

10 points for the

Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe

There are times in history when peoples' destinies hang in the balance and they face decisive choices. For Europeans, the beginning of the 21st Century is just such a time. It is our duty and our privilege to respond to the great changes that are transforming Europe and the world and posing new challenges.

Individually the countries of Europe are too small to guarantee their peoples' security and welfare. The choice they face is to try and hold out in defence of a scale of things that no longer matches the times, or to pool their resources within the larger, stronger, more competitive entity that is the European Union. For the EU Member States there can be no future without Europe and no future outside Europe. Only by joining forces can we defend and uphold our values, both *within* the Union and *beyond* its boundaries, furthering our common and more specific interests and taking up the global challenges together – proactively, not reactively.

Europe must be built not only as a Union of States based on diplomacy, but also by a democratic community of peoples.

We are committed to unlocking the potential of our Union, by building on the fundamental principles of freedom, democracy, solidarity, the rule of law, respect for human rights, free enterprise and equal opportunities.

First, by promoting peace, through a Union in the federal tradition that respects our diverse cultural, local and linguistic identities, and is open to all European States which comply with the criteria for membership.

A Union that can finally vote with a qualified majority system in order to fully exercise the European sovereignty in compliance with the principle of subsidiarity.

The ratification and entry into force of the European Constitution is in this respect essential.

Second, by making the EU a global player bridging the gap between its economic and political dimension: Europe must speak with one voice in world affairs.

This is why we fully support a Common Foreign and Security Policy which aims to promote a new era of peace, democracy and security, notably in the Mediterranean area.

To this end, the perspective of a hard core in defence policy should be supported within an effective multilateral framework.

Finally, the EU's leverage in international trade and financial frameworks should be extended.

Third, by opening up, democratising, making more accountable and strengthening the institutions of the European Union, also by identifying forms of participation and dialogue able to bring into the European debate those who at the moment feel excluded.

To this end, media pluralism is crucial. Furthermore, to foster common European experiences and the sense of belonging to a single continent-wide community, language training and exchange among students, trainees and volunteers should be stimulated.

Fourth, since Europe is a union of minorities, by guaranteeing the fundamental rights of all European citizens and removing all forms of discrimination.

In our common fight against international crime and terrorism, we will always remain vigilant against any erosion of personal freedom. A Europe of security and justice for all is also a Europe that extends these rights to those who justly seek asylum or a new life here. To that effect, the Union needs to strengthen protection of the common external borders and to harmonise asylum policy. Europe has to develop a common strategy to manage legal immigration and coordinate action against illegal immigration, and to firmly combat any form of racism and xenophobia within Europe. The protection of minorities is the essence of democracy.

The Area of Freedom, Security and Justice should be deepened.
Intercultural dialogue should be promoted and deepened further.

Fifth, believing that the aim of society must be the self-fulfilment of each individual, by promoting education at all levels.

Support for scientists and researchers, technology transfer, investments in information, eco-friendly technologies and R&D networks on a European basis are essential.

Sixth, by strengthening economic governance after the introduction of the Euro.

A common economic policy must aim to create prosperity, competitiveness and jobs, and keep the European social model viable, by modernising the European economy and fostering an innovative society. In this framework, we must reform Europe's economy to secure a stable and competitive climate for businesses to invest in innovation and create jobs, to facilitate labour mobility, and to achieve a real single and liberalised market.

An effective single market implies also the reduction of the bureaucratic impact of its implementation.

Seventh, by ensuring value for money for taxpayers, rooting out fraud wherever it is found, tackling unnecessary bureaucracy; by reforming the system of own resources to make it more transparent, progressive and fair.

Eighth, by making Europe the world leader in environmental protection.

This means seeking common solutions to our common environmental, public health problems, consumers protection and food safety. Europe must commit to cleaner, safer forms of energy and embrace renewable resource use. The Union should work for the achievement of the targets set out in the Kyoto Protocol for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and for the launch of a follow-up to Kyoto.

Environmental and security policies should lay at the core of the Union's cooperation with its neighbours.

Ninth, by making globalisation work for everyone.

We recognise that globalisation has had together with positive effects also some negative ones. To overcome the negative effects, Europe must promote sustainable development through a more generous and targeted aid policy, and must give through the multilateral trading system the world's poorest nations access to our markets to escape the poverty trap.

Tenth, by ensuring a full recognition and enhancement of the role of Europe's regions, particularly those with legislative powers, and by building a structural policy which develops the potential of Europe's most needy regions.

EU resources should be used to mobilise additional investments, and cohesion funds should be focused on the poorest regions. The Union cannot afford that any of its region lags behind. For a balanced development at home and abroad, it is necessary to rethink and reform the Union's Common Agricultural Policy.

The European Union's achievements to date are impressive - half a century of peace, prosperity and stability; instead of fighting each other, Europe's nations harness their collective genius and goodwill to a common enterprise and provide opportunity for our citizens. After the Second World War, the founding fathers wrote the European project of the twentieth century; right now we should rewrite together the project to cope with the challenges of the third millennium.

United, our alliance of Liberals and Democrats is committed to realizing the dream of a political and democratic Union for our unified continent.