow, innovate and scale up. To support this, I will create a **private-public fund specialising in Initial Public Offerings of SMEs**, with an initial investment from the EU that could be matched by private investors

Deepening our Economic and Monetary Union

Our people and our business can only thrive if the economy works for them. This is what our social market economy is all about.

After years of recovery, Europe's economy is on a stable footing, with jobs, growth and investment all back to or beyond their pre-crisis levels. Public finances continue to improve, our banking system is more robust and the foundations of our Economic and Monetary Union are stronger than ever.

With clouds forming on the horizon, some linked to trade tensions and others to slower global growth, we must keep up the momentum. We need a more attractive investment environment, and growth which creates quality jobs, especially for young people.

The euro, our common currency, is more than the coins and notes in our pockets. It is a symbol of our unity and of Europe's promise of prosperity and protection. We must never stop making it stronger. This is why I will prioritise the **further deepening of the Economic and Monetary Union**.

As part of this, I will help deliver a **Budgetary Instrument for Convergence and Competitiveness for the euro area** to support Member States' growth reforms and investment. I will step up support for those countries outside the euro area who are preparing to join.

I will make **full use of the flexibility allowed within the Stability and Growth Pact**. This will help us achieve a more growth-friendly fiscal stance in the euro area while safeguarding fiscal responsibility.

I will also focus on completing the Banking Union. This includes a common backstop to the Single Resolution Fund, a last-resort insurance measure in the event of a bank resolution.

To ensure people have peace of mind when it comes to the safety of their bank deposits, we need a **European Deposit Insurance Scheme**.

These are the missing elements of the Banking Union which we should find agreement on as swiftly as possible. I will also put forward measures for a robust bank resolution and insolvency framework.

I want to **strengthen the international role of the euro**, including its external representation. A strong, integrated and resilient capital market is the best starting point for the single currency to become more widely used internationally.

Our economic policy must go hand in hand with social rights, Europe's climate-neutrality objective and a competitive industry.

I will refocus the European Semester into an instrument that integrates the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Economic governance and democratic accountability must go hand in hand if we want to strengthen ownership of our common decisions.

In this spirit, **I want the European Parliament to have a louder voice when it comes to the economic governance of our Union**.

Our people and our business can only thrive if the economy works for them. This is what our social market economy is all about.

Members of the Commission in charge of economic matters will come to the European Parliament before each key stage in the European Semester cycle.

Europe's social pillar

I believe it is high time that we reconcile the *social* and the *market* in today's modern economy.

This is why I will put forward an **action plan to fully implement the European Pillar of Social Rights.**

As part of this, we will support those in work to earn a decent living, and those out of work as they look to find a job. We will support our children and our young people to give them the education and the opportunities they need to thrive.

The dignity of work is sacred. Within the first 100 days of my mandate, I will propose a legal instrument to ensure that **every worker in our Union has a fair minimum wage**.

This should allow for a decent living wherever they work. Minimum wages should be set according to national traditions, through collective agreements or legal provisions. I am a firm believer in the value of **social dialogue** between employers and unions, the people

who know their sector and their region the best.

Digital transformation brings fast change that affects our labour markets. I will look at ways of **improving the labour conditions of platform workers**, notably by focusing on skills and education.

We must also do more to support those who lose their jobs because of external events that affect our economy.

This is why I will propose a **European Unemployment Benefit Reinsurance Scheme**. This will protect our citizens and reduce the pressure on public finances during external shocks.

We must do more to fight poverty. The future of Europe will depend on our young people. We must support them throughout their childhood and into their adult life.

It is our collective shame that almost 25 million children under the age of 18 are at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Children living in poverty are more likely to become adults living in poverty. We need to break this dangerous cycle. We must do better.

To support every child in need, I will create **the European Child Guarantee**, picking up on the idea proposed by the European Parliament.

This tool will help ensure that every child in Europe at risk of poverty or social exclusion has access to the most basic of rights like healthcare and education.

