

EPP Platform

Adopted at the EPP Congress in Bucharest,
17th and 18th October 2012



Preamble

001. The European Union and its Member States are confronted with a series of severe and unprecedented challenges. On the other hand, they also face important new opportunities. If the challenges remain unanswered and the opportunities unused, Europe risks permanent crisis, stagnation and decline. But if we rise to the challenge and make good use of our potential, we can leave the crisis behind and lead Europe to greater strength and prosperity.

002. Our political family is the driving force of European integration. The European Christian Democrats founded in 1976 - as the first European party – the European People’s Party. It has become the party of the centre and the centre right. After the end of the Cold War two decades ago, we helped to lay the foundations for a Europe truly whole and free. The 1990s turned out to be a decade marked by solidifying integration and preparing rapid enlargement of the Euro Atlantic institutions. That decade was governed by a sense of optimism about the global spread of liberal democracy and the social market economy. The EPP was at the forefront of these developments. Consequently, our 1992 Athens programme on basic principles reflects that spirit; just like the 2001 Berlin declaration “A Union of Values” reflects the enlarged EPP family on the eve of the accession of Central and Eastern Europe’s democracies to the Union.

003. All over the world the challenges of fighting against poverty, violence, the disregard for human dignity and for human rights remain. Moreover, in the decade since 2000, new challenges have emerged. Globally, the West finds itself in an unprecedented and intensifying global competition with emerging economic powers. While democratic ideas are spreading in some parts of the world, disguised authoritarian rule and fundamentalist, anti-Western thinking have become more acute elsewhere. This situation calls for an even closer transatlantic partnership. Climate change, environmental degradation, the depletion of natural

resources, waves of migration, global market volatility, failing states, terrorism and transnational criminal networks requires better cooperation at the global level.

004. The European Union, having reformed its structures in a long and complex process, now faces the necessity of fundamentally improving its economic and political governance. It must also regain competitiveness and sustainable and inclusive growth as well as continue efforts to increase the confidence of its citizens in EU institutions and the European project. While confronted with multiple demographic challenges, the EU and its Member States are now envisaging an age of debt reduction of unprecedented scope. Among such challenges are ageing populations, the necessity of integrating a large number of immigrants more effectively and rapidly, often with technology-driven changes, into society, and providing younger generations with opportunities. Civil society and civil society organisations will become more important than ever.

005. All these challenges, global and European, collective and individual, can only be successfully addressed on the basis of fundamental values. These values have remained the same over the last two decades. The EPP has nearly doubled the number of its member parties since 2000. Especially from Central and Eastern Europe, centre and centre-right parties have joined the EPP, increasing the political scope of our family, and enriching it with fresh ideas originating in their historical experiences. Having contributed to the liberation of their countries from Communism, they are fully aware, more so than others, that freedom and human rights cannot be taken for granted and must be protected every day. Together in a political family which is now broader than ever, we reaffirm our commitment, therefore, to the common core values of the EPP.

006. These values are: the dignity of human life in every stage of its existence, freedom and responsibility, equality and justice, truth, solidarity and subsidiarity. The Christian image of Man is their point of departure. Achieving the Common Good is their final objective. For their implementation, a strong civil society is indispensable. In its pursuit we are guided by the use of reason and historical experience. Our political and societal choices are inspired by the constant need for change and the proper use of instruments to achieve this change, as well

as a respect for history and for the way our values have been recognised and their interpretation developed.

007. We are convinced that without a stronger European Union at this point in time, the Common Good cannot be achieved and our core values cannot be implemented. For this Union, liberal democracy and the social market economy are the defining characteristics. A stronger European Union demands more cooperation and in some issues maintaining and extending the use of the community method in EU decision making. The support of our citizens for the European project will be crucial to its future success. As younger generations often take peace, prosperity and security for granted, we need to explain more effectively that the peace and prosperity we are now enjoying, to the greatest extent since the end of the Second World War, are the result of wise and courageous policies, policies that have given birth to the European Union and have sustained it throughout its further development. We need to explain, equally, that the economic benefits stemming from European integration greatly outweigh the costs.

008. In their combination, these core values and instruments form a coherent whole that distinguishes us from all our political competitors. Socialism and radical environmentalism do not give the same priority to freedom, personal responsibility and subsidiarity. Libertarianism neglects solidarity and inherent values. Populism and radical environmentalism are at odds with progress, democracy and the Social Market Economy. Populism, nationalism and euroscepticism are incompatible with a strong and efficient European Union capable of tackling the challenges of the future.

009. The European Union has faced a severe economic crisis which has its roots in decades of overspending, the lack of competitiveness of some Member States, faulty practices and the lack of regulation in financial markets and inadequate mechanisms to address fundamental problems in Member States and at the European level. In order to return to sustainable economic growth and secure a prosperous future across the entire Union, we will have to get more people to work and work longer. This is only possible based on the values our political family holds dear. We will have to further develop the Economic and Monetary Union,

strengthen economic governance and develop better and more efficient coordination instruments in fiscal and cross-border social policies. And we will have to constantly work on increasing our competitiveness in the globalised markets, as well as liberating unused growth potentials and protectionist and fragmented markets from over-regulation and bureaucracy. We know all this will not come easy, but if our political family does not tackle these challenges, no one else will.

010. Twenty years ago, Europe was triumphant. In the meantime, new risks have accumulated, but enormous progress has been made in making Europe more stable and prosperous. Our political family has played, and will continue to play, the leading role in this process. We have been and will be able to do so by adhering to our core values while adapting our strategies to the challenges of today and tomorrow. Our tasks ahead are to strengthen Europe's sense of purpose and direction and to reaffirm these values, apply them to the challenges and opportunities facing us, and develop from these values the political strategies that will help the European Union to overcome this critical moment in time. Together, we can build a Europe that is stable, free and prosperous, safe for our children and good for the world.

Part I: Values

The Concept of the Human Being

101. We, the member parties of the EPP, affirm the inalienable dignity of every human being from the beginning and in every phase of its existence. We regard man as the subject and not the object of history. Acknowledging Judaeo-Christian values and Hellenic-Roman heritage as our foundations, we regard every man and every woman as a unique human being who is, as a person, irreplaceable, totally irreducible, free by nature, and open to transcendence. In particular, we affirm that all men and all women have the same natural dignity and importance and are therefore equal by their nature. They share the same rights and obligations.

102. We strongly value a proper balance between tradition and modernity; in fact they complement each other. On the one hand, we respect the defining institutions and values of European history and the stability and cohesion of its society. On the other hand, we are guided by the two fundamental concepts at the root of modernity: Progress, the idea that we can and must work for a better tomorrow through constant change and European Enlightenment in its appeal to use reason to free ourselves from all self-induced dependency.

103. Because people are free, responsible and interdependent, they are taking part in the construction and improvement of society.

104. Freedom is inherent in the nature of man. It means that every person has the right and the duty to be fully responsible for their acts and to share responsibility vis-à-vis their neighbour and the Earth for the integrity of the created world.

105. Progress is the result of multiple attempts to achieve the common good via different paths, through trials, errors and dialogue. Truth is not automatically accessible to man and man is by nature fallible. Consequently, we acknowledge that it is impossible for anyone to conceive of, not to mention construct, a perfect society free of all pain or conflict. We reject any form of totalitarianism based on such an aspiration. Every human being is capable of holding, pursuing and revising his or her own concept of good. The democratic polity treats with equal respect and concern people with different concepts of good, provided they are expressed in accordance with the values of tolerance and are democratic.

106. The thought and political action of the EPP are based on fundamental, interdependent, equally important and universally applicable values: freedom and responsibility, fundamental equality, justice, truth and solidarity, as well as subsidiarity. We consider these values universal, not exclusively Western, although they historically emerged in the West and developed in dialogue with other cultures. This, in particular, refers to the equality between women and men, the separation between state authorities and religious institutions, the separation of powers, democracy and the rule of law.

Freedom and Responsibility

107. For more than two decades, we have lived in a Europe more united and freer than ever before. This is partly due to a process of European Integration, which has been successful beyond all expectations. But this is also due to the liberation of Central and Eastern Europe from totalitarian Communism and of parts of Southern Europe from authoritarian rule. The experience of getting rid of totalitarianism and dictatorship, and of being deprived of basic individual and political rights and of struggling for freedom, putting personal well-being and sometimes lives at risk, has enriched the whole of Europe. In our political family it has consolidated an irreversible commitment to human freedom and a steadfast rejection of totalitarian and authoritarian rule. Even after 20 years, the efforts of these parties working in former Communist countries to implement and sustain democratic values could (and should) not relax because of embedded and persistent autocratic traditions or due to a feigned conversion to European standards by the successors of former Communist parties.

108. We believe that genuine freedom means autonomy and responsibility, not irresponsible independence. True justice and solidarity cannot exist unless the existence of freedom is accepted by everyone as an essential prerequisite.

109. According to this concept, everyone shares responsibility vis-à-vis the integrity of the created world. Persons, groups, communities, peoples, nations and states are, therefore, answerable for their actions to each living and future human being, all of them being unique parts of the created world.

110. That is why the EPP seeks to enable everyone to enjoy, in their daily existence, the inalienable rights recognised as belonging to everyone. This involves both the right to develop and use their gifts, talents and abilities fully and, on the other hand, the obligation to offer these in service to the community and to seek at all times to apply the values of justice and solidarity in relationships with others.

