

Volt

Mapping
of Policies

Eighth Edition
August 2021

FUTURE  MADE IN EUROPE

The following document is a constantly evolving work that outlines the policies proposed by Volt Europa. This is not a political programme.

The eighth version (published on 10 August 2021) was written by around 200 team members from across the continent, with input from a range of experts, and was drafted to provide guidelines for Volt's national chapters to craft programmes and ensure consistency.

The policy team has started a round of consultations with various stakeholders to hone our policies. This version was nevertheless released for transparency purposes and to enable us to receive valuable feedback, while showcasing what we stand for.

At the national level, the teams will develop specific policies based on this initial document by prioritizing issues, adapting them to national realities, translating the document, and assessing the financial validity in their specific national context.

This is a living document: our members are filing amendments and are continuously working to improve it. It will regularly be updated, so do not hesitate to check it once in a while, to see how we grow. For any feedback or input, please contact policy@volteuropa.org

The Policy Team of Volt

Disclaimer: Think of our planet, do not print this document! You can find a print-friendly version on our [website](#).

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Smart State

Challenge 1 - Smart State

Vision

European citizens and residents expect their governments and public institutions to provide effective and efficient high-quality public services as well as transparent public administrations. Europe, over decades of integration, has set a standard of quality in public provision, allowing for an unprecedented high quality of life for citizens and a unique European social model.

However, in the wake of the economic crisis, growing inequality, and emerging technologies, trust in public institutions has disintegrated, while endemic corruption and inefficiency continue to plague public life.

For Volt, public service is intended to primarily benefit the citizens and residents of the State. We hold as core tenants the principles of management by objectives, transparency, accountability, citizen empowerment, and subsidiarity in the allocation of competencies.

Volt will work to ensure that across Europe, public institutions in the member states of the European Union are reformed with state-of-the-art technology and new thinking to tackle years of economic crises, and in some cases, decades of neglect.

In times of transformation, governments must adapt to enable every citizen to fully participate in and contribute to society, and provide for maximal social inclusion and mobility. Smart States must adopt new tools to earn their citizens' trust through accountable, transparent, and efficient governance. Volt will invest in our common future, including not only innovative public services to cut waste, but also innovative education systems, quality healthcare, and effective justice to combat corruption. Together, we can use technology for common prosperity.

I. Administrative effectiveness to reduce waste and improve service quality

Digital technology affects nearly every aspect of our daily lives and must start playing a key role in the way our countries are governed. Volt wants to digitise public services to reduce waste, cut inefficiencies and corruption, ensure transparency and security, and make the State a true servant of its citizens.

Smart State

A. Digital revolution

Make digital solutions the backbone of our administration, providing key tools to improve both internal processes (back-end) and external services (front-end), reducing inefficiencies, and strengthening relations between administrations and citizens. Digital tools must be embedded in every policy decision as a means and not an end.

Use proven and emerging technologies to provide public services with a user-centric approach, facilitate and monitor transactions as well as citizens' data storage. Examples of innovative services are e-Taxation, digital ID, e-Voting, e-Health and e-Residency, which can be pursued through emerging technologies such as blockchain ledgers.

1. In Public Administration

Create paperless administration wherever it does not exist. Volt will aim to create an infrastructure for completely [paperless processes](#) {1}, as well as harmonised information and [communication technologies \(ICT\) standards](#) {2} in order to reduce waste and to implement efficient services guaranteeing increasing interoperability between databases, platforms and applications. Each action pursuing this goal will take into account three elements:

organization, tools (and the external supplier providing them), and the government-citizen relationship. New and improved services will be easily usable and accessible from different devices at the same time. Public entities will reengineer their internal processes, adapting them to new tools, organisations and applications. Finally, services will be interconnected through the use of homogeneous standards.

Create safe and effective digital infrastructure to enable innovation.

Improvements in digital infrastructure will be prioritised to meet the future needs of the private sector and of the general public.

- The introduction of fibre optic networks will be accelerated to boost internet speed; internet coverage will also be [significantly improved](#) {3}.
- [City sensors](#) {4}, community wi-fi and consolidated infrastructures will be implemented to achieve cost efficiency and guarantee service coverage. This will also enable greater use of shared platforms to provide administrative services (i.e. HR and Financial management) {5.1,5.2}, as well as individual services like cloud usage.

Smart State

- All new technologies will be vetted using a [Proof of Concept {6}](#) model to test their usefulness before implementation.

2. In e-Governance

Foster the adoption of electronic identification and trust services for electronic transactions and [digital signatures {7}](#), speeding up the processes such as signing electronic rent contracts, accessing confidential files, and submitting online taxation. Blockchain ledgers could foster the diffusion of digital identity across Europe, and their adoption is supported by use cases and pilot studies that have already taken place [{8.1,8.2}](#).

- Ensure all pilot studies include requirements of at least double authentication (e.g. through a PIN1, PIN2 system).

Diffuse the Estonian e-Residency model to allow non-EU actors to establish businesses that can operate within the single market of the European Union [{9}](#).

Use big data and predictive analytic systems to better tailor policies and government services to citizens' needs {10}. This data should be used during policy formulation for all policy, while at all times upholding the highest standards of privacy,

data protection, and protecting fundamental rights.

Use open data to increase government transparency and provide citizens and enterprises with information that either increases accountability and efficient governance or may be used for research interests. Organise hackathons where data is made available to allow developers to create innovative solutions and increase the cybersecurity of public infrastructure.

3. In Healthcare

Diffuse e-healthcare practices at the national level, ensuring [patients' records {11}](#) and their clinical histories can be easily shared among hospitals and general practitioners, and implement transnational e-prescription policies to ensure easy and secure access to prescribed medication for [citizens that live, work or otherwise, are abroad {12}](#). Emerging technologies such as blockchain ledgers can support the development of these digital services [{13}](#).

Develop a public e-booking system for specialists to reduce costly waiting lists, as it already exists for private healthcare insurance.

4. In the Law

Make legal proceedings more accessible.