Europe should also support parents and people with caring responsibilities to better balance their work and family lives. I will ensure that we fully implement the **Work-Life Balance** Directive, which encourages better sharing of responsibilities between women and men.

This will help bring more women into the labour market and help fight child poverty. I will ensure we back this up with sufficient investment from the **European Social Fund+** to improve the quality and accessibility of **early childhood education and care systems**.

In the last five years, the Youth Guarantee has helped 3.5 million young people a year to get in training, education or work.

Building on this success, I will **turn the Youth Guarantee into a permanent instrument to fight youth unemployment**. It should have an increased budget and regular reporting to ensure it delivers what it promises in every Member State.

I will create the European Child Guarantee to help ensure that every child in Europe at risk of poverty or social exclusion has access to the most basic of rights like healthcare and education.

As a physician, I am passionate about health. 40% of us will face cancer at some point in our lives and almost all of us will know the anxiety and grief of a friend or family member diagnosed with cancer.

Survival rates are on the up, especially thanks to early detection and screening programmes. But there is a lot more we can do. I will put forward a **European plan to fight cancer**, to support Member States in improving cancer control and care.

A Union of equality

A prosperous and social Europe depends on us all. **We need equality for all and equality in all of its senses.**

This will be one of the major priorities of my Commission and of the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

In business, politics and society as a whole, we can only reach our full potential if we use all of our talent and diversity. Diverse teams produce better results. Innovation happens when people from different backgrounds and perspectives blend together. With the demographic challenges ahead of us, we cannot afford to leave any potential behind.

There must be the same opportunities for all who share the same aspirations. This is why we will **propose new anti-discrimination legislation**.

The principle of equal pay for equal work is enshrined in the Treaty. This will be the founding principle of a new **European Gender Strategy**.

Women earn on average 16% less than men, even though they achieve higher qualifications.

In the first 100 days of my mandate, I will table measures to introduce **binding pay-transparency measures**.

Gender equality is a critical component of economic growth. The European Gender Strategy will systematically address the way laws impact the decisions women take throughout their lives: starting a job, running a business, getting paid, getting married, having children, managing assets and drawing a pension. We must give women and men equal legal rights across all of these life decisions.

To break the glass ceiling, we need to **set** quotas **for gender balance on company boards**. As I did as a Minister in Germany, I will seek to build a majority to unblock the Directive on women on boards.

On gender equality, **the Commission will lead by example by forming a fully gender-equal College of Commissioners**. By the end of my mandate, I will ensure we have full equality at all levels of Commission management. I will accept nothing less.

In business, politics and society as a whole, we can only reach our full potential if we use all of our talent and diversity. There must be the same opportunities for all who share the same aspirations.

Gender-based violence remains a terrifying reality for too many people in our Union. **The European Union should do all it can to prevent domestic violence, protect victims and punish offenders**.

EU accession to the Istanbul Convention on fighting domestic violence remains a key priority for the Commission.

If the accession remains blocked in the Council, I will consider tabling proposals on minimum standards regarding the definition of certain types of violence, and strengthening the Victims' Rights Directive. **I will propose to add violence against women to the list of EU crimes defined in the Treaty**.

Equality goes beyond gender equality. **Women and men, old and young, East and West, North and South, our various national and cultural identities are the patchwork of our identity.**

We may have different beliefs, we may belong to different minority groups but we have to make sure we listen to each other, learn from each other and embrace this diversity.

Too many European citizens feel like they have different opportunities in certain parts of Europe than they do in others. We need use all the tools at our disposal to put this right.

Fair taxation

One of the key foundations of our social market economy is that everybody pays their fair share. There can be no exceptions.

A race to the bottom on taxation undermines the ability of countries to set tax policies that meet the needs of their economies and people.

Where profits are generated, taxes and levies must also contribute to our social security systems, our education systems and our infrastructure.

The EU and international corporate tax systems are in urgent need of reform. They are not fit for the realities of the modern global economy and do not capture the new business models in the digital world.

I will stand for tax fairness – whether for bricks-and-mortar or digital businesses.