111. Authorities derive their legitimacy from the requirement to establish the appropriate conditions for the personal development of everyone, individually as well as in the context of communities. Any authority, whether public or private and at whatever level it operates, must therefore protect the general interest and the common good of mankind with specific attention paid to the poorest and the most vulnerable under all circumstances.

112. The common good must not be confused with the sum of individual interests. However, these interests must always be compatible with a proper respect for the rights of each person: individual, civil and political, economic and social, religious, cultural and collective.

113. The right of peoples to self-determination and the free exercise of their legitimate rights cannot be invoked to deny any one person the exercise and enjoyment of his or her fundamental rights or to lead the people on a path of violence.

114. This respect for others' freedom and equality should, in the opinion of the EPP, also be recognised in the way we deal, discuss and communicate with each other, notably in public debates, irrespective of the opinion and conviction of others, and in the way we refer to other groups, their convictions, minorities and institutions.

115. We consider that it is necessary to respect the right of conscientious objection.

Dignity and Fundamental Equality

116. All human beings enjoy equal rights because they are endowed with the same dignity based on human nature. In relationships with others, each person's freedom is, therefore, limited by a respect for others' freedom and dignity deriving from the recognition of that fundamental equality. Notwithstanding their differences in terms of gifts, talents and abilities, each person must be able to achieve personal development in freedom and equality regardless of his or her origin, sex, age, race, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, conviction, social status or state of health.

Justice

117. From the concept of justice follows that the necessary conditions for individuals and also their communities, depending on their nature and objectives, to exercise their freedom, must be guaranteed at all times. It is the characteristic of justice to attribute to each individual his dues and to actively strive for greater equality of opportunity and a life in society based on mutual respect. It is the responsibility of the state, social partners and civil society through legislation, partnership and participation at all levels – private, national and international – to ensure social justice.

118. One dimension of justice is respect for the law and its impartial application. Citizens must be equal before the law. Laws are constantly evolving in tune with the dynamics of civilisation and technical progress but they must always respect human dignity and human rights and they have to be freely accepted by people and their communities.

119. Laws must evolve on the basis of universal respect for man's fundamental and undeniable rights, as defined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man, the 1950 European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union as confirmed in the Lisbon Treaty of 2009.

120. Justice cannot be arbitrary or confused with the dictatorship of the majority. It requires respect for the minority, to whom no majority can deny the free exercise of its rights, and it requires renouncing the imposition of measures and policies which are not compatible with basic human rights.

Solidarity

121. Justice and solidarity are indissolubly linked to one another. Since anything that happens to one person has repercussions for others, solidarity means an awareness of the interdependence and interrelatedness of people. It also means practical action, sharing, effective aid, and rights and duties in relation to individuals and their communities.

122. Solidarity is a joint responsibility: the strong should help those in need who in turn have to make an effort themselves to improve their situation according to their abilities.

123. In affirming the unity of mankind in space and time, we see solidarity as not only horizontal between human beings of all generations and all places but also vertical; referring to the legitimate interests of future generations and including respect for the created world.

124. Solidarity starts at home, in the family, and is indispensable for the common good of communities, nations and the EU as a whole. The principle of subsidiarity requires that solidarity is always balanced with the concepts of individual responsibility and self-realisation. In the age of globalisation solidarity and the rejection of greed is the expression of the recognition of the global Common Good. The interdependence and common political destiny of the EU Member States call for European solidarity. Institutionalised solidarity between European Member States should, however, require Member States to assume their legal responsibilities.

Respect for the Integrity of the Earth and the Created World

125. We oppose the unreflected and unjust exploitation of the earth, without respect for the limited self-regenerating potential of nature. Our concept of man calls for responsible management of the earth with a view to satisfying the just needs of all and improving the living conditions and quality of life of everyone, whilst also ensuring sustainable development to protect the legitimate interests of future generations. This implies abstaining from those policies and practices whose future consequences we cannot oversee, according to the precautionary principle. We encourage new technology, research and innovation since they are key to sustainable development. The EU has to play a leading role in this area.

126. Therefore, we should fully exercise our personal, national and European responsibility in dealing with the problem of climate change and we should work at all levels to mitigate this deterioration and to adapt to its consequences.

127. High environmental and social standards are prerequisites for good living conditions. We believe in the sound judgement of the people themselves. Laws should create the appropriate framework for an informed and reasoned decision.

Subsidiarity and Diversity

128. We consider that democracy is a vital condition for the lives of human beings as citizens and for prospering societies. Democracy is always based on rule of law, a separation of powers and free elections. Citizens' participation in public life and in decisions that concern everyone represents an essential element of democracy. We consider citizens' participation at all levels as an indispensable means to achieving a true democracy.

129. The principle of subsidiarity means that power must be exercised at the level where it is both most effective and closest to the citizen provided it can be effectively exercised at that level. Policies, measures and regulatory frameworks that are most effective at the European level should be transferred to the European Union, while tasks that can be performed in an adequate manner at a lower level must not be transferred to a higher level. All levels of governance in the EU must cooperate with transparency in completing these tasks.

130. The limits imposed by the principle of subsidiarity also contribute to a specific separation of powers by preventing their concentration. We envisage a strong bottom-up system, reaching from empowered individuals and families and their organisations, local communities, cities, regions and Member States up to the level of the European Union.

131. If governments violate fundamental human rights, the international community of states has the responsibility to take protective measures on the basis of treaties, conventions, agreements and other texts, and even by codifying an obligation to intervene using gradually more and more severe but proportionate means to stop the violations, subject to strict international, democratic control.

132. The *raison d'être* of the sovereignty of states is to enable them to ensure the common good, the well-being and development of their people, and to defend and reinstate international judicial order respecting human dignity. This also means, however, that states must share their sovereignty in supranational and international organisations whenever they cannot take effective action individually; they should combine their capabilities in international and global partnerships and conventions.

Our Vision of Society

133. Our values should guide the political order as well as the economic, social and cultural spheres.

134. Economic development, based on the contributions of each and every person, cannot foster wellbeing and peace unless its fruits are shared with the aim of improving the living conditions of each person and his or her personal development. It is for this reason that we are in favour of the social market economy and must support and develop sustainable systems of solidarity and responsibility.

135. It is necessary to remain vigilant with regard to the danger that the misuse of economic power results in the inhibition of freedom, in inequality or injustice. It is therefore important to safeguard competition between market forces as well as to promote solidarity and social justice.

136. Subsidiarity expresses itself not only vertically in the political system but also horizontally in society, based on the premise that society can be constructed in freedom. The public authorities must, therefore, respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, recognise and support the relative autonomy of social groups and not take the place of private initiative unless the latter is weak or non-existent. In this same spirit, the European People's Party encourages a vibrant civil society through the activities of nongovernmental organisations and the creation of associations. We also believe the EU should foster direct relations with

associations of producers, consumers, trade unions, economic chambers and other socio-economic and societal actors.

The Social Market Economy

137. The social market economy as a concept was developed in Europe's darkest hour, in the 1930s and 1940s, as an antidote to crisis, totalitarianism and war. It built further on concepts and policies which were developed in the nineteenth century and the first decades thereafter by societal organisations and churches. The social market economy is, above all, a deeply political concept to safeguard human freedom through the preservation and development of the market. It has found its clearest expression in the policies of Christian Democrats in the first decades of post-war Europe and it represents a basic principle of our political family. It constitutes an economic and social order, anchored in the treaties and which reconciles personal freedom, private property rights and free and market competition with social rights, public interest, and sustainable development. Our political family must re-emphasise the ethics of work and entrepreneurship, which allows for everyone to earn their own living. The EPP is in favour of a strong social dialogue and recognises the important role of social partners.

138. The weakest members of our society deserve solidarity as long as they cannot support themselves. However, this policy should never be in contradiction to the basic principle of personal responsibility in a competitive market environment. After the experience of a severe worldwide financial and economic crisis, the promotion and strengthening of the principles of the social market economy at European and global level in an ever more connected global economy must be our top priority. Markets must work as freely as possible and unfair practices and protectionist measures against free competition and free trade need to be done away with.

139. A social market economy at European and global level has to be based on the principle of environmental sustainability. That implies an ever greater attention to renewable energy sources, phasing out unsustainable energy production, energy efficiency, the preservation of

biodiversity, the conservation and regeneration of natural resources (water, air and land). It also means that economic growth should support those factors which increase the citizens' quality of life.

Religion and Politics

140. We, the member parties of the EPP, reaffirm the link that exists between Christian values based on the Gospel and Christian cultural heritage and the democratic ideals of freedom, fundamental equality between all human beings, social justice and solidarity. At the same time we emphasise the separation between church and state and the need to distinguish between the roles of the church and the state in society, as well as between religion and politics. The Gospel is not a political platform. But, the above distinction should never justify the exclusion of churches from the public domain or lead to devaluing the need for constant dialogue and interaction between the political and the religious spheres. This dialogue should be strengthened. The EPP welcomes Article 17 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and considers it as a key tool, for example, when dealing with the issue of the persecution of Christians and other religious groups in the world. The freedom of religion, including the right to conversion or to hold no religion, is on an equal level with other basic human rights.

141. In recognition of the Greco-Roman and Judaeo-Christian roots of our civilisation and the Enlightenment as sources of inspiration we want to position ourselves as essentially a party of values without confessional bindings. This is valid both for those of us who believe in God as the source of truth, justice, good and beauty, and who believe that humankind is called upon to contribute to God's work of creation and freedom, as well as those who do not share this faith but who respect the same universal values as arising from other sources.

