

GREEN DECLARATION ON THE FUTURE OF THE EU

"Yes to Europe – Let's have the courage to change"

The European Union is a historic achievement, one which has been built piece by piece by the men and women of Europe. Over the past 70 years, Europe has accomplished great things: countries which were once enemies have become friends and partners.

A lack of solidarity in dealing with the many crises currently facing us is giving rise to doubts, however, as to whether the EU and its Member States are capable of overcoming the challenges of our times. And yet the EU's development has never been free from ruptures, contradictions, setbacks and negative developments. Time and again, it has experienced serious crises. Often enough, however, these have also proved to be an opportunity to overcome stagnation. Yet Europe's many overlapping crises are shaking the whole project of European integration – more so than ever before. This is exacerbated by the fact that division within the EU Member States is growing, and frustration with those in power is rising. In this context, "Brussels" offers an ideal scapegoat for national failings. The Brexit referendum in the UK has brought this to a head. It constitutes a massive setback, a stage win for nationalism over the European vision.

Nonetheless, as convinced Europeans, we say: we want to preserve this cooperation, this Union, and to fight for our European future by having the courage to change. We will not settle for the status quo, as this no longer offers answers to key problems facing us today. Although the shortcomings of European integration have been widely debated, the heads of state and government have been unable to rectify them through structural changes to the EU. Yet the EU is so valuable and essential that we want to develop it further, and by doing so ensure that it once again receives greater public support.

Brexit: strengthening European cohesion in the wake of this historic setback

Only together can we overcome the global challenges of our times. There can be no national solutions to transnational problems. That was one reason why we wanted the UK to remain a member of the EU. We deeply regret that a majority of Britons have taken the decision to leave the EU, but we accept this decision. An exit process which is fair to all sides must now follow rapidly in order to put an end to uncertainty as quickly as possible and to ensure that confidence in the EU is not damaged further. The focus must now be on preserving and strengthening the cohesion of the remaining 27 EU Member States.

It is a positive signal that a majority of the Scottish people wanted to remain in the EU. We understand that the Scottish government wants to deliver on the wish expressed by the voters. We therefore hope that all involved will find pathways to a solution.

We unequivocally condemn a Brexit campaign which was largely based on populist, and at times even racist and xenophobic, comments and lies. In retrospect it is also clear, however, that the pro-European forces were too late and too hesitant in campaigning for the United Kingdom to remain in the EU. Our Europe is not shaped by the stirring up of resentments and the fostering of exclusion. Unfortunately, however, we are again and again witnessing a style of politics – including from the Federal Government and certain parties and parliaments in Germany – which focuses solely on national interests and which sacrifices much-needed European action in favour of domestic political expediency. That must change. The EU must no longer be the scapegoat for the failures of national politics.

We remain convinced Europeans

For the EU is a guarantor of peace between its members and the peaceful resolution of conflicts of interest within a legal framework. It stands for overcoming the boundaries that divide us, for shared freedom and equal rights. It has ensured that our continent, in all its diversity, has always grown closer together. The EU is a pioneer when it comes to equality and environmental protection. Solidarity is a key European value. Human rights are enforceable before European courts. It is precisely because of the values on which the EU is

based – respect for human dignity, democracy, individual freedom, human rights, solidarity, equality, the rule of law – that Europe holds such a powerful appeal for hundreds of thousands of people who are seeking protection from war, terror, dictatorship and persecution. They show us the immense value of what we Europeans have achieved in our Union. However, the EU also promised prosperity: it promised to bring its members economic advantages and greater stability in a globalised world, and in this way to contribute to jobs and higher incomes. Even if we are currently seeing a massive rise in social inequality in the Member States as a result of wrong decisions, the EU has made a vital contribution to greater prosperity in the past. We Europeans want the EU to constantly deliver anew on this promise of prosperity. This requires greater social cohesion and greater solidarity.