Governments need to be accountable for each document that is produced with regards to legal proceedings, exploiting the emerging technologies to adequately store it and share it with all the [involved stakeholders](#) {14}. Facilitating the right of access to documents or information held by public administrations will make the actions of public bodies transparent and guarantee the protection of legitimate interests and citizens' rights. Moreover, emerging technologies, such as blockchain ledgers, will facilitate the protection of documents and information such as sensitive data or information concerning public order. This would make it more difficult to deny an applicant's request to access in order to protect opaque interests.

5. In Security

[Pursue the usage of blockchain ledgers](#)

{15}, such as the KSI Blockchain, to make data manipulation impossible, making donations to public actors transparent and traceable.

B. Talents and Reputation

Revive, strengthen, and reward motivation and performance among civil servants to increase responsiveness to the changing environment and to citizens' needs. Foster an agile environment to stimulate civil servants' performance, growth and career opportunities.

[Set up innovation teams](#) {16} within local and central administrations.

These "i-teams" will develop digital solutions to tackle the most pressing issues for their constituency, and then monitor their implementation. These teams will combine digital and service design competencies, ensuring that new tools and services fit citizens' capabilities and needs {17}. Public sector digitisation must be considered as a means, not an end.

Facilitate new skill learning in public sector jobs.

Public bodies will provide a wide range of training courses to their employees, enabling them to develop the project management and IT skills that are required in such a rapidly changing environment. All civil servants will have these competencies certified. Civil servants can experience and learn from private sector dynamics by participating in "public-private sector exchanges".

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Diffuse the position-based recruitment system in public administration

{18.1,18.2} across Europe to attract talent from all backgrounds and professions within ministries and public bodies: people from differing careers offer specific skills. Special entry points for young talent may include programs launching specific challenges aimed at [hiring those that respond best to these tests](#) {19}.

Introduce a management-by-objectives system

composed of financial and non-financial incentives to improve civil servant performance and accelerate the career paths of strong professionals. The performance will be evaluated based on outcomes.

Introduce attractive, fair compensation for all civil servants as well as high-quality entry-level positions in the public sector.

C. Shared Competences

Identify and avoid inefficient or ineffective duplication of shared competencies at all levels of public administration to clarify accountability and decision-making processes. Decision-makers must be accountable to their constituents for the use of public funds and their outcomes. Clear and demarcated competence allocation between bureaucracies at state, regional and local levels fosters greater

accountability from political representatives.

Apply the subsidiarity principle to ensure the most effective and efficient distribution of administrative and legal competencies at the local, national, and EU level.

D. Glass State

Ensure full transparency in the use of public resources: how they are accounted for, where they come from and how they are spent. Monitor tendering processes to make certain that public procurement delivers [“best value for money” \(BVM\)](#) {20}. Competitive proposals for the delivery of public services ensure better outcomes for citizens while a transparent system limits fraud.

Exploit the role of the European Court of Auditors in the governance of National Audit Offices

for better use of public finances, both at the European and national level, aiming to homogenize the public sector accounting standard {21.1,21.2} and [share best practices among countries](#) {22} (i.e. production of Whole of Government Accounts (WGA) at a national level {23}). The Court should guarantee public finances are used to correctly and efficiently implement policies, monitoring

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coherence between policy design and policy implementation.

Increase the power of National Audit Offices {24} to review the activities, size, and objectives of public sector entities and public policy programmes without compromising on speed and quality of services. They should perform periodic independent assessments of all public property and enterprises to test their effectiveness and increase efficiency, and trial innovative public finance and budgeting techniques.

Centralize procurement processes or use aggregation vehicles like framework agreements and consolidated contracts to gain from bigger scales. Integrate the existing central platform for **public procurement (TED)** {25} with national **e-procurement platforms** {26}, ensuring interoperability and data exchange to enable cross-national bids and weaken existing lock-in effects.

Improve market knowledge {27}, for instance through research and Pre-Commercial Procurement practices, to better define public sector needs in multi-annual and annual procurement planning.

Foster better, more effective and transparent use of Public-Private

Partnerships (PPP) and results-based outsourcing only in cases of a clear benefit for citizens, when market externalities, such as environmental and societal impacts, accountability, and possible perverse incentives are accounted for. Carry out thorough impact assessments for important outsourcing initiatives with a potentially large impact on public welfare. Public provision of services must also be evaluated on that same thorough basis as PPP.

Establish and expand the use of cooperatives and mutuels in the provision of public goods and services in order to increase democratic accountability, citizen participation, and effective delivery and joint ownership {28.1, 28.2}.

II. **Build an enabling education system for the future**

Education is a force for fostering social mobility and inclusion, as well as the **foundation to unite people in a vibrant and dynamic democracy**, and of open pluralistic societies. Europe is facing extremely diverse regional education challenges. Volt will ensure that schools are the most inspiring, safe, attractive and stimulating workplaces. With the aim of creating **equal opportunities and access to high-quality education**, Volt aims to

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enable reflective and responsible development for every single child living in the European Union. Volt will also support extracurricular learning as well as informal and non-formal education. **Lifelong learning and vocational training** must be available to all throughout their professional and personal lives, in order to offer people opportunities regardless of age. There will be a strong emphasis on early-age education. Finally, there must be **greater investment in European higher education, along with research and development.** High-quality higher education must be accessible and available to everybody, irrespective of background. In order to enable every citizen to participate in and contribute to society, education must provide the necessary ingredients for rich personal development and create versatile opportunities for European citizens.

In order to build a system that empowers citizens to partake in and contribute to society, education requires major reforms to develop the basic skills for a participatory society, stimulate civic engagement, and foster and reward excellence. As it is Volt's founding principle to form policy based on best practices, we regard Finland's effective school reform as an example to emulate. Its key achievements include an emphasis on pre-primary education, providing resources for high-quality teacher training and

adequate pay for teachers, short school hours, and a light homework load, in addition to providing free meals and free transport to school. Volt considers these the foundation for the future of learning. Let's work together to transform schools into a safe harbour for knowledge, inspiration and enlightenment for students and teachers alike.