142. If it rejects, forgets, neglects or dilutes its values, the European People's Party will be no more than an instrument of power, without soul or future, whilst also forfeiting the universal and original nature of its message, which is based on a global appreciation of the irreducible complexity of every human being and of life in society.

Part II: New Challenges for our Societies

201. The European Project, for which the member parties of the EPP were the pioneers and the driving force, remains yet to be completed. Post-war Europe has been reconstructed, war has become a distant threat, the move towards totalitarianism has been reversed; the continent has been almost united and has become peaceful and more prosperous than ever. But there is no reason for complacency.

202. The 21st century offers not only dramatic new opportunities but also poses challenges and threats. Globalisation demands a multifaceted answer but it must be a strong and coherent European response. The enormous power shifts in economics and geo-politics demand a new common effort towards innovation and competence based on values and long-term vision and strategies. The demographic evolution, climate change, threats to food security, the shrinking of biodiversity and new scarcities make far reaching changes inevitable.

203. We believe that global developments of the last decades have reaffirmed the basic principles of the European social model as well as the necessity of developing it further in order to maintain competitiveness.

Global Challenges

204. After overcoming totalitarianism and creating the conditions for reconciliation and the prevention of war in Europe, we are now confronted with a dramatic shift in power relations worldwide and the emergence of a new global landscape. This goes hand in hand with far-reaching demographic and economic changes. Moreover cultural and financial constraints limit the readiness of Europe to assume stronger geo-political responsibilities. The end of the Cold War and the successful struggle against poverty and underdevelopment in many countries create new possibilities for peaceful international cooperation and the strengthening of global governance. But on the other hand there are increasing threats stemming from regional insecurities, failing states, the quest for natural resources, unsettled territorial

disputes, terrorism and new and old weapons of mass destruction in the hands of state and non-state actors. In this new political landscape, Europe must be aware that it can easily lose its hitherto still significant impact on world affairs also in view of the shift of attention of its most important ally, the United States, to other parts of the world. These opportunities and threats in the domain of international and foreign policies will demand a far-sighted, committed, strong, and creative answer from the Union. They provide a new justification for continuing and intensifying European integration itself.

205. Globalisation and the information society increase the dependencies and contagion risks among countries and among economic regions and can, therefore, lead to negative economic developments in a much shorter time than in the past. Globalisation and growing interdependence have also created imminent threats to, and great opportunities for, the European economy. The increasing purchasing power in many parts of the globe and expanding world trade have given new chances to Europe's export of goods and services, whilst at the same time the worldwide division of labour has lowered the cost of many basic products for European consumers. Millions of new jobs have been created. On the other hand, the same new division of labour has caused severe losses of jobs on our continent. Moreover, Europe's global competitiveness is being challenged on an unprecedented scale, especially concerning our demographic structure, education, research and development patterns and lack of geographic mobility. On top of that, it has become painfully clear that our current patterns of excessive public and private spending based on credit and lending are unsustainable not only in the perspective of future generations but even in the short run. The creation of the euro has certainly boosted the economies of the participating states, and is therefore irreversible or can be undone only at the price of dramatic and uncontrollable consequences. The central question for citizens and politics is whether we are ready and willing to draw the full economic, financial and institutional consequences of having one currency. We as the EPP are, therefore, facing the threefold challenge of an intense and broad reform and modernisation of our economies in adaptation to the exigencies' of the global competition on the one hand, the rebalancing of our public and private incomes at with our spending without causing economic downturn and mass unemployment on the other hand, and the bringing about of institutional reforms which are essential for the preservation of a common currency.

Saving the European Project in the face of these challenges will demand vision and expertise.

206. The industrial revolution, population growth, technological capabilities and above all the enormous increase in production and consumption are confronted with the limits of what the Earth can reproduce and absorb, and have, in a number of cases, exceeded their capacity. Restoring this balance is no less than a matter of survival of mankind and a central challenge of this and future generations. Moreover, our economies already feel the constraints of upcoming scarcities, notably in the area of energy. Drastic changes in our patterns of production and consumption are unavoidable and global warming will make them more urgent. On the other hand, existing technologies and the development of new ones can not only create alternatives to unsustainable trends in our economies and lifestyles, but also provide promising new perspectives of change, innovation, employment and growth. The greening of our economies provides chances – nationally, regionally and globally – for new entrepreneurship and for bold solutions to scarcities. It can be a new source of income for modern and hitherto less developed societies alike. This third overarching challenge is at the same time an indispensable new ground for European cooperation: environmental challenges demand solutions, which surpass national boundaries. Most of them demand a global approach in which the advocacy of the visions and interests of Europe will not be effective without strong, unified and far-sighted policies and practices.

Society and Culture

207. Europe has always been a place of culture, rationality, progress, knowledge and Humanism.

We, as the EPP, believe that there is a common European culture distinct in the context of globalisation. Therefore, we are in favour of strengthening a structure of society in which there is room for families, local communities, citizen's associations, regions and nations. We attach strong value to citizens' personal responsibility, to a balance between commercial and non-profit initiatives including cultural activities, and between paid and voluntary engagement. Public policy should support this.

208. Fostering a strong sense of European identity, as an indispensable precondition to a dynamic Union, must be based on the social, cultural and spiritual diversity of our continent. This diversity also includes the contribution of other religions than Judaism and Christianity such as Islam.

209. We need, at the same time, the protection and promotion of official local and regional languages and the right to education in the mother tongue in an appropriate number of schools on the one hand and, on the other hand, multilingual education, which permits the citizens of Europe to communicate easily with one another.

210. We see a strong need for the protection and fostering of values detached from purely commercial interests and for the development of contemporary cultural expressions in the area of media; including new media, architecture and spatial planning, arts, literature and the preservation of our cultural heritage and its enrichment through the promotion of cultural exchange and mobility.

Family and Demography

211. As laid down in Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the state. Family is irreplaceable as the core institution where love and charity, sympathy, and human solidarity are cherished and instilled, thereby uniting different generations. It is the place where parents and children take responsibility and practise solidarity for each other. Strong families are also a precondition for better demographic development.

212. We are aware of the need for new balances in our societies between paid and professional work, on the one hand, and family care on the other, in order to strengthen solidarity between generations. At the same time, our demographic challenges require lengthier participation in the labour process and more scope for the care and education of children, also in the form of provision of day care facilities and other social services and in the form of an arrangement of work organisation, which takes into account the reconciliation

between private life and professional life. We emphasise the need to recognise the work of parents as educators within the framework of social policies. We believe that fiscal policies should support families and solidarity between generations.

213. The EPP refuses to consider abortion as a method for family planning. We promote supporting programmes and initiatives to help parents and families to welcome every child, in particular when difficulties or unforeseen pregnancies occur. No social pressure should be exerted on parents who decide to accept a child with a handicap.

214. The fact that the life expectancy of Europeans is increasing, due to technological and medical progress and healthier lifestyles, is in itself a positive achievement. But it has consequences for the pension and health insurance systems that need to be addressed. The ratio between the working population and those in retirement is bound to become more precarious. Higher productivity can only partly offset this development and therefore the average total working time within the lifespan of a person needs to be increased. There is an ever increasing need to promote healthier lifestyles and preventive health care. Keeping people healthy and active for longer will have a positive impact on productivity and competitiveness. At the same time, Europe must invest more in education and training, including in the areas of language, labour mobility and entrepreneurship for young people.

Education and Youth

215. Education and knowledge are fundamental to Europe but are not yet fully realised. In recent years Europe is facing the challenge of building itself as a knowledge-based economy and society. The goals of competitiveness and scientific potential face the brain drain trends as well as the financial crises. At the same time education is a corner stone for making the individual a successful and developing professional.

216. We believe that education and training have turned into a lifestyle and a resource, and thus we in Europe have never been more dependent on it. In a world of rapid changes, young

people have the specific responsibility of shaping the future of Europe. A greater challenge is to give them a good start through education.

Immigration and Integration

217. Mobility within the EU and immigration from outside Europe are realities. They have enriched Europe for centuries. The European economy is interested in attracting highly qualified employees from all over the world, but immigration should not be promoted as the sole answer to demographic challenges. A “brain-drain” should be prevented. The competence for decisions regarding access to national labour market rests with the Member States. Besides, it will always be necessary to provide asylum for people who are persecuted. Immigrants and refugees must be treated on the basis of respect for human rights.

218. We believe it is imperative to also discuss the problems that have arisen as the result of a lack of integration and because of illegal immigration, particularly with the emergence of “parallel societies” of immigrants in which the core values enshrined in our constitutions are disregarded, such as individual freedoms and the equality of men and women before the law. Human rights, freedom and tolerance must be respected within any cultural or religious community in Europe. Across the Union there should be no room for sanctuaries for sectarian judiciary systems.

219. Immigrants should be in command of, or learn the languages of, the receiving countries, as well as the history and characteristics of their new environment, abide by the law and respect its cultural heritage and underlying values, and participate in the civic rights and duties of their respective local and national community. This is, above all, to empower all individual immigrants to enjoy their full rights. On the other hand, the EPP will fight against all kinds of discrimination against immigrants. People have the right to exercise their religion and culture as long as the law is respected. The emergence of ghettos of ethnic groups should be addressed. Having the chance to work is an important aspect of becoming integrated in a society. Facilities of cooperation and for encounters between immigrants and their families and their fellow citizens from the host countries should be promoted.