At the same time, we need European cohesion and close links between the Member States, and not only as insurance against a relapse into national egoism and chauvinistic confrontation. Cohesion in the EU is also essential as we wrestle with the infinitely difficult problems facing the international community: from the battle against climate change, which is of elementary importance, to the implementation of an internationally just sustainable development policy, to patient advocacy of shared security and global peace, to a solidarity-based approach to refugee and migrant flows, to the battle for the rule of law and democracy. In view of the dynamic force of globalisation, European countries can only bring their weight to bear effectively in pursuit of these goals by working together. The EU remains the most progressive example of how sovereign countries can peacefully and democratically stand up for common values and interests, despite all of their differences.

Yet many political actors in too many European Member States are currently being driven by national egoism instead of seeking joint solutions based on solidarity. At the same time, wrong or short-sighted political decisions are being taken which undermine confidence in the EU. The severe financial crisis in Greece and the eurozone was a clear wake-up call, highlighting the urgent need to reform the economic and monetary union, to reduce social division in the EU, and to undertake structural reforms. With regard to environmental protection and nature conservation, a conservative-liberal majority at European level is driving forward a deregulation agenda which threatens the key achievements in these areas. The Common Agricultural Policy is still pursuing the false dogma of an export-oriented approach, while its social and ecological realignment is delayed further. In terms of climate protection, national governments are today shutting their eyes to what needs to be done and dragging their heels, in spite of the Paris Conference. When it comes to our policy towards refugees, there is a lack of solidarity. On matters of international trade, considerations relating to human rights or development continue to play too small a role. As far as internal and external security is concerned, obstinacy is prevailing rather than cooperation focused on civil and human rights. Populist parties and movements are gaining ground in many countries.

Nonetheless, the EU is also strong, resilient and capable of shaping events. Today, Europe shapes our lives: we learn, love, study and work in Paris or London; we have friends in Madrid or Warsaw. We travel without showing our passports or changing money. We pay with Greek euros in Estonia or German euros in Italy. The single market's common rules protect us from social and environmental dumping in many areas. In our civil-society engagement, in politics, academia and business, in public authorities and cultural institutions, we are forging links which stretch from Lisbon to Nicosia, from Helsinki to Valletta, with the aim of together finding solutions to shared problems. Problems which affect us all and which no country is now in a position to tackle alone.

For the younger generation, in particular, European integration is a given. They mostly voted for "Remain" in the UK referendum. We are convinced that, by building on everyday Europe, we can secure the changes which will enhance the future viability of our European Union.

Together or divided?

The challenges of our times are global in nature, and are too large for us to continue to take a narrowly national approach. In spite of this, not all EU Member States want to pull together in the same direction and with equal determination, for example when it comes to the fight against terrorism and organised crime, the battle against climate change and global poverty, the environmental and social modernisation of our economy, oversight of global financial markets and transnational corporations, the elimination of tax havens, or effective data protection. We must therefore ask ourselves the fundamental question of how much internal

differentiation within the EU is possible without it falling apart – or, indeed, how much is necessary to prevent it falling apart.

We are taking a clear position in this discussion: our aim remains a Europe in which all members hold together. We oppose any categorical division into an exclusive eurozone club and the rest, into north and south, or “everyone but Greece”. We oppose the EU’s division into a core Europe and a periphery. That said, in certain cases it may be necessary, for pragmatic reasons, for a group of Member States to lead the way. We therefore regard it as valid for a multi-speed approach to be taken in various areas in the form of enhanced cooperation, based on the concept of variable geometry. However, in areas where a multi-speed approach becomes genuinely necessary, we do not believe that this should be organised outside the EU treaties, and we do not want the rights of the European Parliament and the European Commission to be undermined.

How much Europe do we want?

More competences for the European level inevitably means surrendering some national power. We are therefore only in favour of “more Europe” in areas where the EU is better placed than the national, regional or local level to serve the public by taking necessary and useful joint action. We do not want an EU which dictates down to the smallest detail what must or must not be done in every area. Public services and local self-government must continue to be shaped locally. However, given that in the era of globalisation and digitalisation almost all areas of life are and will be shaped by joint European or international agreements, subsidiarity must not become a smokescreen for an unwillingness to compromise with other countries in Europe or the world.