I will ensure that **taxation of big tech companies** is a priority. I will work hard to ensure the proposals currently on the table are turned into law. Discussions to find an international solution are ongoing, notably at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. However, **if by the end of 2020 there is still no global solution for a fair digital tax, the EU should act alone.**

European companies ask for simple tax systems and simple rules, especially when working across borders. In the first half of my mandate, I will put forward proposals to improve the business taxation environment in the single market.

A common consolidated corporate tax base would provide businesses with a single rulebook to compute their corporate tax base in the European Union. This is a longstanding project of the European Parliament and I will fight to make it a reality.

Differences in tax rules can be an obstacle to the deeper integration of the single market. It can hamper growth, particularly in the euro area where the economic ties are stronger. We need to be able to act.

I will make use of the clauses in the Treaties that allow proposals on taxation to be adopted by co-decision and decided by qualified majority voting in the Council. This will make us more efficient and better able to act fast when needed.

In the same spirit, **I will step up the fight against tax fraud** and make our action against harmful tax regimes in third countries stronger.

3. A Europe fit for the digital age

I want Europe to strive for more by grasping the opportunities from the digital age within safe and ethical boundaries.

Digital technologies, especially Artificial Intelligence (AI), are transforming the world at an unprecedented speed. They have changed how we communicate, live and work. They have changed our societies and our economies.

The Internet of Things is connecting the world in new ways. After knowledge and people, it is now physical devices and sensors that are linking up with each other. Huge and increasing amounts of data are being collected

Europe already sets standards in telecoms. It is time to replicate this success and develop **joint standards for our 5G networks.**

It may be too late to replicate hyperscalers, but it is not too late to achieve **technological sovereignty** in some critical technology areas.

To lead the way on next-generation hyperscalers, we will invest in blockchain, high-performance computing, quantum computing, algorithms and tools to allow data sharing and data usage. **We will jointly define standards for this new generation of technologies that will become the global norm**.

As we increase investment in disruptive research and breakthrough innovation, we must accept that failure will be part of our path.

Data and AI are the ingredients for innovation that can help us to find solutions to societal challenges, from health to farming, from security to manufacturing.

In order to release that potential we have to find our European way, balancing the flow and wide use of data while preserving high privacy, security, safety and ethical standards. We already achieved this with the General Data Protection Regulation, and many countries have followed our path.

In my first 100 days in office, I will put forward legislation for a coordinated European approach on the human and ethical implications of Artificial Intelligence. This should also look at how we can use big data for innovations that create wealth for our societies and our businesses.

I will make sure that we prioritise investments in Artificial Intelligence, both through the Multiannual Financial Framework and through the increased use of public-private partnerships.

A new **Digital Services Act** will upgrade our liability and safety rules for digital platforms, services and products, and complete our Digital Single Market.

Digitalisation and cyber are two sides of the same coin. This starts with a different mindset: We need to move from “need to know” to “need to share”.

We should do this through a **joint Cyber Unit** to speed up information sharing and better protect ourselves.

The public sector has an important role in stimulating digital transformation. I want the European Commission to lead by example.

I will drive the full digitalisation of the Commission, putting in place new digital methods and digital diplomacy tools.

I believe this will make the institution more agile and flexible, as well as more transparent in the way it works. This will also help instil a new and more inclusive leadership and work culture, with fewer hierarchies and more cooperation. This will help us change our mindset and embrace the future.

I believe Europe can successfully manage the transformation into the digital age, if we build on our strengths and values.

Empowering people through education and skills

The best investment in our future is the investment in our people. Skills and education drive Europe's competitiveness and innovation. But Europe is not yet fully ready. I will ensure that we use all the tools and funds at our disposal to redress this balance.

I am fully committed to making the **European Education Area a reality by 2025**. We need to bring down barriers to learning and improve access to quality education. We need to enable learners to move more easily between education systems in different countries. And we need to change the culture of education towards lifelong learning that enriches us all.