220. Creating a common asylum policy is a goal that all EU Member States have subscribed to. However, any such common policy must be built upon existing rules in the area of EU asylum policy. This policy should also show solidarity with Member States which are facing specific and disproportionate pressures on their national asylum systems, in particular due to their geographic location or their demographic situation. In cases of war or manmade and natural disasters, the EU and its Member States should facilitate the reception of those in need of international protection in the EU. We need to encourage their return once conditions on the ground allow.

Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion

221. One of the defining features of the European Union is cohesion, whether socially, territorially or economically. It is the translation into practice of the principle of solidarity and of the conviction that social peace is not sustainable with too big of a divide or lasting divides. Fostering cohesion means bridging divides between countries, enhancing cross-border and territorial cooperation and between regions within countries, but also overcoming differences within our societies, whether in the context of class, ethnicity, national origin or age. This is severely challenged today by rising inequality and poverty, which are often combined with increasing unemployment, especially among young people.

222. Now the challenges are mostly on a national level in stopping the emergence of a new underclass. Social cohesion within our societies is threatened most when unemployment, a lack of education and immigrant populations are concentrated in a neighbourhood, which all too often leads to a pauperisation of their living environment, radicalisation, drug addiction, violence and criminality. Moreover, phenomena like poverty even among those who work and among the elderly require increased attention by governments and social partners. While it is primarily the national governments and local authorities which are responsible, and are assisted by civil society initiatives and self-help movements, the EU can assist in tackling these problems by creating conditions for employment and economic growth, and by utilising its coordinating competences in the area of fighting crime and drugs.

223. The third dimension of cohesion, alongside economic and social, is territorial. Territorial cohesion underpins the improvement of competitiveness among countries and regions.

224. The EPP intends to also pay more attention to the drop out problem and lack of education within the younger generation. Here the EU has an important but subsidiary role to the Member State and should, for instance, support programmes of education, mobility and lifelong learning.

225. The EPP reaffirms its efforts to promote the human right of education and parental freedom of educational choice.

Deepening the Ethical Debate

226. Technology plays an increasing role especially at the beginning and the end of human life. The moral consequences of our decisions add new dimensions to our political, societal and individual choices. At the same time, new capacities to measure the implications of our behaviour and decisions for generations to come demand an unprecedented weighing of current versus future consequences.

227. The EPP confirms the position of the human person, human life and the created world as described in our 1992 Athens basic programme and in our 2001 Berlin Declaration "A Union of Values". On the other hand, not all areas of technological development and ethical challenges have been mentioned in these documents. That it is why, based on the principles outlined in these documents, new technologies need to be continued to be assessed. We need to continue to have a systematic underpinning ethical debate to accompany technical innovations in these areas. The EU should not make funds available for those technologies which are clearly contrary to the values outlined in the abovementioned documents, and in other sensitive areas EU funding should be accompanied by research on related ethical aspects.

228. Human life should be protected from its beginning until its natural end. Genetic intervention at the beginning of human life should be restricted to interventions in order to heal its diseases. Artificial creation and the selection of human embryos for reasons of research or commercialisation should be forbidden across the Union. Advertisements for abortion or euthanasia should be banned.

The Role of Political Parties

229. Political parties are an indispensable institution of representative democracy. They play a decisive role in representing the general, particular and diffuse interests of people, holding governing institutions accountable, integrating people into the political process and promoting democratic ideals. Therefore, political parties should promote equality between women and men, as well as diversity on all their election lists and in all their internal organs. Political parties at the national and European levels must be organised and function in conformity with the rules of internal democracy. In addition, they must remain vigilant about ideologies and groupings aiming to destroy the legacy of peaceful political cooperation and democracy achieved in Europe.

230. Political parties play a key role in bringing together citizens and governments. Representative democracy is the bridge between citizens and governments. At the European level too, they are indispensable to bringing the Union and its citizens closer to one another and to linking the European process of decision making to grass roots participation. On the basis of a mix of voluntary contributions and of Union financing, these European parties should have the means to do their own research via detached think tanks, to conduct European electoral campaigns and to get access to the media.

231. With the growing importance of decision making at the European level the integrity, transparency and independence of European decision makers and parliamentarians should be controlled and enhanced. Financial contributions should, in all cases, be transparent.

232. The EPP itself will engage in a permanent process of strengthening and gaining trust from the citizens by dialogue, presence, transparency and accountability. The EPP aspires to a deeper integration with its member parties on the basis of subsidiarity, whilst aiming to realise the full potential of the institutional decision making of the Union. At the same time, taking advantage of the changes in Europe's neighbourhood, the EPP should continue to strengthen those political forces in its neighbourhood that share its basic values.

233. The EPP promotes and supports the action of its parliamentary groups in every European organisation, in the European Union, Council of Europe, OSCE and NATO.

Safeguarding National Minorities

234. Autochthonous national minorities and traditional minorities in this sense are groups which have been residents in the same area for generations while national borders have shifted. Their rights and efforts to preserve distinct cultural traditions and speak their own languages must be respected and fostered by the nation states, as much as the minorities must respect the constitutional order of their countries. The European Union, with clear commitments to cooperative problem solving, by minorities as well as national governments, should help to answer to this complex question, which has often been at the root of conflicts in European history.

235. We believe that the European Union can gradually develop a set of legally binding community standards and norms for the protection of persons and communities belonging to minorities, whilst encouraging positive measures and policy tools to be implemented for the purpose of protecting minority persons and groups. The principle of the sharing of best practices underlies a concrete and efficient EU strategy for autochthonous national minorities and traditional minorities.

The Importance of the Regions

236. The EPP supports the contribution of the Committee of the Regions as a political assembly and as an institutional body of the European Union that defends the interests of regions and cities. The Treaty of Lisbon has reinforced the role of the regions and the local authorities in the European Union and strengthened the institutional role of the Committee of the Regions throughout the legislative process. The EPP favours and fosters a strong position of the regions as a key component of the European Union to respond to the vital need for reducing the democratic deficit of the EU. They play important economic, cultural and social roles, sometimes transcending the borders of the respective Member States. We see the promotion of the regions and the local authorities and their cooperation in many aspects as an added value in the process of European integration.

Freedom in the Era of the Internet

237. The recent progress in information and communication technologies, especially concerning social media on the internet, has begun to change our lives and societies in an unprecedented way. This has contributed to the emergence of a global civil society and increased our capacities for economic growth through innovation and the development of a Digital Single Market, for freedom of expression, and for uninhibited access to information. At the same time, new threats have emerged to intellectual property, individual privacy and personal integrity. The EPP stands for a reasonable balance between individual freedom and maximal creativity and regulation to fight cybercrime and all misuse of the digital technologies, including infringements of intellectual property rights, whilst strongly promoting the development of new business models in the digital environment. Human rights must be respected on the internet too. That includes the individual right to data security. The protection of individual data in the Internet can be infringed upon only in cases involving criminal activity.

238. Technological developments are having a profound impact on the political process. Combined with societal developments, this has contributed to an unprecedented acceleration

of political developments, to decreasing long term party loyalties by voters and, therefore, a higher volatility and unpredictability as well as a weakening of large people's parties. The EPP and its member parties will have to take this into account and constantly improve their abilities to make use of technology while maintaining personal communication with voters and bringing politics closer to the citizens. The communication should be two-way, and especially the possibility of communicating from grass-root levels to the top of party hierarchy should be enhanced. At the same time, nothing can replace multi-party electoral democracy based on the rule of law. The EPP will encourage its members to make full use of the potential of the internet as a tool to open up the political process and reach out to citizens previously uninvolved. Social media have a role to play in this.

Part III: The European Union

The EU – A Union of Values

301. Over many centuries Europe's peoples have evolved into distinct and self-confident nations. Despite their national differences, they have preserved their shared cultural heritage, rooted in Hebrew prophecy, Greek philosophy and Roman law, as they have been harmonised and enriched by the Christian message and Judeo-Christian values. The concept of the nation state has remained intact throughout the different phases of cultural development: the Renaissance, the Enlightenment and modernity. The nation state as a form of political organisation and a way of life has become a model for the whole world.

302. We are currently facing major transcending challenges that require solutions on a European level. The European project, an ever closer union of united nation states, is not to destroy the nation states of Europe, but is a prerequisite to avoiding nationalism, which has done so much harm to our citizens, and restoring to them the real capacity to fulfil their key responsibilities. European integration is a prerequisite for the solution of the fundamental problems our nations face and as such, the decisive breakthrough in the history of our continent. Built on the ruins of the Second World War and emerging from totalitarianism, European integration has given its citizens enduring peace, freedom, stability and prosperity. We, the Europeans, can be proud of having achieved this common approach in our recent history.

303. Moreover, the European way of peaceful cooperation and integration has developed into a model for other regions in the world. This provides a basis for us to promote the longstanding values, which characterise the European societies: peace, freedom, democracy, equality between women and men, the rule of law, tolerance, and private property based on the social market economy. The EU and its Member States must, together with our transatlantic partners and other international actors with whom we share common values, continue to fight for those values, which form the basis of our societies and which have contributed to democracy and human rights, as well as the rule of law around the world. We

should step up our efforts to help democrats in need across the globe and to counter authoritarian and fundamentalist ideologies.