In cases where the transfer of national decision-making powers to the European level is necessary and useful, the following principle must apply: the European Parliament must gain competences in areas where national parliaments surrender them. In addition, this kind of transfer of sovereignty must entail adequate financial resources. Matters which we have chosen, for good reason, to organise at European level must be negotiated and shaped in a fully democratic manner using the Community method, i.e. by the European Parliament, Council and Commission, and within the EU treaties. To this end, however, we must also create a stronger European public and ensure the greater visibility of those in positions of responsibility and their actions at EU level. The national political parties, in particular, must at last communicate this more clearly and accord their European parties greater relevance. For when things are only viewed from a national perspective and this is reinforced by the media, mutual understanding is weakened and it is easy to lose sight of the bigger picture.

In support of strengthening European democracy

It is self-evident that the EU has democratic legitimacy. We firmly reject assertions that this is not the case, no matter which end of the political spectrum they come from. But like any democracy, European democracy has weaknesses which we want to clearly identify and eradicate. All too often, European democracy gains legitimacy too one-sidedly via the actions of national governments instead of via the European Parliament. We want to change that. We want the European Parliament, as the only directly elected EU institution, to become the central forum for all European decisions and to gain the right to put forward its own legislative proposals. It must remain the sole parliament representing all EU citizens and thus also for the EU and its currency, the euro. We reject any form of separate parliament for the euro. In addition, it must be possible for the European Commission and its President to be voted out of office by a majority of Members of the European Parliament, similarly to the German Parliament’s mechanism of a constructive vote of no-confidence, rather than the two-thirds majority which is required at present. We also want to strengthen the national parliaments by enshrining rights to receive information in the treaties which will enable them to better influence and scrutinise the actions taken by their own governments in Brussels.

While the European Parliament operates more transparently than the Bundestag and the Bundesrat, for example by holding public committee meetings, there is very little transparency in the decision-making processes of the heads of government, the national ministers in the Council or the Eurogroup. Time and again, lobbyists manage to exert considerable influence on European legislation. That said, lobbyists who seek to assert their interests are not objectionable in themselves. What is objectionable are the actions of the minority of politicians who give greater weight to these special interests than the common good.

One key to strengthening European democracy is greater transparency – even if the procedures in the EU institutions are in some cases already more transparent than those at national level. At present, the Council only meets in public if it is deliberating or voting on legislation; that does not go far enough. The Council should meet in public as a matter of principle, and transparency should be introduced for its preparatory bodies. As a rule, minutes and non-papers should also be public. The same applies to the Eurogroup. This would make positions, debates and the search for compromises more transparent from the outset. Negotiations on EU legislation between the Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission (trilogues) must also become more transparent.

We want to bring greater transparency to lobbying. Unlike at state and federal level in Germany, the European Parliament and the European Commission already have a lobby register. However, it is not binding. We therefore want, at all levels of political decision-making, binding lobby registers, stricter cooling-off periods, and a “legislative footprint” which makes it easier to monitor what influence third parties have had on EU legislation – whether in dealings with national or European Members of Parliament, Commission officials, national civil servants or members of national governments.

Our Europe is one of lively, open and democratic debate in parliaments and society to determine the best political strategies. We want European decisions to be based on European debates. For many European citizens, the EU seems very distant. That must change. It would be better if the European Parliament had far fewer sitting weeks in Strasbourg and Brussels and instead had more time for European policy at local level. To raise the profile of key actors in the EU, the parties should continue to put forward candidates for the office of President of the Commission in European elections. We also support transnational lists. To this end, the national parties, in particular, must at last embrace fundamental change, participate in a genuine European party democracy, and help to strengthen the role of the European Parliament as the forum of European democracy.