A. Pre-Primary Education

While public institutions will support and complement parents in a variety of ways, parents will always remain the primary entity responsible for the welfare of a child. The objectives of early childhood education are to support children's growth towards becoming ethically responsible members of society, to provide children with the knowledge and skills necessary in life, and to improve children's learning conditions. Therefore, there is a need to increase its quality and accessibility.

Ensure preschools and kindergartens are accessible to all children for free. {29}

Creative playful pre-primary education: Volt will place a strong focus on early education, echoing the [Finnish model](#) {30}. Early childhood education and care programs (e.g. mentoring programs) such as those found in Finland provide positive

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role models and improve the [development of children](#) {31}.

Establish rehabilitation working groups made of representatives from health care services, members of the voluntary and statutory sector, child guidance and family counselling and the school sector. These groups exist to organise daycare for children in need of special care and education, to support the [monitoring of growth and learning](#) {32}.

Ensure access to programmes for children under 6 years old such as speech therapy courses and support from child psychologists.

Guarantee a high Europe-wide standard of parental, paternity, and maternity leave. After the period of maternity and paternity leave, either one or both of the parents may take parental leave. The duration of parental leave should be a minimum of 26 weeks and may be taken in a continuous period, which an employer cannot refuse, or in a discontinuous period, which the employer can refuse. Similar to maternity and paternity allowance, [parental allowance is equivalent to income earned](#) {33}.

B. Primary and Secondary Education

Primary and secondary education require special attention because they are key determinants for social inequality. Volt aims to develop a truly comprehensive system that will generate more informed, involved and empowered citizens to close the inequality gap.

1. Citizens basics

Provide free, healthy, daily school meals to all students to break the cycle of hunger and child poverty. Access to free meals has nutritional, learning, and health benefits, and supports [productivity and educational success](#) {34}.

Ensure that high-quality internet connection access and connectivity to technology {35}, in terms of the fastest available mobile network connections and wifi, reach rural areas and other marginalised communities as soon as possible. This is absolutely vital for children's education, as it provides quick access to information from a wide variety of sources, which must go hand in hand with critical thinking skills.

Strengthen the educational system by expanding the funding of public schools

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in urban and rural areas. Give every child the possibility to attend a well-developed school.

Create special programs of integration for migrant children to help them adjust to a new culture, language, and environment.

2. Innovative approach and techniques

Make education effective & accessible for a wider range of student abilities and talents. Investigate long term trends and regularly update curricula to be in line with our changing societies, support the development of new tools and education parameters.

Invest in research to find better and more creative ways to teach, like phenomenon-based learning: [teaching by topic {36}](#), peer-to-peer learning, more experimental approaches, value-based education, and competence thinking to facilitate creativity and imagination. Empower every child to build on strengths while securing minimum standards, and encourage children to learn through [leadership, participation and civic awareness {37}](#).

Introduce new approaches to measure the success of schools, such as student

enrollment/dropout rates; staff retention and professional development; and school connectivity via funding raised from philanthropy, parent engagement and community satisfaction metrics. Aim to have no more than 20 pupils per teacher at all schools.

Incentivise the development of digital skills, both in early education and in preparation for the professional realm (coding classes etc.).

Strengthen the educational system through improved online courses and make the best education available for everyone, especially for students living in remote areas.

Review neuroscientific and biological research papers on learning {38}, attention and concentration, e.g. concerning class times, exam times etc. and experiment with new structures of class times.

3. Curriculum reform

Ensure English fluency, as English is the undisputed lingua franca in international communication. Simultaneously put a greater focus on the mastery of the native language to allow for adequate public engagement within local communities.

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Emphasise Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) subjects, that will be offered in English, and actively connected to arts and creativity.

Focus on citizenship education and how a political system works, from the local council to the national government and the European Union. Make citizenship education a priority.

Introduce a “life competencies and responsibility” mandatory subject 1h per week in the last two years of secondary school which will cover content such as economics and basic financial literacy, legal basics, social competencies, sustainability, healthy lifestyle, as well as the cooperation of the schools with their local environment.

Reform educational programmes and curricula, so that they actively teach tolerance and inter-cultural dialogue, citizen engagement, and overcoming prejudices, and promoting democratic values. Prioritise courses for gender equality, overcoming gender stereotypes and discrimination as well as sex and relationship education.

Increase education on mental health and well-being that must address the challenges that persons of all age groups face in a world of constant connectivity,

socio-economic marginalisation and online bullying and harassment.

Introduce classes on media literacy that explore creativity and empathy through film, drama and art.

Increase the emphasis on learning skills and competencies, e.g. oral communication, public speaking and written skills.

C. Teacher satisfaction

Attract more qualified people to become teachers that stay motivated in their job by raising the reputation of and compensation for this important profession.

Support annual education summits {40} held by the European Union.

Reform teacher training by offering more practical experience, reviewing the conditions of admission and supporting lateral entrants.

Extracurricular engagement and overtime should be paid or compensated.

Invest in emotional support, counselling, psychological guidance and care for teachers provided by specialized staff and

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in close collaboration with local medical facilities.

Prioritise investments in schools and teachers in marginalised communities facing social exclusion.

Encourage and reward long term commitment by teachers. Give teachers and education practitioners greater say and a voice in setting education policy.

Place an emphasis on teaching for and through creativity, with new work structures, and working environments. Introduce evaluation schemes based on 360° Feedback.

D. Buildings and Infrastructure

Turn education centres into community focal points for the exchange of ideas.

Invest in new or renovated facilities and buildings [{41}](#) that facilitate skill learning for modern markets, such as networking, within their architecture, when possible. Functional versions of these concepts already exist; we just have to spread them all over Europe. Orestad high school from Copenhagen is one such example.

E. Higher and vocational education

In today's world, there is a demand for highly skilled and socially engaged people. In the period up to 2025, half of all jobs are projected to require high-level qualifications. Driven by digital technology, jobs are becoming more flexible and complex. People are required to manage complex information, think autonomously and creatively, use resources, including digital ones, communicate effectively, and the ability to be resilient is more crucial than ever. Creativity, and the ability to create links between and across disciplines, is crucial to personal development and to solving social problems. Every citizen should always be able to advance to a higher level of education, regardless of the choices they made at different stages in life. Volt aims to revive tertiary education with innovative policies aimed to keep up with emerging trends.