304. In the future, the European Union will continue to be successful if all EU Member States and the Union's institutions share a focused and cohesive vision of the future. For the EPP, the promotion of the European model will be crucial if we want European values to have an impact in a rapidly changing world. The EPP remains committed to the vision of political integration of the European Union. This vision is the result of history; today it remains the best response to the challenges of the future, such as globalisation, migration, new security threats, climate change, and energy security. It is now our task to adapt the European Union to the realities and needs of the 21st century by setting the right priorities and by bringing the European Union closer to the citizens.

Europe in a Globalised World

305. It follows from the increasing interconnectedness of our societies and economies that European action is needed not only in order to create an internal market and a community of law but also to strengthen freedom, equal opportunities, solidarity and sustainability where the nation state alone is not able to fully secure that anymore. But the European Union must also restrict itself, according to the principle of subsidiarity, to those tasks which cannot be adequately dealt with at lower levels and which can at the same time be better dealt with at European level. A lean European Union is built on self-governance by local and regional authorities and the identity and the role of the nation states. The European Union is not a state but works with instruments of a federal union in those policy fields in which it has received the competences of its Member States.

306. In line with the commitment to Europe, which the Christian Democrats have shown since the very beginning, the EPP calls for gradual – but resolute– progress towards a genuine political union following the basic lines defined by the 1992 Athens Programme and the subsequent congresses. We want a European Political Union. The EU will, over the coming

years, have to be fundamentally reformed. The Union and the Member States will exercise more powers jointly.

307. The institutional setup of the European Union must be developed further around its basic principles. It requires the EU institutions to give equal attention to all citizens and Member States. It needs democratically representative institutions, including a more effective European Commission, and a mechanism to ensure better economic governance at the heart of the Union. The co-decision procedure between the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament has to become more transparent. The Council of Ministers, as second chamber, should therefore decide publicly on legislation. It must adopt more participatory democracy, which implies new forms of direct interaction between citizens and the European institutions, like the citizens' initiative. The direct election of the President of the European Commission is one of our goals. This would reduce the perceived democratic deficit of the Union and foster a greater shared identity among EU citizens.

308. Having served as the world model of reconciliation and prosperity for the entire European continent for more than half a century; the EU must naturally be involved in shaping the rules and norms of the new international system. Both our citizens and our global partners expect Europe to embrace the challenges of the 21st century, play a prominent and proactive role in international negotiations, come up with viable innovative proposals, take responsibility, and promote European values across the world. But in order to respond effectively and on time to its new vocation and the global challenges it entails, Europe must be able to speak with one voice and act as a single entity.

309. A globalised world requires global governance. Therefore, strengthening international organisations and making them more responsive to worldwide power shifts are imperative, in particular with regard to the UN, as it has the strongest legitimacy in addressing and solving global problems. The IMF should also be reinforced as it contributes to more stability and security in international financial markets. Strengthening the WTO is of fundamental importance for global prosperity and helps to defuse conflicts based on diverse national

economic interests. The removal of barriers and enhanced market access worldwide should be accompanied by decisive efforts for a more effective international regulatory cooperation.

310. New global realities also require the reform of existing and/or the creation of new institutions. Flexible ones, such as the G20, will grow in importance, highlighting the increased weight of emerging economies in Asia, Latin America and Africa.

311. In order to enhance our economies and, as a result, build up our international appeal and establish Europe as a strong global actor, better coordination and integration of national economic and budgetary policies is required. This will encourage a revival of European economic activity and job creation. A period of economic difficulties cannot be overcome without decisive steps forward in European integration. This is important in order to secure growth but also the stability of the euro. The Common Market and the common currency can best be supported by a common political decision.

312. We consider economic dynamism in Europe not only as compatible with social responsibility but in fact as a precondition for it. There will be no social cohesion and political stability without sustainable economic development and a robust response to fraud, tax evasion and money laundering. The achievement of the goals of the economic and political integration of Europe benefits all European citizens. It should be done under the existing European treaties respecting EU rules, the equality principle, the Community approach and active support of the citizens.

313. A stronger involvement of the EU in international crisis prevention, support of democratic development, suppression of fundamentalist terrorism and conflict solution is of utmost importance. Europe must be able to contribute balanced and viable diplomatic solutions.

314. The EU requires an improved ability to set and pursue political priorities and it should globally continue to engage in situations where it can play a useful role. We also believe that the EU must take full advantage of the opportunities provided by the Lisbon Treaty to strengthen its foreign and security policies. The strengthening of the Common Foreign and

Security Policy as well as the Security and Defence Policy, complementary to the transatlantic alliance, and also the active and concerted defence of human rights and fighting poverty on a global level in international relations, will be crucial for the further development of the European Union. The European Union must also have better operational capabilities in the area of defence policy. It is a key objective to forge a particularly close form of cooperation between the EU and NATO. This shall not prejudice the specific character of the security and defence policy of certain Member States.

315. Although the threat of a conventional attack against European territory is low, the EU has to remain vigilant and strengthen its efforts in the field of non-proliferation of weapons of mass-destruction, terrorism, and organised crime as well as regional conflicts. Therefore, the EU must cooperate with partners and promote agreements that will secure regional balances. At the same time the EU needs to increase its efforts to reduce the risks of energy dependency, climate change, piracy and uncontrolled trade of conventional weapons.

316. In order to enhance the EU's diplomacy and determination to maintain peace in the continent and safeguard stability and democracy around the world, effective military capabilities at the disposal of the EU and its Member States are required. The EU also needs to step up its efforts at common procurement, specialisation, research and development, and training in order to enhance the efficiency of its military capabilities. The financial and economic crisis forces us to radically improve budgetary efficiency and realise the positive effects of civilian and military synergies as well as pooling and sharing of military and civilian resources. This is also important in view of the new responsibilities in the field of peacekeeping, crisis management and counter-terrorism; as well as threats to our conventional means of transport and communication. Strengthening our defence against cyber threats through enhanced cooperation on the European level is of particular importance, complementing already existing NATO capabilities in this field.

317. The EU also has a strong interest in and responsibility for its closest geographical neighbours. The European Neighbourhood Policy covers countries from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea region and the Caucasus but also respects the uniqueness of each country.

The process of stabilisation and democratisation in the neighbouring countries has a high priority and contributes to strengthening their and the EU's stability, security and welfare. In view of the uprisings against authoritarian rule and dire economic conditions in North Africa and the Middle East, the EU must strengthen its instruments to support the transition to democracy and social market economy in order to broaden the area of stability and security around it, whilst also paying attention to the state of democracy and economy in the Eastern neighbourhood. That includes political dialogue, trade, development assistance and support for civil society. Special attention in that regard has to be given to the youth of that region through EU exchange programmes and educational facilities. Our support for the freedom movements in the Middle East and North Africa goes hand in hand with a firm commitment to a special partnership between the EU and Israel. The European Union must pursue the stabilisation of peace in the Mediterranean area. We have to pursue a policy of dialogue in view of improving the respect of fundamental human rights, reinforcing the Euro-Mediterranean community.

318. Therefore, the EU Neighbourhood Policy, in the interests of the EU and our neighbouring countries, has been strengthened with tailor-made approaches adjusted to the specific situation of each partner country. We are convinced that a more effective EU cooperation with these countries, focussing more clearly than before on human rights, religious and other fundamental freedoms, democracy, the rule of law as well as good neighbourly relations based on clear conditionality, would also broaden the area of stability and security around it. The EPP recognises the contribution that the EU's Neighbourhood Policy can bring to the countries that are experiencing an influx of immigrants from conflict areas in the close EU neighbourhood.

319. The Eastern Partnership of the European Union deserves special attention. We should refine our instruments for promoting democracy and human rights, putting more emphasis on good governance, anti-corruption measures and the rule of law. Historically, the Eastern Partnership countries have always had very strong ties to the rest of Europe, sharing our democratic values and cultural heritage. The difficult history of this region, too often having to struggle for independence, requires a special commitment from us to assist those countries in

a precise and practical way. This assistance should not only contribute to the reinforcement of the European values but also towards building up functioning democratic structures in the EaP countries and bringing their economies to a higher level. In a strategic perspective, it will also help them reaffirm their sovereignty and territorial integrity, and reassert their independence from their stronger neighbours, be it of a political or economic nature. Moreover, in the longer run, strengthening their ties with the EU will become beneficial to the EU countries. We continue to support the principle of "more for more" in the delivery of financial assistance and reward progress.

320. The Arctic region is increasingly important economically but also in view of the need to increase cooperation in using newly opened sea lanes, in protection of the environment and many other important issues. Therefore, the EU needs to form a coherent Arctic policy.

321. Albeit increasingly challenged by new power centres in Asia and Latin America, the transatlantic relationship will, according to most criteria, remain one of the most powerful pillars of a multilateral system. The framework of the EU-US relations will remain the cornerstone of our external policy; steps should be taken to strengthen them and to find ways in which the transatlantic partnership will tackle the new global challenges based on our shared values and beliefs. The creation of a barrier-free transatlantic market would provide such a basis for a reinforced transatlantic partnership and would create economic growth and jobs.

322. With Russia, the EU's biggest neighbouring country in the east, it is important to develop close and wide-ranging relations in order to cooperate on issues of common interest such as stability beyond the EU's eastern borders, energy security and international affairs. Therefore, an open and realistic dialogue should be conducted with Russia over priority issues. Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms should continue to figure prominently on the agenda. Therefore, in designing its policy towards Russia, the EU should take into account the situation of countries in our common neighbourhood. The EU should resist any attempts to divide Europe into spheres of influence or zones of unequal sovereignty and security while

continuing to work on a broad agenda to promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law that will also enhance economic attractiveness and attract foreign investment.