We are championing a European democracy in which each and every European can exert influence, participate in political life and help to shape decisions. That is why we want to dismantle unnecessarily high hurdles for democratic participation mechanisms. This applies to the European Citizens' Initiative, for example; we also want to examine whether it can in future be developed into a mechanism for a genuine European popular initiative. Looking to the future, EU citizenship should also evolve further to become a European nationality, so that EU citizens enjoy full civil rights in the Member States in which they live.

Overcoming the economic and financial crisis together: in support of a more social and more just EU

The last few years of severe economic and financial crisis have been a clear wake-up call, highlighting the fact that the EU is still not sufficiently crisis-resistant and capable of taking action. That must change. Several steps have already been taken in the right direction, with the banking union, the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) and the EU investment fund. But these steps do not yet go far enough: the EU must reform or further develop its institutions and existing structures and instruments. To overcome the consequences of the crisis, a sensible, three-fold approach is needed, consisting of investment in the future, structural reforms and budget consolidation. And we want to counter the severe social crisis in parts of Europe by taking measures to promote social participation and greater social justice in the EU.

In structural terms, the European Parliament should have an equal role in decision-making to that of the Council or the Eurogroup when it comes to the economic and monetary union. To prepare for this in an efficient manner, a special committee on euro issues with special rights to receive information should be set up. MEPs would be able to participate in this committee irrespective of their nationality. We are calling for a member of the European Commission to be given all competences and a right of veto in relation to the economic and monetary union. This person should be elected and dismissed individually by the European Parliament, and should chair the Eurogroup and the Economic and Financial Affairs Council (ECOFIN). This “double hat” would ensure that the President of the Eurogroup is accountable to the European Parliament.

Rectifying mistakes – reducing imbalances – expanding social security

Many mistakes, some of them serious, were made during the financial and economic crisis – by national governments, the Troika and the Eurogroup. One of these mistakes was the short-sighted European austerity policy. In addition, too little was done to boost the economy, alongside necessary structural reforms and

austerity measures. These mistakes must be rectified. We need a permanent pathway out of the crisis in the form of socially just structural reforms, sustainable budget consolidation and a new economic dynamism brought about by sustainable investment in the future – at national and European level.

The current crises and the lack of financial resources for adequate European responses show the need for a reform of the EU's own resources. We want the EU, rather than continuing to be dependent on the goodwill of the EU Member States, to be given stable and adequate own resources, allowing greater transparency and democratic scrutiny with regard to the EU budget, replacing the current rebate arrangements for individual countries, and at the same time facilitating environmental leadership to promote attainment of climate targets. We want to drive forward the social and environmental transformation of the European economy, including by creating a new Future Fund in the EU budget, financed by a European tax package, which will facilitate investments in the future which are coordinated and financed at European level. In addition, we want to discuss what form a fiscal capacity for the economic and monetary union could take, in the framework of the EU budget and under the oversight of the European Parliament. For example, no EU Member State should be categorically excluded; it should do more to promote joint investment; it should respond to economic and asymmetric shocks; it should foster structural reforms; and it should be linked to political objectives.

We are pressing for economic imbalances in the EU to be reduced more effectively than has previously been the case, and for economic governance to be strengthened via what is known as the European Semester. To reduce excessive debt, we continue to support binding European rules in conjunction with the establishment of a debt repayment fund, involving European bonds, for existing debt. In addition, the European Stability Mechanism should be upgraded to become a European Monetary Fund (EMF) under the oversight of the European Parliament. The Troika, as it is known, must be subject to more transparent and stronger parliamentary scrutiny until its replacement by an EMF. The banking union must be completed, a capital markets union must be developed, and joint action against tax avoidance and evasion must be stepped up significantly in order to improve the revenue side.

Although the economic situation in crisis-hit countries may have gradually improved, with imbalances being reduced, unemployment figures in decline – albeit still at a high level – financing conditions for companies becoming more favourable and competitiveness improving, there is no overlooking the fact that many sections of the population are still not benefiting enough from this. And the situation remains extremely fragile. Unforeseen events or changes in the oil price, the euro exchange rate or interest rates could jeopardise the slight stabilisation which has taken place and make new bailouts necessary. The younger generation, in particular, must urgently be given the prospect of escaping from crisis mode. Otherwise, the credibility of the EU's promise of prosperity and social participation for all will be severely undermined.