Expand Erasmus+ by significantly increasing the budget and increase accessibility, outreach, and awareness of the opportunities it provides. Currently, the information dissemination of the program happens through the Directorate General for Education And Culture (DG EAC's) platform, but we want to ensure more collaboration with national and regional institutions to reach out to the

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places that would benefit the most from this exchange. Since the start of Erasmus+ in 2014, [over 2 million people have participated](#) {44} in the programme.

Expand Erasmus Pro for apprenticeships, and ensure it reaches people from all walks of life and all socioeconomic backgrounds in both educational and professional programmes. 30 years on, the Erasmus Programme has proven itself, and expanding it is a worthwhile investment in Europe's future.

Facilitate intersectoral mobility between universities and other higher education facilities on the one hand, and the private and third sector on the other. This would stimulate the exchange of different perspectives and allow highly skilled individuals to pursue a flexible career.

Establish an award for best teacher(s) in the EU.

Open discussions on how to design the university of the future, concerning topics such as open access for all residents of a given region, as well as through online lectures.

Enable the pursuit of education by offering scholarship opportunities to post-baccalaureate and mature students

who wish to return for further studies to foster lifelong learning.

F. Excellence

Create centres of excellence across selected universities and high schools to gain international recognition, attract talent, foster innovation, and create synergies with the private sector, if relevant, while maintaining academic freedom and the integrity of the educational system.

Invest in universities located in economically disadvantaged areas to attract students and resources.

Invest in education centres connected to local artisanship and excellence (e.g. Napoli school for tailors/dairy producers).

Involve companies and civil society in the design of selected classes and seminars in order to ensure that necessary skills are created, and achieve a greater degree of mobility between learning institutions.

III. Make high-quality healthcare available for everyone

In line with the World Health Organisation (WHO), Volt defines health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being rather than merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Mental and physical diseases and disabilities need to be destigmatized in a mindful society. Volt believes that an efficient and sustainable healthcare system emphasises prevention rather than treatment, reducing the human and financial cost of disease management.

Based on these principles, Volt seeks to create a first-rate healthcare system. Volt will invest in improving universal access to healthcare. Everywhere across the continent, it should be possible to see a GP or specialist within a few days and obtain timely treatment (and to reduce costs of waiting lists). In addition to this, access to mental healthcare needs to be improved. Effective e-health tools need to become an integral part of healthcare providers to increase access to care. Moreover, Volt will allocate more resources to preventive healthcare, with a particular focus on lifestyle diseases, as well as children's health and resilience. Volt wants to create an efficient healthcare system where caregivers are empowered to provide the best care to suit a patient's needs and

desires. Overall, closer collaboration between medical professions concerning physical, mental, and social health will be key to improve the quality and efficiency of healthcare.

A. Alignment of European healthcare systems

Ensure universal coverage and access to healthcare for all European residents.

Develop European guidelines, based on benchmarking and "best-in-class" performance, **for waiting times, diagnostics, and treatments** to improve the quality of healthcare. To this end, Volt proposes to implement a system of [yearly public healthcare reviews](#) {45} incorporated into the European Semester (e.g. by cooperating with different research organisations like the Health Consumer Powerhouse).

Work towards an efficient and high-quality healthcare system, which requires continuous optimization of coordination and co-working between public institutions and healthcare providers and market players. Healthcare providers should not be (fully) run by (centralized) bureaucratic agencies but need to be independent and empowered to deliver the highest quality of care with minimal involvement of governments, politicians

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and bureaucrats in operational decisions. Instead, a multitude of organizationally independent healthcare and insurance providers should enable high-quality healthcare, where operational decisions are primarily made by medical professionals with patient co-participation. The state(s) should provide the necessary conditions for healthcare and insurance providers to function to a high standard, and set in place the legal and regulatory framework for healthcare financing to result in adequate universal coverage with affordable health care for all ([Bismarck style](#)) {46}. Given the multitude of healthcare systems across the continent, Volt is convinced that the optimal public-private coordination and division of tasks needs to be determined on a country-by-country and case-by-case basis.

Ensure Europe-wide coverage of health services to facilitate the mobility of European citizens by expanding existing healthcare agreements (e.g. by enabling an EU-wide e-booking system of specialised healthcare using the European Health Insurance Card – EHIC). Our long-term vision is that the EHIC would give EU citizens access to all types of healthcare throughout the EU.

Ensure world-class healthcare by enforcing evidence-based guidelines across the EU.

Introduce further harmonisation of the prescription and use of medicine across countries through the European Medical Agency (EMA). For example, a first priority is to reduce the large inter-country variation in antibiotic consumption, as overuse of antibiotics is increasingly leading to [pathogen resistance](#) {47}.

B. Access to healthcare

Reduce waiting times through roll-out of an e-booking system for specialists, with investment in more specialists and facilities.

Create a multi-professional approach by supporting the smart centralisation of specialised medical domains. Medical centres should provide a comprehensive point of contact for patients to consult physicians as well as psychiatrists, psychologists, social counsellors, speech therapists, physiotherapists and other medical professionals. Patient's medical data needs to be shared easily but securely and confidentially across healthcare domains so that healthcare professionals can deliver the best care to an individual.

- Physical centralisation is primarily necessary for rural areas; in cities, centralisation connects healthcare domains in a smart way through ICT.

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- Investments in telemedicine and e-health are required in order to provide an efficient and patient-friendly comprehensive point of contact with healthcare professionals.

Set up a European Health Express for rural areas or areas that don't have good access to healthcare, and invest in new ideas like [mobile clinics](#) {48} such as those used by the Red Cross or [Lifeline Express](#) {49}.

Ensure the European wide provision of mental health care services.

- Patients should have quick access to mental healthcare professionals through their GPs.
- Mental healthcare should increasingly also be offered via innovative e-health platforms, such as video consultations.
- Governments should play an active role in promoting mental healthcare. This would lower the threshold for patients to seek mental healthcare and forward the destigmatization of mental health problems.
- Work to eliminate stigma and mystification around mental illnesses like depression, and provide both early

and continued support as well as preventative measures.