323. Europe is a global actor and should engage in an open and constructive manner with the emerging economic powers but, at the same time, it must scrutinise all of their actions on the international stage. Europe must continue to foster privileged relations with those countries in Asia, Latin America and Africa that share our values. Moreover, the EU must develop strategic partnerships with emerging powers, which have to accept their growing global responsibilities.

324. It is essential that Europe reconstruct its security strategy in order to integrate energy policy in its foreign policy approach to third countries with the aim of building a strategic external policy with key partner countries. It has to enhance and develop an approach to climate and energy policy that will increase the EU's energy security including access to natural resources and raw materials whilst simultaneously advancing its competitiveness and internal energy market. The completion of Trans European Energy Network and development of new sources and routes should be a priority for the EU's energy security. We are committed to efficiently managing our natural resources and transforming Europe into a highly energy-efficient, low carbon economy. Moreover, the EU possesses increased negotiating experience, power, when speaking with one voice and technological know-how, and it should continue its leading role in combating climate change and global warming but also in coping with their effects. We should constantly adapt our patterns of production and consumption and shape our international and diplomatic agenda accordingly.

325. Increased irregular migration, illicit arms, drug trade and human trafficking, as well as international terrorism are challenges of the globalised world. Europe needs to protect its borders and find a balance between minimising the threat of crimes and maximising ease and convenience for travellers. The EU is an area of freedom, justice and safety. This needs clear structures in support of crime victims and their rights. As crime now can move freely across the internal borders, it is important that the EU play an active role in coordinating tasks among the Member States in order to take advantage of victims' rights. Strengthening external border

security by enhancing Frontex and stepping up joint operations between Member States is an urgent necessity together with the creation of a European Coast Guard. The EU must also effectively cooperate with external countries' border security authorities, especially countries that are identified as a source or transit route of irregular migration. In order not to unduly increase the number of refugees in EU Member States, the EU must increase humanitarian aid to those local communities in third countries, which welcome refugees and aim at combating poverty and instability at their roots.

326. It is unacceptable in our times that one and a half billion people across the world are starving and living below the poverty line. Europe must continue to play a leading role in intensifying global development cooperation and to fight poverty and support economic and social development in Africa, as well as in the less-developed countries elsewhere. The lack of democracy and human rights is a major obstacle for economic and social development in several regions. The EU must continue to put democracy dialogue and assistance among the top priorities in its relations with third countries. Fostering agriculture and food production should be a priority in our common actions. Environmental and health policies, as well as policies for better education and the development of physical infrastructure, are all areas where the EU could make substantial contributions to reaching the Millennium Development Goals and therefore to a better world. The EU partnership with our neighbouring continent Africa should be strengthened and become more effective. In case of the finalisation of the existing agreements between ACP and the EU we should take care that their central elements are included in new separate cooperation mechanisms with Africa, the Pacific and the Caribbean. The EPP is convinced that the application of the principles of the social market economy best serve the development of poorer and emerging economies. Assistance to these developments should give ample room to entrepreneurship and investment, to cooperatives and non-governmental organisations and it should reward combining personal responsibility and solidarity.

327. The EU should continue to develop its relationships with the countries of Latin America and their people, reaching beyond the former donor-recipient dependency. Now that many of them are becoming self sufficient and even prosperous, we should, on the basis of our

common values and mutual bounds, cooperate in areas of mutual strategic interest. The European Union and both Americas should aim for a strategic partnership in the new global order. We are in favour of a humane globalisation process.

328. We are convinced of a strong need for a far-reaching reform of efforts to combat global poverty. Their effectiveness will not only be determined by the quantity of our contributions including the ambition to spend 0.7% GDP, the coherence of our overall development policies, and by coordination and specialisation between individual Member States and the Commission. In all EU agreements with third countries, the EU must take care that a substantial “democratic and human rights clause”, including a “religious freedom clause” be inserted and effectively implemented. Global respect for freedom of religion must be fully implemented in all parts of the world and conditionality must play an important role in foreign relations.

What can Europe do Better? Subsidiarity and Capability to Act

329. European integration has been an enormous success. We are committed to solving the EU’s problems especially in times of an economic and financial crisis in which the foundations of the European Union were heavily challenged. So far these foundations have proven to be solid and resilient, but as a political force we have to guarantee that they also continue to be so in the future.

330. For all these challenges ahead of us, it is decisive that we respond to the concerns of our citizens and that we manage to fully involve and engage them in the process. Solidarity and social, economic and territorial cohesion are important objectives of European integration. The success of the whole project depends on the support of all EU citizens.

331. The EPP is convinced that a clear majority of people all over Europe also want a strong European Union that deals with problems effectively at the European level: those problems, and only those, which cannot be sufficiently addressed by the Member States on their own.

332. Our political methods, based on subsidiarity and solidarity, should be the guiding principles of our societies. A clearer distribution of competences between European, national and sub-national levels, solidarity and personalism, as well as the strengthening of European unity and speaking with one voice, will be of decisive importance. Only then will we be able to give the best answers to global, European, national, regional and local challenges.

333. Many of these challenges are urgent problems in all of our societies, like the threat of terrorism, trans-border criminal networks, irregular migration, human trafficking, organised crime and large scale political corruption. Some are clearly common challenges, such as economical revival, the support to research and training, energy policy or common infrastructure projects, and can, therefore, only be dealt with efficiently if we manage to act together.

Economy, Labour Markets, Innovation

334. The economy should serve the people and not the other way around. Europe needs a steady, coherent, ambitious, growth-oriented and long-term economic and financial perspective in times of crisis and beyond, rather than a collection of individual and ad-hoc solutions. The creation of jobs and maintaining high employment must remain a main focus of this long-term economic perspective.

335. We lay high priority on the creation and preservation of high-quality jobs, based on higher qualification of our population. In this respect, we will continuously stimulate Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurship as a source for jobs and growth. It is essential to target key industries with increasing job creation potentials (such as green economy, health and social care sector, digital economy). Competition should remain socially sustainable, precluding harmful competition between European workers. Social dialogue should remain an important mechanism to strengthen cohesion in times of structural reform. We need to strengthen our efforts to improve the relevance of our education and training systems to the future needs of the labour markets. The role of practical skills should be strengthened in secondary and higher education. We also place emphasis on the transition

from school to a qualitative job for our young workforce as measures to prevent youth unemployment.

336. The Single Market is the backbone of the Union and its good functioning is the basis and framework for economic recovery in Europe. We have, therefore, to commit ourselves to properly enforcing the Single Market legislation by strengthening its governance, whilst also taking into account its social dimension. Strong leadership on the part of the European institutions and political ownership on the part of the Member States is still required to lift the remaining restrictions on the single market freedoms: the project is not complete as long as citizens and businesses have not yet fully benefited from its potential. Labour mobility is of high importance in this context. The European single market also requires a European Patent law. Completing the Single Market will be of particular significance to the digital economy.

A well functioning Single Market depends on the joint effort of the Member States on the one hand, which have to make sure that Single Market legislation is fully and timely transposed and implemented, and the EU on the other, which has to make it easier for the Member States to comply with the legal framework.

337. SMEs are the backbone of our Social Market Economy because their job creating capacity is the biggest contributor to the European labour market. The European economy needs healthy SMEs, and SMEs need a stable framework ensuring a level playing field in which market failures are addressed as well as strong competition policies. Our political family has to push for creating an environment in which SME's are able to grow and to innovate and in which individuals, in particular young people and women, are keen to establish their own business. Achieving this requires a significant and continuous reduction of administrative burdens in particular for micro businesses. SMEs will achieve their growth potential through the promotion of access to finance, and of market access within the Single Market as well as internationally. In order to reap their innovation potential, SMEs have to have support in building creative partnerships between industry and academics, as synergies are significant for creativity and for future growth. Thus, entrepreneurship will become the catalyst for innovation and sustainable development in Europe.

338. Facing global competition, Europe must openly support and encourage its youth, its creative individuals, its hard working employers and employees, its inventors, its companies, and it must again become a favoured location for all new job-creating activities.

339. Economic policies should lead to stable public finances. Today's generations should create the foundation for a prosperous and stable economy for future generations. We must safeguard the public finances and make the European Union prepared for future challenges. That is why we say no to promises that would lead to unfunded spending. The economic policies should consist of demands on surplus, demands on a balanced budget, reducing public debt to under 60% of GDP according to the Stability and Growth Pact, more free trade and competition within the EU. All parts of society must share the burden involved in a fair and balanced way.

340. Know-how is central to economic growth and job creation, so we must create the best conditions for transforming our society into a knowledge society. To reach this fundamental objective, investments in education and research and innovation are an essential element. The future success of the European economy will be determined by the appropriate financial commitments to these sectors.

341. The EU is still the biggest economic power in the world and there is no reason why Europe should not lead the world in innovation and science. To maintain high standards of living, the EU must stay ahead of the others. In general, spending on higher education and science should be tilted towards the best-performing institutions. Closer coordination between national and EU-level policies in this area would be advisable, especially with regard to those policies aiming to strengthen public spending as a lever to boost R&D. It is clear that we in Europe need a more innovation-friendly environment; this means less bureaucracy, more flexibility in making work and family life compatible and more cross-border cooperation in the field of research and development.