However, the European level currently has few competences in the social field, as the EU Member States do not want to hand over responsibility for their social security systems. When we discuss how to achieve a more social Europe, we must begin by answering the question of how much power we want to surrender to the European level. In our view, key first steps which are possible using current EU competences include: transfers, financed on the basis of solidarity, to EU projects to promote social, environmental and economic cohesion in the EU, as an investment in our common European future; further binding targets in social policy; greater coordination and minimum standards in the field of social security and the labour market; and a minimum income directive setting out standards for basic income support benefits in the individual Member States. Freedom of movement must be subject to better social protection. All EU citizens seeking work in an EU Member State should receive support to ensure that they have a chance in the labour market and are given access in principle to basic income support benefits. We want to tackle the worryingly high level of youth unemployment by means of a more effective EU Youth Guarantee, among other measures. Our single market goes hand in hand with common rules which make the EU more than just a free-trade zone. The EU is often criticised for red tape and regulatory overreach. But in a single market with free movement of goods, services and capital, and in which people are less flexible, rules are quite simply necessary in order to prevent lower standards leading to dumping and competitive disadvantages for certain countries. This includes rules on maternity protection or working time.

We are convinced that Europe will only hold together if society in Europe holds together. That is why we are pressing, at European level and in the individual Member States, for a shift towards more social policies.

Our Green New Deal for Europe's future

We Greens are campaigning for a better tomorrow in a fair world which is worth living in – for everyone, everywhere. We want economies which serve the people now and in the future, which distribute prosperity and opportunities more fairly, and which respect the environmental limits of our shared planet. For the EU to make a suitable contribution to this, it needs a Green New Deal which tackles economic, environmental and social problems equally. Europe does not need to reinvent itself, but rather return to what it stood for over many years, namely an ambitious environmental policy which is also visible at local level. Almost all of the key rights which members of the public can use to make their voices heard in the field of environmental protection are based on European legislation: a right for environmental associations to take legal action, the no-deterioration principle for water bodies, or the large protected areas for flora, fauna, habitats and birds, brought together in the cross-border Natura 2000 sites. Given that water and air do not stop at national borders, almost no one would consider regulating this area at national level. So it is all the more disastrous that the current European Commission, acting on instructions from the heads of state and government, now intends to wield the axe of deregulation in this area. We Greens want to prevent this.

We are campaigning for a European climate and energy union with ambitious targets for renewables, emission reductions and energy conservation, as well as high environmental standards to encourage innovation. In this context, the EU must also live up to its responsibility to comply with the Paris climate agreement. Significantly higher levels of investment are needed, not only in these areas, but also with regard to rail infrastructure, high-speed internet, and education and research. Only science and research can produce the innovations which Europe needs for greater progress. European support for research must therefore be much more focused on research to promote a social and environmental transformation and to solve major challenges facing society.

We need a European industrial strategy focused on resource and energy efficiency, digitalisation, new production technologies and the circular economy. A realignment is needed through active divestment, including in the public finances: a shift away from financing the destruction of our planet and towards a low-carbon economy which is better for the environment and climate. To prevent a few countries from blocking essential progress, we regard this as a suitable area for enhanced cooperation.

In agricultural and food policy, we are pursuing the aim of a consistent realignment which reflects European objectives in climate, environmental, consumer and development policy, and which sustainably shapes and fosters the potential and prospects of rural areas. Already, a large number of regionally based farms which take a traditional and organic approach and prioritise animal welfare and environmental protection are demonstrating that a different kind of agriculture is possible. Yet the required investment in corresponding agricultural research is lacking, as are the necessary decisions to bring about a social and environmental transformation of the agricultural sector.

And we want a European digital package which focuses on social and ethically compatible automation and digitalisation, and which provides special support for the European IT sector's strengths – for example, in relation to secure, privacy-friendly and open technical standards.