- Take a holistic, "all of society approach" to mental health based on the [WHO Action Plan](#) {50}. State interventions regulating occupational conditions with respect to worker dignity, work-life balance, working hours, vacation time, and flexibility. Measures should be set in place to inform the workforce, to give them support in cases of distress, and to monitor the enforcement of workplace guidelines.

Ensure sufficient coverage of general practitioners and primary care units in economically challenged areas, especially in rural areas, by improving compensation for doctors in rural areas, facilitating medical services to difficult-to-reach areas through e-health, and other measures.

C. Focus on preventive healthcare

To deliver the best health outcomes and quality of life, Volt will focus on preventive healthcare. Many diseases are the result of long-term exposure to risk factors that can be partially controlled through better lifestyle choices, a cleaner living environment, and an increased focus on preventive healthcare, especially early in life. Volt believes that more resources

need to be dedicated to preventive healthcare in the following domains:

1. Lifestyle choices and diseases

Throughout Europe, lifestyle choices are major contributors to the total burden of disease {51.1,51.2}. Unhealthy lifestyle choices such as tobacco smoking, physical inactivity and poor diet are leading risk factors for ill-health, which can result in (chronic) conditions such as cancer, obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and premature death. Although people live longer, they do so with more disease, which negatively affects well-being and further drives increases in health expenditures. Therefore, a preventive lifestyle for both physical and mental/social well-being should be a focus in schools, companies, and public awareness campaigns. Regardless of socioeconomic position, all European residents should have access to first-rate preventive healthcare over the entire life cycle. This includes having access to affordable healthy nutrition.

Promote a healthy lifestyle by offering information on healthy lifestyle choices and regulating access to harmful and/or addictive substances. All European schools will provide up-to-date learning tools and practical classes on lifestyle choices.

Additionally, they will offer sufficient time and facilities for physical activity.

Further restrict access to tobacco for minors (i) by imposing an EU-wide prohibition on the legal purchase of tobacco products for those below 18 years old and (ii) better enforcement of the purchase restrictions (e.g. through sales licences and fines for vendors and underage buyers).

Increase taxation of tobacco-derived products {53} to disincentivize consumption. This is justified by the estimates that by 2020 tobacco would account for 10% of all deaths, and that smoking causes about 71% of lung cancer cases, 42% of chronic respiratory disease and nearly 10% of cardiovascular disease.

Increase taxes on alcohol, in combination with further policy measures to discourage consumption. This is justified by the across the board negative health consequences of alcohol consumption, including violence when under the influence of alcohol {54}.

Set European guidelines for physical activity in schools and the workplace {55}.

Explore and test tax reforms for a healthier diet, including:

- Increases in VAT on unhealthy foods including saturated fats, trans-fatty acids, and processed sugars.
- Decreases in VAT on healthy vegetables and fruits.

Provide European guidelines to educate children in schools on healthy diets.

Standardize or mandate vaccines for sexually transmitted infections such as human papillomavirus and Hepatitis B virus in state-sponsored vaccinations programs.

Provide affordable and accessible STI testing facilities for all.

Provide European guidelines for immunization programs for the elderly.

Work towards controlled decriminalization or legalisation of drugs. Portugal's progressive legislation and attitude towards drug addiction have shown that the current predominant model of a “war on drugs” has not and will not work. Volt intends to emulate Portugal's model and decriminalize all drug possession under a certain threshold. This will free up police resources to follow up on large scale drug smuggling and buyer victimization. It will enable European societies to treat addiction as a medical and [not a criminal problem](#) {56}.

2. Provide preventive healthcare programmes for minors

Monitoring health and development early in life enables effective interventions with long-term positive outcomes for health and well-being. Parents should receive support in making the best decisions for themselves during pregnancy and for their children concerning physical and mental healthcare, nutrition, exercise, and vaccinations. Research has shown the importance of early life interventions, and a comprehensive approach to early childhood development to improve long-term health and human capital outcomes for children has a high [“return-on-investment.”](#) {57}

Implement and set EU-wide standards for high-quality preventive healthcare programs for minors. Health care programs should monitor physical development as well as psychosocial, speech development, and socio-emotional skills through regular screenings. Through these programs, parents should get all the support needed to give their children the best possible start in life. Measures include:

- Providing prenatal care that ensures fair and safe conditions for newborns, conducting regular screening on mothers (e.g. examination of fetal

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karyotype, ultrasounds, education about substance abuse).

- Providing EU-wide guidelines on (i) the timing of preventive screenings/examinations over the life-cycle and (ii) essential preventive procedures/check-ups for each screening/examination.
- Smart targeting of at-risk minors for additional screenings.
- Sharing best practices and data between countries to improve national programs based on best practices. Although preventive healthcare programs for minors are in place in most European countries, health outcomes and access to preventive health care [vary considerably across Europe](#) {58}.
- Standardizing obligatory childhood immunization programmes for minors, following European guidelines.
- Providing the neonatal heel prick to detect genetic conditions among newborns (e.g. hypothyroidism, phenylketonuria, cystic fibrosis).
- Increasing coverage of preventive healthcare for minors through measures such as home visiting

programs during infancy and school visiting programs.

- Providing prevention programs for depression and anxiety to teenagers, as research has shown this to be effective in the [reduction of the symptoms of these conditions](#) {59}.

3. Reduce environmental risks

Global Climate Change, urban outdoor air pollution, and lead exposure account for nearly [2.4% of diseases and deaths globally](#) {60}. In order to lower the negative impact of those causes, Volt wants to:

Publicly monitor key variables indicative of environmental quality (e.g. air pollution using SO_x, NO_x and particulate matter levels, water quality (pH and harmful residual minerals such as limestone), in real-time to (1) inform citizens, (2) guide policy making, and (3) detect dangerous situations which might lead to diseases like thyroid carcinoma and mesotheliomas.