My priority will be to get Europe up to speed on digital skills for both young people and adults by updating the **Digital Education Action Plan**. We need to rethink education by using the potential the internet provides to make learning material available to all, for example by the increased use of massive open online courses. Digital literacy has to be a foundation for everyone.

I also support the European Parliament's idea to **triple the Erasmus+ budget as part of the next long-term budget.**

4. Protecting our European way of life

I want Europe to strive for more when it comes to protecting our citizens and our values.

Upholding the rule of law

A Europe that protects must also stand up for justice and for values. Nowhere is this more important than when it comes to the respect of the rule of law.

Our European Union is **a Community of Law**. This community is the foundation of everything we have achieved and everything we still have to do. This is Europe's hallmark. And it is central to my vision for a Union of equality, tolerance and social fairness.

There can be no compromise when it comes to defending our core values.

Threats to the rule of law challenge the legal, political and economic basis of how our Union works.

Ensuring the respect of the rule of law is a primary responsibility of each Member State. However, as the Court of Justice has recently confirmed, we have a common interest in resolving problems. Strengthening the rule of law is a shared responsibility for all EU institutions and all Member States.

I will ensure that we use our full toolbox at European level. And I support an **additional comprehensive European Rule of Law Mechanism**, with an EU-wide scope and

objective annual reporting by the European Commission. The monitoring approach will be the same in every Member State.

There can be no compromise when it comes to defending our core values. Threats to the rule of law challenge the legal, political and economic basis of how our Union works.

The Commission's monitoring will be done in close dialogue with national authorities on the basis of law, notably the recent case law set down by our independent Court of Justice. I will also ensure a greater role for the European Parliament in this rule-of-law mechanism.

The new way forward brings transparency, allows early detection and offers targeted support to resolve any issues at an early stage.

Our objective is to find a solution that protects the rule of law, with cooperation and mutual support, but without ruling out an effective, proportionate and dissuasive response as a last resort.

I intend to focus on tighter enforcement, using recent judgements of the Court of Justice showing the impact of rule-of-law breaches on EU law as a basis. I stand by the proposal to **make the rule of law an integral part of the next Multiannual Financial Framework.**

This is about strengthening trust and confidence between us, which is as good for our internal market as it is for our internal unity.

The Commission will always be an independent guardian of the Treaties. Lady Justice is blind – she will defend the rule of law wherever and by whomever it is attacked.

Strong borders and a fresh start on migration

I will propose a New Pact on Migration and Asylum, including the relaunch of the Dublin reform of asylum rules.

I am aware of how difficult and divisive discussions on this issue are. We need to allay the legitimate concerns of many and look at how we can overcome our differences. We need to look at it in a comprehensive way.

We need strong external borders. A centrepiece in this ambition is **a reinforced European Border and Coast Guard Agency**. Agreeing the next Multiannual Financial Framework on time will allow us to reach a standing corps of 10,000 **Frontex** border guards earlier than the current target of 2027. I want to see these guards with the ability to act at the EU's external borders in place by 2024.

We have to modernise our asylum system. A **Common European Asylum System** must be exactly that – common. We can only have stable external borders if we give enough help to Member States facing the most pressure because of their place on the map. We all need to help each other and contribute.

These two steps forward will allow us to **return to a fully functioning Schengen Area of free movement**, a key driver of our prosperity, security and freedoms. But we need to improve the way it works and pave the way for a potential further enlargement of the area.

We need a new way of burden sharing. We need a fresh start.

Our responsibility starts in the **home countries** of those who come to Europe. People do not choose lightly to leave their

homes and take a perilous journey. They do so because they feel they have no alternative.

We need to put the clear focus of our development cooperation on **improving the perspectives of young women and men in their countries of origin**. We need to invest in their health, in their education and skills, in infrastructure, sustainable growth and security.

We need to allay the legitimate concerns of many and look at how we can overcome our differences. We need a new way of burden sharing, we need a fresh start.

The reality for those who do leave is a brutal one. They put their destiny in the hands of unscrupulous traffickers who leave the most vulnerable behind. **Criminals should never decide the fate of any human being or dictate who comes into our Union**. We must disrupt and dismantle their business models with every tool at our disposal.