Overcoming national egoism – in support of a solidarity-based and humane EU asylum policy

The people fleeing poverty, terror and war are, regrettably, leading many governments to call into question the open borders within Europe or even to unilaterally close them. But this challenge will not be solved by building new border fences, which has a detrimental effect on consumers, jobs and companies, all of which benefit from open borders. What is needed instead is a commitment to Schengen as one of the fundamental pillars of the EU, and, at last, a common, solidarity-based and humane EU asylum policy which places the rights of those seeking protection centre stage. At the heart of such a policy is a fair and permanent refugee relocation system, with all Member States gradually coming to participate in a spirit of solidarity. Recognised refugees should, after a transitional period, be entitled to free movement within the EU in accordance with the same rules as EU citizens. For there to be a return to positive steps in this direction, a group of Member States will have to take the lead. Germany must press for this, while at the same time ensuring that its Central European partners are involved or, at least, do not feel offended. When it comes to the relocation of refugees, factors such as asylum seekers' language skills or family ties should be taken into consideration. This will have a positive impact on their chances of integration, which we want to support by developing an

integration structure in the EU Member States. In all efforts to harmonise asylum procedures within the EU, it must be ensured that the aim is a high level of protection and decent reception conditions, and not, for example, a lowering of standards or the introduction of coercive measures. Looking to the future, we need a uniform asylum procedure based on common rules which fully implement the provisions of international law relating to refugees and give the fullest possible expression to the human rights of those seeking protection. Recourse to the courts to appeal against asylum decisions must be guaranteed throughout the EU, and the needs of particularly vulnerable refugees must be considered.

Rather than striving to achieve the illusory goal of a Fortress Europe, we advocate a border regime which is based on shared protection of human rights, which guarantees legal certainty and which boosts confidence in the Schengen system. Legal and safe pathways to Europe must be enhanced, targeted family reunification and resettlement must be boosted, and greater capacities must be directed towards joint sea rescue operations.

Turkey, as the biggest host and transit country for those fleeing the Syrian war zone, is an important partner for Europe on refugee policy matters. The EU therefore has an obligation to work together with Turkey and other countries in the region to improve the situation of millions of refugees. That said, we oppose the agreement with Turkey in its current form, especially the one-for-one scheme, which ties the number of people seeking protection who are taken in by the EU to the number of refugees returned to Turkey from Greece. It shifts the EU Member States' humanitarian responsibility to Greece and an increasingly autocratically governed Turkey, and leads to inhumane conditions for the refugees. It must not be part of the deal for Europe to now look away and remain silent as human and fundamental rights are violated on a massive scale in Turkey, for example by the deportation of Syrian refugees to Syria. Likewise, the EU-Turkey deal must on no account become a blueprint for further questionable agreements with third countries, such as those currently being sought with Horn of Africa countries in the framework of the Khartoum and Rabat Processes and following the Valletta Summit.

To ensure that fewer people are forced to flee terror, war and poverty, the EU must also contribute to a more just and sustainable world through good development cooperation and sensitive and coherent policies. All EU Member States should engage in better coordination with each other in this process: harmonising their strategies will boost the effectiveness of their joint action in the Global South. To ensure that Europe remains a credible partner for developing countries, the target of investing 0.7% of the budget in development must be met.

European action to boost security and freedom in times of terror

We Greens support a greater role for Europe in internal and external security. Following the horrifying attacks in Paris and Brussels, there was an enormous amount of solidarity between the EU Member States. But there were also reflexive calls for the generalisation of surveillance measures, for example in the aviation sector. We take the view that more European cooperation on security policy would be a much more concrete contribution to greater security. The EU Member States are called upon to cooperate more effectively and to make more money and personnel available for meaningful investigations. Instead of restricting Europeans' freedom by creating a surveillance apparatus which operates without reasonable suspicion of wrongdoing and by taking the dangerous and sweeping step of bringing together all collections of data, existing structures should be used and all important information about suspects should be transmitted in good time and in full. This is how the EU Member States can achieve greater security for the people of the EU.