Take measures to improve air quality in cities, e.g.:

- Limit traffic on days when certain threshold values of air quality are exceeded, as is already done in Spain,

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Italy, and Denmark, where measures include (i) forbidding cars and/or trucks to enter the city or (ii) restricting access to even or odd-numbered license plates;

- Improve public transportation networks;
- Support the development of shared means of transport (e.g. car-sharing);
- Supply green alternatives for transportation, such as safe and extensive biking and walking infrastructure and bike-sharing.
- Ensure affordability of public transportation for all.

Strengthen regulation and controls on the industry to minimize harmful emissions.

Invest in research on air purification and targeted green space regeneration, as well as run pilot projects.

4. Data-driven prevention

Volt believes that better use of data can be a strong driver of innovation in healthcare, especially when it comes to preventive

healthcare that is better tailored to the individual. Volt aims to:

Reinforce government agencies to monitor risk factors based on the probability of occurrence of medical risk factors, such as diseases among patients, among geographic and demographic categories, to better target preventive healthcare to sub-populations at risk.

Use anonymized patient data to establish a trusted and secure Health Information System where a citizen can opt-in to obtain “recommendation packages” based on individual characteristics to [perform preventive tests](#) {61}. Calls for tests will be communicated through e-health platforms (via apps, smart devices, etc.). This will achieve the following benefits:

- Improve health outcomes through individualized preventive healthcare
- Provide forecasts for incoming test volumes to healthcare providers;
- Reduce waiting time for patients;
- Track patients’ test executions, reminding them to take them at the right moment.

Provide tax deductions to citizens for expenditures on preventive healthcare.

Monitor (changes) in the prevalence of chronic diseases to guide policy making in preventive healthcare.

D. Empowering and educating patients

Provide EU-wide coverage of urgent but non-life-threatening medical assistance through an [on-call service {62}](#) (phone number 116117.) Callers would receive medical assistance or an appointment with a specialist over the phone. They could also receive advice on whether they should see a nearby primary care or emergency care unit. This would alleviate unnecessary pressure on emergency rooms and first care units.

Run an EU-level campaign to inform citizens of the existence and services of the 116117 phone number.

Raise public awareness of the need for organ donations in order to boost donation numbers (e.g. by sending letters for informed-based decision-making to every citizen turning 18 and by creating a transparent system). Explore a gradual move to a system where organ donation is the default option at the time of death

unless a patient actively chooses to opt out.

Prevent discriminatory exclusion of potential blood donors with unbiased Individual Risk Assessments. Donations of blood and its components enable health care providers in the European Union to deal with trauma or major surgery, treat chronic blood diseases, and manufacture [medicinal products {63}](#). Despite our dependence on these voluntary blood donations, exclusion criteria that have been introduced to ward off donations of blood with transmissible diseases such as HIV have not been sufficiently updated. As a result, they still categorically detain large groups of the population, e.g. parts of LGBTIQ+ and commercial sex workers. Current criteria and long-lasting deferral periods are often discriminating and have led to [non-compliance {64}](#). In line with Article 21 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights about [Non-discrimination {65}](#), Volt urges to base the eligibility to donate blood on an Individual Risk Assessment (IRA) that is independent of sex, gender and sexual orientation, similar to the one that has been used in Italy since 2001 [without having any measurable impact {66}](#) on the HIV epidemic. We want the IRA to consist of a questionnaire followed by a face-to-face interview with a medical professional. Following international safety standards, we demand a deferral

period after risky behaviour that does not exceed [three months](#) {64}.

Harmonise information and guidelines on lifestyle choices that lead to lifestyle diseases based on state-of-the-art scientific insights.

E. Ageing populations

1. Healthcare for the elderly

Across Europe, we need to find solutions for challenges posed by [shifting demographics](#) {68} in healthcare. As life expectancy increases, so too does the incidence of illness in elderly people, resulting in an increasing need for care and medical attention among this population. While many elderly individuals find support in assisted living facilities and nursing homes as they age, autonomy and agency, which remain key components of a decent quality of life, may still be compromised. Although advances in medical technology have led to spectacular increases in length of life, medical interventions frequently do not sufficiently take the quality of life into account. Volt aims to:

Improve the quality of life and (long-term) care for the elderly {69.1,69.2} by making assisted living programs more widely available, through

community care programs such as Buurtzorg in the Netherlands, where self-governing teams flexibly produce the best care that fits for the individual patient, [and other such programs](#).

Educate and train medical students, medical specialists and other healthcare professionals to facilitate decision making processes on possible treatments with patient co-participation with the goal of improving or sustaining quality of life. This is particularly relevant for patients with complex co-morbidities and at the end of life.

Ensure the provision of palliative care in the home environment at the end of life.

2. Supporting fertility and childcare

Throughout Europe, there has been a steady trend of decreasing fertility. During the period from 1961–2015, the highest annual number of live births in the EU-28 was recorded in 1964, at 7.8 million. Since then, the number of live births in the EU-28 has declined, reaching [a low of 5.0 million in 2002](#) {70}.

Ensure that parents have access to affordable childcare so that it becomes easier to raise children while working.

Enable equally paid maternity and paternity leave for a specific period of time, and then extra time off that may be shared according to the parents' preferences. Heavily incentivize both parents to take parental leave. This also applies to same-sex couples. Single parents can either choose to take full time off (otherwise available to both parents) or to be awarded financial benefits. The length of leave can be decided according to the countries' existing frameworks but [ensuring gender equality](#) {72}.

F. Innovation and research

Invest in e-health programs to promote coverage of healthcare, flexibility and efficiency of healthcare provisions and research focusing on advanced analyses of medical data. Volt wants to:

- [Implement e-booking systems to avoid costly waiting lists](#) {73}.
- Improve telemedical networks to improve access to (i) healthcare in remote areas and (ii) consultations with specialists. The latter should especially be provided for patients with complex diseases and high levels of comorbidity that may make travel difficult or result in a sudden demand for contact with a medical specialist.