A stronger cooperation enablement with **third countries** is essential, whether they be **origin or transit countries**. Europe has a responsibility to help the countries hosting refugees to offer them decent and humanitarian conditions. To this end, I support the establishment of humanitarian corridors.

We need diplomacy, economic development, stability and security. This would help stop smugglers and bring a stronger commitment to resettlement, as well as pathways for legal migration to help us bring in the people with the skills and talents we need.

Europe will always honour our values and extend a helping hand to refugees fleeing persecution or conflict – it is our moral duty. The same applies to saving lives at sea. For that, we need **a more sustainable approach to search and rescue.** We need to move from case-by-case solutions to a more permanent answer.

This comprehensive approach should also be accompanied by a clear understanding of how to deal with those who are not eligible for protection and need to be returned. Updating our rules on return needs to be part of the solution. Everything is linked.

Internal security

Every person in our Union has the right to feel safe in their own streets and their own home. We can leave no stone unturned when it comes to protecting our citizens. We must improve cross-border cooperation to tackle gaps in the fight against serious crime and terrorism in Europe.

We should use all the tools at our disposal to do this. **The European Public Prosecutor's Office should have more muscle and authority and be able to investigate and prosecute cross-border terrorism.**

The complexity and sophistication of our financial system has opened the door to new risks of money laundering and terrorist financing. We need better supervision and a comprehensive policy to prevent loopholes.

It is time to take the Customs Union to the next level, equipping it with a stronger framework that will allow us to better protect our citizens and our single market. I will propose a bold package for an integrated European approach to reinforce customs risk management and support effective controls by the Member States.

5. A stronger Europe in the world

I want Europe to strive for more by strengthening our unique brand of responsible global leadership.

Multilateralism is in Europe's DNA. It is our guiding principle in the world. My Commission will keep on championing this approach and ensure that we **uphold and update the rules-based global order**.

We are on the right path and have achieved a lot over recent years, but major challenges remain.

We must be ambitious, strategic and assertive in the way that we act in the world. We must build on our strengths, confront and address our vulnerabilities, and enhance our legitimacy.

Free and fair trade

I believe we can strengthen Europe's role as a global leader and standard setter through **a strong, open and fair trade agenda**.

We believe in trade because it works – it accounts for over a third of the EU's GDP and supports over 36 million jobs. We are the largest exporter of manufactured goods and services and the largest export market for 80 countries. This shows how far and wide our reach goes and how attractive a place Europe is for business.

We will seek to swiftly conclude ongoing negotiations with Australia and New Zealand, and pursue new partnerships if the conditions are right. We will work to strengthen a balanced and mutually beneficial trading partnership with the United States.

Recognising the concerns of many, **I will ensure the highest level of transparency**, communication and cooperation with the European Parliament and civil society throughout the process.

In addition, my Commission will always propose that provisional application of trade agreements take place only once the European Parliament has given its consent.

Trade is not an end in itself. It is a means to deliver prosperity at home and to export our values across the world. I will ensure that every new agreement concluded will have a dedicated sustainable-development chapter **and the highest standards of climate, environmental and labour protection**, **with a zero-tolerance policy on child labour**.

Trade is not an end in itself. It is a means to deliver prosperity at home and to export our values across the world. I will ensure that every new agreement concluded will have a dedicated sustainable development chapter.

With the increased wealth that trade generates comes increased responsibility. I will appoint a **Chief Trade Enforcement Officer** to improve the compliance and enforcement of our trade agreements, and regularly report back to the European Parliament.

Similarly, Europe will always fight for a level playing field and be strong against those who compete by dumping, deregulating or subsidising.

We will always look for multilateral solutions and **I intend to lead the efforts on updating and reforming the World Trade Organization**.

We must make full use of our trade defence instruments where necessary. And we must ensure that we can enforce our rights, including through the use of sanctions, if others block the resolution of a trade conflict.