342. Only if we accept the interdependence between the 'preconditions for more employment' and 'high social standards' will we be able to safeguard social cohesion. We also have to

promote mobility through investment in education and training, notably in linguistic skills and particularly for young people. At the same time, Europe needs better incentives for talented people in order to diminish the brain drain across the Atlantic.

Education and Research

343. It is our belief that higher education must be regarded as a key policy at EU level. That will be the only way for us to establish a knowledge-based economy and to achieve competitiveness globally. A key priority is to constantly develop higher education and research policy, and to encourage the process of modernisation among the Member States in the field.

344. The EU needs to encourage the steady and wise investment in higher education and research systems. We should look forward to a further and stable harmonisation process among the various higher education and research systems across Europe. The EU must foster and coordinate reforms in the systems of higher education, research and innovation. We believe there should be a stronger relationship between business and higher education, on the one hand, and scientific research and higher education, on the other.

Enlargement

345. Enlargement has been one of the most successful European policies and has largely proven the attractiveness of the European model. EU enlargement remains an important answer to the double challenge of consolidating the global role of Europe and stabilising its neighbourhood. EU enlargement has been an effective tool for promoting freedom, democracy, peace, stability and economic development, as well as human rights and the rule of law, across the whole of Europe.

346. The European People's Party has been a supporter of strong ties with all countries of the European continent. Our aim is to form a truly united Europe through membership or strategic partnership. Stronger ties will serve countries inspired by the European achievements to

share the common European values. Candidate countries will have to fully meet all specific criteria and requirements before joining whilst at the same time the integration capacity of the Union to integrate new states has to be respected. Furthermore, European countries, which cannot or do not want to become members of the European Union should be offered a strategic partnership with the EU. This concept should be developed more concretely in order to represent a real alternative to full membership. Conceivable options could be multilateral agreements covering participation in the single market and close cooperation in the field of the foreign and security policy. An appropriate balance should thus be achieved between enlarging the EU and strengthening its identity and capacity to act efficiently.

Environment, Climate Change and Energy

347. Climate Change is another important global challenge with a significant impact on future generations. Increasing natural disasters around the world, as well as the rise in gas and oil prices, show the need for a rapid and courageous move toward the most modern and efficient technologies. Concrete and farsighted steps towards renewable and low carbon energy sources will we be able to avoid the adverse effects of climate change and at the same time reduce our dependence on imported fossil fuels. The European Union should continue to be the frontrunner in this area because the protection of the environment cannot be done by individual states alone. In the same way, the European Union also needs to tackle water supply challenges and stop environmental degradation in general and especially the loss of biodiversity and contribute to the conservation and to the regeneration of natural resources (air, water, ground).

348. The dependence on fossil fuel from politically unstable regions is another major reason to increase energy efficiency and to promote low carbon energy sources and to diversify energy supply sources and routes. The continuing global increase in demand for energy will, together with declining reserves, make energy more expensive. Therefore, new ways are needed to guarantee energy security for our citizens and a competitive and stable environment for European industries. Transportation is important both for people and goods. The global trade is increasing and that can lead to growth. Therefore, the transport sector

needs a rapid decrease in the use of fossil fuels and a major cut in production of green house gases.

Immigration and Integration

349. The feeling of “belonging together” and sharing the same values and principles must be exemplified and strengthened, in order not to lose public support for the European project. We must be careful not to give in to fear, hate and violence, and to strengthen cooperation and solidarity with the moderate voices of different cultures.

350. The EU will require an immigration policy that responds to increasing pressure from migration flows, on the one hand, and the need to meet the challenge of its own demographic situation on the other. The need for a common policy for controlled, targeted immigration, for the prevention of illegal immigration, for more effective border control, for the enforcement of readmission agreements, and for integrating legal migrants into broader society, is evident from the point of view of efficient control of immigration as well as the basic requirement of conformity and solidarity between Member States.

351. A growing divergence between the degrees of population growth in the developed and developing nations as well as climate change are likely to spur more intense south-north migration pressure which may lead to social tension if it results in a substantial drop of living standards due to a massive loss of talents and skills.

Demographic Change

352. We also have to be aware that there are few economies in the world with a similar demographic profile; coping with ageing populations must become a top EU priority. One of the ways to do so is to complement our labour force at different levels of skill.

353. This would also entail provisions such as extending the effective retirement age and incentives for older citizens to remain active in the labour market. Within a more transparent and better regulated financial infrastructure, private pension funds should be established as a supplement to public ones and clearly defined contributions should be promoted through favourable taxation systems.

354. Further measures have to be taken to increase the employment rate, especially in those population groups whose potential is essential to meet future challenges of the labour market: older workers, young people and women in general. Special measures have to be taken to foster the integration of people with disabilities into the labour market.

355. It will also be necessary to strengthen the compatibility of work and family life. While clearly honouring the importance of the family for raising children, pro-family policies should also focus on instruments which have proven their positive impact on the demographic trends such as the availability of child care and support for the family in the first years after birth.

Closer to the Citizens – The Future of the EU Institutions

356. The ongoing process of European integration demands the strengthening of democratic participation in the European decision-making process. Democratic procedures need to be applied in those areas where the Member States have conferred competences to the EU. In this respect, it is nevertheless necessary to reinforce the links between the European institutions, especially the European Parliament, and the national parliaments. The Lisbon Treaty paves the way for national parliaments to safeguard the principle of subsidiarity in the decision making process. Solidarity and social, economic and territorial cohesion are important objectives of European integration.

357. The European Parliament is today the only democratically elected EU institution and has become a central decision making institution of the European Union. The low turnout in the European parliamentary elections proves that there is a lack of necessary public engagement in European politics. The elections to the European Parliament must develop into genuine

European elections in the sense of having more real European issues debated because we take the democratic rights of European voters seriously. We need to increase awareness of voters for the relevance of their participation in these elections for the legitimacy of the European Project.

358. Therefore, we also need to further develop our pan-European political party and enforce a greater European focus in the debate. The European process must feature more prominently in the political debate. We, therefore, have to further develop a more democratic, transparent and efficient Europe. EU citizens feel that they have no influence on EU decision-making, turn their back on community projects and seek national identification. The EU institutions, therefore, in close partnership with the Member States, must ensure that the citizens can have confidence in the effectiveness, efficiency and real added value of Union programmes. As such, citizens must have access to all decisions and information provided by the European Union in their national language. The EPP, considering this is an essential element of reconciliation between the Union and its citizens, strongly supports multilingualism.

359. The future of the EU will depend, above all else, on its actual ability to anticipate, address and resolve the specific problems of concern to the citizens. For this challenge to be met, the Union requires at all its levels democratically accountable, transparent, efficient and effective governance. It needs an efficient framework bridging the interests of its Member States and satisfying the needs of its citizens on the basis of freedom, democracy, responsibility, equality, justice, solidarity and subsidiarity.

360. The Union has to simplify and clarify the scope and responsibilities of its institutions. In addition, a simplification of the law and the introduction of a hierarchy of legislation that will advance the transparency and consistency of the community legal system will improve the citizens' understanding of the EU.

361. Strengthening the EU institutions and the community methods of decision making and responsibilities are a requisite in order to achieve, and also improve, transparency, efficiency, democratic accountability and the capability to act in unity, all in order to cope with the

enormous challenges ahead. In effect, it is a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for the success of its future enlargement.

362. The Union must be consolidated by remaining capable of achieving its objectives even in the event of the accession of new Member States. Therefore, it is decisive that major institutional changes be concluded before accession negotiations.

Economic and Monetary Union

363. The euro is irreversible and we support those actions by Member States and EU institutions needed to enhance public and market confidence in the stability of the currency. The EPP views the Euro as one of the most profound expressions of the European integration process. The benefits of the Euro, as our single currency, outweigh the costs by far. The opportunities for citizens, businesses and economies outweigh the risks but more economic and fiscal integration are needed to ensure this outcome. In order to provide citizens, companies and investors with a stable economic environment, we need more discipline from all Member States, more convergence on the basis of best practices and better coordination among national fiscal policies.

364. The fulfilment of responsibilities by both Member States and EU institutions is the fundamental condition for good economic governance in the European Union. The EPP is ready to address the constraints that derive from a common monetary policy and separate, sometimes divergent, fiscal policies at national level. In view of the necessity of developing common economic policies, the membership in a Monetary Union implies responsibility and solidarity for the single currency. This requires sound policies, fiscal discipline and continuous economic reform. It also requires a significant proportion of fiscal resources to be channeled through the EU budget.

365. Growing interdependence among our European economies sharing a single market and single currency requires the further strengthening of economic governance. We need the tools and the institutions capable of implementing our convergent economic objectives. We

are determined to be the driving force for adjusting the EU institutions, its policies and instruments, in such way that future economic crises can be prevented and the future of our single currency, the Euro, can be safeguarded. Credible economic governance supposes establishing concrete goals and commitments. The European Commission shall formulate such objectives and monitor their implementation. In this respect, the Commission shall execute a system of recommendations, corrections and sanctions. The Council shall only be entitled to suspend or reject such decisions by a qualified majority.

366. Given commitments made by most Member States to joining the common currency once they fulfil the criteria, we are aware of the need for greater convergence between the EU and the eurozone. On this basis, we favour the inclusion of non-eurozone Member States into decision making processes, which impact their economic and monetary issues. We view this as an instrument to evaluate the impact of eurozone decisions on all EU Member States, and as a tool to strengthening the coordination between current and future Eurozone Members. We are convinced that every Member State should stick to fiscal discipline. Given financial, economic and political risks, we oppose every call to exclude any Member State from the eurozone. This would be a danger for the stability of the Euro and a setback for the process of European integration.