The police, security authorities and intelligence services must cooperate more effectively at European level, but they require a clear EU framework based on the rule of law. Common standards for fundamental rights and parliamentary oversight must therefore finally be introduced in the field of "national security". In addition, authorities must be better equipped for cross-border cooperation in concrete cases. For example, joint investigative teams at Europol and Eurojust, including and in particular in the field of counterterrorism, must be strengthened to ensure that Europe's local and regional security authorities also cooperate more closely here in future. To this end, we need additional financial resources and personnel for coordination, information platforms and translation.

Nor can Europe forgo more effective cooperation on external security. What is needed is better coordination in the use of existing capabilities. We oppose any requirement for the EU countries to meet the constantly

repeated but nonetheless unrealistic demand for military budgets to be increased to 2% of GDP. We argue that capabilities in the field of security should be pooled instead of further public money being wasted on armaments. Capacities and capabilities to promote peace, human rights and the rule of law must be expanded.

Defending European values

European values are damaged by a debate in which national egoism outweighs the common European interest. In addition, the crises we are facing have further inflamed existing right-wing prejudices. We are seeing more and more nationalist populists using the current crises to score points by offering seemingly simple national solutions. In doing so, they know and accept that they are helping to destroy Europe's economic advantages and social opportunities. We are therefore resolutely opposing the anti-Europeans and right-wing populists at national and European level. For us, it is a fact that Europe is not a battle between nations. It is about more than economic advantages, the distribution of money and the negotiation of national rebates. Today more than ever, Europe represents the hope of a better life in the eyes of millions of people.

Europe is based on universal values: respect for human dignity, democracy, individual freedom, human rights, equality, the rule of law. And Europe must be measured by its own aspirations, its aims and values: whether internally, when it comes to solidarity in the Europe-wide relocation of refugees, or externally, for example when it comes to shaping a fair global trade policy. And only by shouldering greater responsibility with a Common Foreign and Security Policy can Europe make the world fairer and more peaceful. The EU therefore needs a long-term foreign-policy strategy which identifies Europe's challenges, its responsibility and its interests in the world and which pursues the aims of the protection of human rights, the responsibility to protect, civilian crisis prevention, action to tackle the causes of refugee flows, a strengthening of the International Criminal Court, and multinational cooperation. We want the Common Foreign and Security Policy to be dovetailed more closely with accession procedures and the European Neighbourhood Policy, to allow coherent political impetus to be provided outside of technocratic negotiations. EU enlargement must remain possible in principle, rather than the EU ruling out further accessions and thus undermining the commitment to reform in many countries.

And looking within the EU, the same principle applies: Europe will only be able to live up to its bedrock of values if the national democracies in the EU are functioning properly. It is therefore important to express clear criticism of governments which diverge from this bedrock of values, without calling into question our friendship with the country concerned. After all, patronising attitudes and crude populism are often grist to the mill of those who stir up resentment of others and of Europe. The EU should not look away if individual governments seek to weaken democracy in their own countries. The existing Rule of Law Mechanism is a first step to engaging in dialogue with governments about shortcomings. However, it urgently needs to be upgraded to become an effective European instrument for conducting regular reviews of the rule of law in all Member States.

We Greens want to hold Europe together: Yes to Europe – Let's have the courage to change

In spite of all the enormous challenges of our times, we will not forget that Europe has gifted us the freedom to live together peacefully in all our diversity. In our view, that is a historic achievement, and we do not want that to change. We therefore regard it as self-evident that we should continue to build our common European home, and to identify and address weaknesses in its structure and in the implementation of its values. We know that some of our proposals would require changes to the EU treaties. We do not want necessary treaty amendments to be the subject of backroom politics, however; they should instead be discussed and drawn up in the framework of a European Convention, in a public, democratic and citizen-friendly process.

We are campaigning for European democracy to be strengthened. We want Europe to be more sustainable, solidarity-based and fair, with a greater sense of responsibility towards the rest of the world and its own citizens.