A more active role

European leadership also means working hand in hand with our neighbours and our partners. In deepening our relationships, we will always be guided by our values and our respect for international law.

The European Union is the world's biggest donor of development assistance. In doing so we seek to create a partnership of equals, without compromising freedom and dignity.

I would like Europe to have a **comprehensive strategy on Africa,** our close neighbour and our most natural partner.

It is a continent full of opportunity and potential for cooperation and for business. It will become home to the youngest, fastest-growing middle class in the world, with private consumption expected to reach €2 trillion a year by 2025. We must make the most of the political, economic and investment opportunities that these changes will bring.

I want to **reaffirm the European perspective of the Western Balkans** and I see an important role in the continued reform process across the region. We share the same continent, the same history, the same culture and the same challenges. We will build the same future together.

I fully support and stand behind the European Commission's proposal to open negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania. The accession process offers a unique opportunity to promote and share our core values and interests.

I am ready to pave the way for **an ambitious and strategic partnership with the United Kingdom**, which will remain our ally, our partner and our friend. I deeply regret the decision of the British people to leave our Union but I fully respect it.

Brexit creates uncertainty for citizens' rights, for economic and territorial actors, and for stability and peace on the island of Ireland. **The Withdrawal Agreement negotiated with the United Kingdom is the best and only deal possible for an orderly withdrawal**. Should more time be required, I will support a further extension if good reasons are provided.

I want to reaffirm the European perspective of the Western Balkans. We share the same continent, the same history, the same culture and the same challenges. We will build the same future together.

I believe **Europe should have a stronger and more united voice in the world**.

To be a global leader, the EU needs to be able to act fast: I will push for qualified majority voting to become the rule in this area. I will work closely with the High Representative/Vice-President to ensure a **coordinated approach to all of our external action**, from development aid to our Common Foreign and Security Policy.

To remain a strong global actor, I want the EU to spend 30% more than we do today on external-action investment in the next long-term EU budget, increasing the total to €120 billion.

Defending Europe

Europe has always gained its power through peace, and its peace through power. NATO will always be the cornerstone of Europe's collective defence. We will stay transatlantic and become more European.

We need further bold steps in the next five years towards a genuine European Defence Union.

As part of the next long-term EU budget, I intend to strengthen the European Defence Fund to support research and capability development. In doing so we will open up major new opportunities for our high-tech industries and other parts of our economy.

Peace, security and development are all mutually dependent. **We need an integrated and comprehensive approach to our security**.

This is why Europe should play a full and active role on a global level at the United Nations in our neighbourhood, in particular through closer partnership with Africa. Europe must support Africa in designing and implementing its own solutions to challenges such as instability, cross-border terrorism and organised crime.

Security challenges are becoming diverse and unpredictable. Serious and acute hybrid threats have become a reality. The European Union needs to step up its response and resilience.

6. A new push for European democracy

I want Europe to strive for more in nurturing, protecting and strengthening our democracy.

Our Union's democratic system is unique, bringing together directly elected parliamentarians at local, regional, national and European levels with elected Heads of State or Government.

The record-high turnout in the 2019 European elections shows the vibrancy of our democracy. We must respond to that call by giving Europeans a stronger role in decision-making. We will go further than ever before to make this happen.

A greater say for Europeans

I want Europeans to build the future of our Union. They should play a leading and active part in setting our priorities and our level of ambition.

I want citizens to have their say at a Conference on the Future of Europe, to start in 2020 and run for two years.

The Conference should bring together citizens, including a significant role for young people, civil society and European institutions as equal partners. The Conference should be well prepared with a clear scope and clear objectives, agreed between the Parliament, the Council and the Commission.

I am ready to follow up on what is agreed, including by legislative action if appropriate. I am also open to Treaty change. Should there be a Member of the European Parliament put forward to chair the Conference, I will fully support this idea.

Special relationship with the European Parliament

I want to strengthen the partnership between the European Commission and the European Parliament.