- Use e-health to connect a patient's prescriptions to the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). Through the prescriptions loaded on the EHIC, it should be possible to obtain prescription drugs at any pharmacy in the EU, thereby improving access to medication.
- Provide opt-in options to load (i) patient diagnoses and/or medical records, (ii) organ-donation preferences, and (iii) advance healthcare directives onto the EHIC to improve healthcare tailored to the individual.
- Invest in standardized secure digital patient files (1) for data collection, to increase the efficiency of healthcare provisions and (2) enable innovative big-data research based on anonymized patient records compliant to GDPR.
- Provide increased funding for modernisation and digitisation, to facilitate medical workflow in hospitals and medical institutions.

Invest in medical research by:

- Increasing funding for national and transnational publicly owned research organisations, and found a new publicly-owned European research

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centre with an explicit focus on biomedical research in loose analogy to the [National Institute of Health \(USA\)](#) {74}. This research centre will enable the execution of cutting edge research on a scale not necessarily supported by national laboratories or risked by private companies. Thus, the research centre is designed to empower Europe as a daring and pioneer region within the field of medical research, strengthening thereby also the competitiveness of European life science companies by stimulating innovation.

- Promoting evidence-based medicine by means of investing in the development and implementation of standardized European guidelines {75.1,75.2.75.3} for disease treatments and diagnostics, homogenizing quality of health care across Europe.
- Incentivizing research in fields of public interest with low economic potentials such as [new antibiotics](#) {76}, [treatments for rare diseases](#) {77}, and [vaccines](#) {78}.
- Investing in individualized medicine through high throughput techniques (DNA sequencing, microarrays, mass spectrometry, etc.) to investigate how we may improve both preventive and curative healthcare by leveraging

individual genetic, physiological, and biochemical traits and states, while also integrating behavioural aspects such as physical activity and nutrition. Key points for the successful implementation of these techniques include: (i) reducing the cost and increasing the quality of measurement technologies; (ii) developing the needed bioinformatics, computational, and statistical methodology to integrate the data masses generated by these [measurement techniques](#) {79}; (iii) providing funding for long-running academic research projects and/or agendas relevant to high throughput techniques and medical applications thereof; and, (iv) ensuring the ethical handling of [collected data and procedures](#) {80}, including absolute privacy and security of patient data.

- Incentivizing the publication of null-results, while improving the transparency of research projects and their [statistical analyses](#) {81} via standardized [reporting criteria](#) {82}, pre-specified analyses plans, and, if coherent with data protection rules, [publication of the raw data](#) {83}.

Create regulations for more sustainable packaging of medicine using renewable resources and less plastic.

G. Healthcare professionals

1. Nurses

Incentivise homecare networks that link a patient's existing community to a local team of nursing professionals, who then work with this community to tailor patient support to patient need, following the example of [Buurtzorg Netherlands](#) {84}.

Make nursing a more independent and attractive field by promoting a small, self-managed team structure.

Introduce health-care assistants who would assist patients in daily life in the hospital in addition to nurses who would take care of prescribed medical needs, as seen in the United States, United Kingdom, and Denmark.

Encourage the unionisation of nurses and healthcare assistants so their voices can be heard.

2. Doctors / general

Harmonise accreditation schemes across Europe and review study entry requirements (e.g. reward social engagement skills and introduce special tests like in [Austria](#) {85} to prevent high

dropout rates and to attract the needed skills).

Incentivise and encourage participation in European exchange programs during studies and work for all medical professionals.

Allow for flexible working hours, part-time jobs, and family-friendly working environments.

3. Midwives

Review insurance costs for midwives.

Support self-organised projects designed to efficiently connect pregnant women to midwives, both pre- and postnatally (e.g. through apps with online chats during pregnancy and in the first months after birth).

H. Healthcare costs and efficiency

Over the past few decades, most countries have witnessed a steady increase in healthcare expenditures. Currently, expenditures range between 5% of GDP in Romania to 11.1% of GDP in [France and Sweden](#) {86}. After the economic crisis, direct out-of-pocket expenditures have risen more quickly than public spending on healthcare. This trend makes healthcare

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more expensive for consumers, and in the long run, could pose a serious threat to affordable access to healthcare for all European citizens. Volt believes governments should keep healthcare affordable, and therefore should both avoid cuts to overall healthcare spending and increase funding to programs aimed to reduce overall costs of healthcare in general, such as preventive medicine initiatives. Volt also promotes the efficient use of resources and best-value-for-cost policies. To this end, Volt aims to:

Reduce costs by providing a legal and regulatory framework to empower healthcare professionals through self-governing small teams that flexibly provide the best care for an individual patient, e.g. based on the model of Buurtzorg [in the Netherlands](#) {87.1,87.2}.

Ensure efficient and secure use and supply of medical drugs by:

- Providing medicine in individualized packages and quantities depending on patients' needs instead of standard packages, which often result in large quantities of unused medicine and waste.
- Coordinating negotiations with the pharmaceutical industry at a European level to reduce costs

- Reducing waste of drugs by improving the allocation of almost-expired drugs to regions where they are currently needed through a European-wide marketplace.

Incentivize doctors and medical professionals to increase the provision of preventive healthcare that avoids “downstream costs.” Incentive schemes need to be set on a country-by-country basis to adequately fit with a country's healthcare (financing) system.

I. Sexual and reproductive health and rights

Make abortion available and affordable for all women {88} **and ensure that women have access to contraception** {89}. Approach sexual and reproductive health and rights holistically, as a key issue of gender equality and health.

Ensure that schools introduce accurate mandatory classes on reproductive health and rights so that there is a European standard for the curricula that schools comply with.

J. Options and rights in pregnancy and birth

Despite the recommendations of the [World Health Organisation](#) {90}, we are assisting to an alarming rate of unnecessary medical interventions {91,92,93} during low-risk child deliveries. These interventions prove most of the time to be dehumanising to the women involved, who perceive a “baby-factory” environment, reflective of a society bent on productivity rather than respect.

Maternity is one of the most important and impacting moments in a person's life. The *Humanization of Birth* is a concept moving the focus on the mother's needs, and away (but not excluding) midwives and other medical professionals. All efforts should be directed to provide new mothers with the scientific and legal information needed to allow them to make the most appropriate choices when it comes to delivering the baby. The rights of the partners and close family members should also be taken into high consideration.