367. We are fully committed to the independence of the European Central Bank and its primary objective of providing price stability for the eurozone. The low inflation rates provided by the ECB enable a stable purchase power for our citizens. We welcome any measure taken by the European Central Bank within the limits of its statute to enable the stability of the European financial system as a whole.

368. High levels of public and private debt create macroeconomic and financial vulnerabilities, as they limit the governments' options to provide sound answers to unpredicted economic developments, and increase market dependence. Highly indebted countries face additional challenges for enabling economic growth. Prudent fiscal policies should be conducted so that the markets' confidence is assured and provisions are created for unforeseen events. We must ensure the stability of the eurozone in such a way that it is credible for investors, and

provides them with a stable and predictable business environment. Maintaining the confidence of investors shall always be a priority during decision making processes. This can best be realised through reforms and maintaining the no bailout-principle of the Treaty and this does not exclude mutual solidarity between the Member States.

369. We are aware of the risks that derive from unsustainable debt, and strongly oppose the accumulation of private and public debt that goes beyond sustainability levels. Excessive public debt levels place unreasonable burdens on future generations, and are therefore unacceptable. Our policies shall always be consistent with the goals of the social market economy and sustainable economic objectives. We also recognise that large scale fraud, tax evasion and corruption contributed to the economic and financial crisis and, therefore, all financial and assistance packages must be coupled with measures to prevent and combat such crimes.

370. We promote the reform of Europe's economy in such way that stability, social welfare and prosperity are assured. This implies measures to reform inefficient social security systems and labour market regulations in a way that stimulates secure employment and growth. Structural reform should also rely on concrete actions to stimulate employment and social inclusion. Sound fiscal policies are, undoubtedly, a source for growth and jobs in the long run. Fiscal consolidation should always take into account the effect which budgetary measures have upon our job market.

371. The EPP is of the opinion that competitiveness and economic convergence towards the levels of the best-performing Member States are key factors for the long-term success of our single currency. Reducing discrepancies and imbalances between EU Member States should be a long-term goal for EU-wide economic policy coordination. We will continue to be a strong advocate for structural reforms as a generator of growth. In this respect, we believe in the correlation of wages to productivity levels and in sustaining economic growth through market competition in a fully completed Single Economic Market. We are aware of the need to increase the effective time of work in Europe in order to assure competitiveness and the sustainability of our pension systems.

372. The EPP recognises the necessity of financing investment for future growth more effectively. In this respect, we shall further improve the effectiveness of the European Investment Bank (EIB) and better use its expertise to improve business access to credit.

373. For the good of the social well-being of human beings it is important that in the society there is one common working-free day in a week. For centuries in Europe there has been such a day the Sunday. It is important also for preserving the cultural roots of Europe to defend Sunday as a common pan-European working-free day.

374. The EPP underlines the necessity to reform the global banking and financial system. Banks need to return to their primary function, which is serving the real economy, stimulating entrepreneurship and economic development. Banks need to be an enabler for economic growth and job creation. A reliable banking system is key to our prosperity. Financial services shall help economic actors to manage and minimize risks for their economic activity, and not of encouraging speculation. It is important that EU Member States are enabled to decide their own level of financial regulation, i.e. through capital requirements in banks. EU-regulation should be seen as a minimum standard.. Our objective is to have a financial sector with an improved ability to absorb shocks arising from financial and economic stress. We are aware that stronger, safer banks may be less profitable in short term but are of the opinion that the stability of the returns, and that of the banking system as a whole, outweighs both microeconomic and macroeconomic costs. We are as well determined to secure that the reform of the global financial system will not lead to a competitive disadvantage for European banks, and should, by no means, pose any additional burdens for the financing of economic activities in Europe.

375. The EPP views the continuous improvements in productivity and competitiveness as a primary solution to combat the economic shortcomings we are facing and as a prerequisite for sustainable economic growth in the long term. The EU Structural Funds should be allocated in such way that they serve their initial purpose of improving the competitiveness of our less competitive regions. The European Commission must, therefore ensure that these funds are used both effectively and in a sustainable way.

376. The Institutions of the Union and the Member States should stay ready to help any EU Member State in economic difficulty, on the grounds of the principles of solidarity and reciprocity and upon strict conditionality. Authorities in recipient countries should respect their European and international commitments and implement structural reforms at national level, which should improve the future perspectives of their economies, regain the trust of investors and return to sustainability of their public finances.

Citizens in the Forefront

377. Europe has to face the new challenges and meet its high goals. Demographic developments and the ageing of our populations pose major opportunities, as well as major challenges that have a profound implication for our societies. Europe must guarantee the reorganisation of our societies to reflect the need for practical expressions of solidarity between generations and concerns for our senior citizens, without disturbing the rights of the next generations. It should promote the portability of social rights, mobility, and the wellbeing of an ageing population in order to enable them to experience their retirement as a period of well-being, as opposed to one of pain and isolation.

378. Diseases and epidemics, which do not stop at national boundaries, as well as possible deliberate health threats (bioterrorism), pose new challenges for public health. Europe has to strengthen cross border healthcare in order to provide the citizens with the highest possible level of protection.

379. The EPP believes that the European citizens deserve the highest possible standards in their living patterns and an efficient protection of their rights as consumers. At the community level, essential common rules and practices in the area of consumer protection must be agreed and combined with the necessary uniform enforcement of these rules. In order to ensure these rights it is vital that the distribution of accessible and relevant information is guaranteed to enable consumers to make independent, informed choices.

380. Europe is well-known across the world for its high quality agricultural products which are the base of our gastronomic heritage. We need to maintain this quality and even improve it where possible. Therefore, strict standards are required to be set for the production of safe and healthy food and to promote organic products even further. This food safety, as well as food security and a steady and secure supply of products, are indispensable elements of our vision of a modern agricultural policy. At the same time, the Common Agricultural Policy of the EU, already having been modernised in past decades, will have to be further reformed to foster a sustainable model of farming, taking into account food scarcities as a consequence of population growth and climate change as well as the economic role of the countryside.

381. This reform should take into account the new and sharply increasing global need for agricultural products (food and non-food) caused by a growing world population, a substantial change in nutritional patterns (more meat consumption) and the use of biofuels. At the same time, we have to take into account the decreasing capacity of agricultural production in some areas outside of Europe because of climate change and scarcity of water. In light of this perspective, the continuous development and adaptation of Europe's agricultural capacities should be facilitated.

382. In order to safeguard the legal rights of European citizens, access to the justice system must be made less costly and complicated, as well as more timely but without becoming overloaded. Therefore, it is necessary to promote alternative systems of resolving disputes, such as arbitration or mediation, which are faster and give less burdensome solutions without undermining the national public order. At the same time improvements to the effectiveness, with regards to cross-border disputes through the systems of legal assistance that already exist in all the Member States, are required. The EPP is also in favour of creating a common framework for police and judicial cooperation, which fully respects the principle of subsidiarity. An evaluation of all law enforcement and judicial systems and exchanges of good practices are vital for strengthening this cooperation and respond timely and efficiently to transnational crime.

383. The Charter of Fundamental Rights, which has been incorporated into EU law, provides citizens with additional protection, even against their own member-states. The expected accession of the EU to the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) will further reinforce this protection. It concerns the citizens as consumers, workers, retired people, patients, students, civil servants, but also as subjects of the Union, with respect to the European administration and its agents. The EPP wants the safety of citizens to be taken care of in everyday life through the provision of better health care, high quality food, high environmental standards and an efficient protection of their rights as consumers.

Conclusion

401. We, the member parties of the European People's Party, are determined to maintain and expand the leading role of our party family in the development of the European Union. Remaining faithful to our values and open to change, we will do our best to face the challenges of our time and work out solutions for a better European Union.

402. A better European Union is, above all, a stronger and more efficient Union, providing our citizens with the freedom, security, sustainability and prosperity, which nation states alone cannot provide now and in the future. It is a Union, which regains its economic dynamism and global competitiveness through the completion of the Single Market and which secures its economic future not only through a common currency, but also through common economic governance.

403. A better European Union is a Union open to the world, contributing to the spread of human rights and pluralist democracy, helping and defending democrats and human rights defenders across the globe, committed to peace and sustainability, and actively participating in global governance through strong international institutions. It is a Union with strong instruments for an effective common foreign, security and development policy and the political will to bring these instruments to bear, for the benefit of Europe as well as mankind as a whole.

404. A better European Union is also a Union closer to the citizens and responsive to their concerns, firmly rooted in the principle of subsidiarity and ready to strengthen democratic participation. This presupposes strong European parties, capable of acting constructively in the European Parliament as well as in the emerging European public sphere, and bridging the gap between citizens, national parties and national governments on the one hand, and the institutions of the European Union on the other.

405. We want to strengthen our position as Europe's strongest party. That means working on expansion as well as cohesion. We will strive to adapt to local conditions whilst sharpening

our overall profile and reaching out beyond the borders of the Union through stable networks of dialogue and cooperation. We will continuously modernise our party structures and institutions. But above all, we will continue to develop our policies based on the solid foundation of our core values. Just like in the second half of the past century, we are strongly committed to strengthening the position of the EPP as the defining force to enable Europe to respond to the dramatic new challenges and opportunities in this century as well.