I believe we should give a stronger role to the voice of the people, the European Parliament, in initiating legislation. **I support a right of initiative for the European Parliament**.

When Parliament, acting by a majority of its members, adopts resolutions requesting that the Commission submit legislative proposals[1], I commit to responding with a legislative act, in full respect of the proportionality, subsidiarity and better law making principles.

To make this process as effective as possible, I will ask my Commissioners to work hand-in-hand with the European Parliament at every stage of designing and debating resolutions.

To do this **I will ensure my Commissioners brief the European Parliament at all stages of all international negotiations**, following the mould set by the Brexit negotiations.

I will also ensure more appearances in Committee meetings and Commissioner presence in trilogue discussions between the European Parliament and the Council. This will be a requirement that I will outline in the mission letters I send to Commissioners before the start of their mandate.

I will also ensure a permanent dialogue between the Commission and the European Parliament as a matter of priority. **I will be happy to revive the tradition of a Question Hour,** a regular debate with the European Parliament.

[1] Article 225 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)

The record-high turnout in the 2019 European elections shows the vibrancy of our democracy. We must respond to that call by giving Europeans a stronger role in decision-making. We will go further than ever before to make this happen.

I will work with the European Parliament for our shared goal of more democratic and efficient action at European level.

The Union must use the full potential set out in the Treaties. **We need to move towards full co-decision power for the European Parliament and away from unanimity for climate, energy, social and taxation policies.**

Improving the lead candidate system

The experience of the 2019 European elections clearly shows the need to **review the way we appoint and elect the leaders of our institutions**. I am ready to lead that work, in close cooperation with the European Parliament and the Member States.

To rebuild trust and confidence, I propose to broker the discussions between the European Parliament and the European Council.

I firmly believe **we must improve the lead candidate, or *Spitzenkandidaten,* system together**. To make it more visible to the wider electorate, we should also address the issue of transnational lists in the European elections, as a complementary tool of European democracy.

The Conference on the Future of Europe should come forward with its legislative or other proposals on this topic by summer 2020 at the latest.

The Commission will follow up on these proposals where it has competence to act, and will support the European Parliament in amending the electoral law and in securing its agreement in Council.

The new rules should be in place well in time for the European elections of 2024, for greater transparency and democratic legitimacy**.**

More transparency and scrutiny

If Europeans are to have faith in our Union, its institutions should be open and beyond reproach on ethics, transparency and integrity.

I will support the creation of an **independent ethics body common to all EU institutions**. I will engage and work closely with the other institutions to make this happen.

I also believe we need more transparency throughout the legislative process. I will work together with the European Parliament and the Council to make this happen**.** Citizens should know who we, as the institutions who serve them, meet and discuss with and what positions we defend in the legislative process.

Protecting our democracy

Our democratic systems and institutions have come increasingly under attack in recent years from those who wish to divide and destabilise our Union. **We need to do more to protect ourselves from external interference.**

Digital platforms are actors of progress for people, societies and economies. To preserve this progress, we need to ensure that they are not used to destabilise our democracies. We should develop a joint approach and common standards to tackle issues such as **disinformation and online hate messages**.

I will put forward a **European Democracy Action Plan**. It will address the threats of external intervention in our European elections. It will include legislative proposals to ensure greater transparency on paid political advertising and clearer rules on the financing of European political parties.

This is my vision for a Europe that strives for more. I will fight for the ideas I present here and always try to seek as wide a consensus as I can for them.

I will work as closely as possible with the European Parliament and the Council. The Political Guidelines I present today, along with the work done by the other institutions, will form the basis for the **first ever Multiannual Programme which should be agreed by the three institutions later this year.**

I will bring this vision to life from before I take office. On day 1, I will present a gender equal college. Within 100 days, I will put forward a European Green Deal. By next year, Europeans will have their say at a Conference on the Future of Europe. By 2024, 10,000 European Border and Coast Guards should be helping to secure our external borders and every worker should have a fair minimum wage. And by 2050, Europe should be the first climate-neutral continent in the world.

This is a Europe that strives for more.