Ensure that the World Health Organization recommendations regarding Humanization of Birth are followed.

- Ensure that care is provided in a manner that respects human rights and

human dignity, during medical consultations, treatment and childbirth;

- Call on the ministries responsible for health and equality to collect data on medical procedures during childbirth and cases of gynaecological and obstetrical violence, to undertake studies on this subject and to make them public;
- Disseminate the good practices promoted by WHO and ask national medical associations to discuss this issue and make recommendations to prevent gynaecological and obstetrical violence, in particular through a commission to promote a caring approach in gynaecology;
- Conduct information and awareness-raising campaigns on patients' rights and on preventing and combating sexism and violence against women, including gynaecological and obstetrical violence;
- Enact and implement legislation on the informed consent of patients and their right to information at the various stages of medical procedures, if this has not yet been done;
- Ensure appropriate funding for healthcare facilities so as to ensure

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decent working conditions for care providers, respectful and caring reception of patients and women in labour and access to pain relief;

- Provide specific training for obstetricians and gynaecologists and raise awareness of gynaecological and obstetrical violence as part of this training;
- Ensure that the training of doctors, midwives and nurses attaches particular importance to the relationship between care providers and patients, the concept of informed consent, equality between women and men, the reception of LGBTIQ+ persons, persons with disabilities and vulnerable persons, communication, the prevention of sexism and violence, and the promotion of a humane approach to care;
- Propose specific and accessible reporting and complaint mechanisms for victims of gynaecological and obstetrical violence, within and outside hospitals, including with ombudspersons;
- Provide for a mechanism to examine complaints about gynaecological and obstetrical violence excluding any mediation, and provide for sanctions, if

this is not yet the case, against healthcare professionals when a complaint about this kind of violence is proven;

- Offer a support service to victims of gynaecological and obstetric violence and ensure that care is provided;
- For those States that have not yet done so, sign, ratify and implement the [Istanbul Convention](#) {94};
- Allow a second companion, appointed by the couple, to offer assistance during delivery;
- In absence of medical issues preventing it, design structures so that the companion can be present and provide emotional support during the pregnancy hospitalisation;
- [Increase availability of water births in public health systems](#) {95};
- Make birth plans mandatory, where the pregnant and medical professional discuss and approve the course of action to be taken during the process;
- Allow the mother to choose the health professionals to support her during

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pregnancy, labour, delivery and puerperium;

- Assure that women's rights are respected, even during pregnancy, labour, delivery and puerperium;
- Incentivise the creation of centres for birth or houses of births in the public health system.

IV. Ensure a fair legal system, effective law enforcement and anti-corruption legislation

Volt wants 'smart' European states to ensure **frictionless** access to **humane, fair, transparent, accountable and efficient legal systems** and law enforcement agencies.

Volt also has a **zero-tolerance policy towards corruption**; state capture, when private interests dictate state policy; **white-collar crime**; and corporate **tax avoidance**. These behaviours are contrary to European values themselves and lead to significant losses of public and private resources.

Towards this goal, it is necessary, non-exhaustively, to: (1) overhaul and

improve the judicial system; (2) act against white-collar (corporate and financial) crime; and (3) regulate, protect, and incentivise whistleblowing. In addition, law enforcement needs to be improved and limited to regulate state-of-emergency extensions and end police violence (law enforcement and police operations), and prioritize non-prison sanctions.

If not addressed, corruption can become systemic and within Europe, it is most often associated with illiberal models of state capture. Globally, corruption has become increasingly critical, as an endemic part of the structure of the global economy. Studies have found that there are anywhere between 21-32 trillion euros of [unpaid taxes](#) {96} hidden away in tax havens around the world. With growing inequalities leading to political instability and an urgent need to tackle other pressing global problems, ending both corruption and tax avoidance is absolutely critical.

A. Intelligent judicial systems

Reduce the backlog of pending cases by applying simple standards (e.g. focusing on first-in-first-out and urgent cases).

Develop alternative routes to litigation, such as mediation and negotiation, in areas such as family law.

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Encourage the digitisation of proceedings for civil lawsuits below a given claim sum and use digital means to help defendants keep up with their court dates, etc.

Expand legal aid services across Member States in order to enable effective access to justice, particularly to the most vulnerable and marginalised populations.

B. Fighting corruption

Confer additional powers to the European anti-corruption office OLAF and the European Ombudsman, as well as the new European Public Prosecutor's Office. European institutions are held to account by the Office Européen de Lutte Anti-Fraude ("OLAF") and the Member States are self-controlled via their respective anti-corruption institutions. Corruption needs to be checked by an external actor to the government in question. This is why OLAF, as well as the newly created European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO), should be conferred additional powers to investigate cases of corruption in Member States, including the ability to access documents and conduct interviews in cooperation with the European Prosecutor, who is tasked with tackling corruption. Membership in the EPPO, which can only be created as enhanced cooperation, should be

mandatory to receive EU resources beyond the budget. OLAF should further have the right to bring cases to a national court, if necessary.

Expand the European Transparency Register {97} to include all EU institutions, including the Commission and the Council, and make it mandatory for all lobbying and advocacy organisations to be listed therein. Apply the same register system at all levels of government in the Member States.

Effectively tackle the phenomenon of 'revolving doors' across governments and EU institutions, as per [Transparency International's recommendations {98}](#). Measures include substantial 'cooling off' periods for civil servants and elected officials in between leaving their positions and taking up any role that involves for-profit advocacy or lobbying for their former institutions. Institutional ethics committees must be established or reinforced, as well as empowered with credible, legally binding powers to prevent any conflict of interest after public service, following tougher ethics guidelines. The recent Barroso & Goldman Sachs scandal must not be allowed to be repeated.

Ensure the curbing of opportunities for abuse of power by governmental actors by obliging the publication of public spending. We will promote the

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implementation of e-Governance and e-procurement initiatives to stop bureaucratic corruption. To accommodate this, there must be changes aimed at speeding up the digitisation of governmental institutions and the transparent publication of both decisions made by governmental institutions and interactions with the contractors they hire. Any decision that requires public spending must be made fully available for scrutiny by the press and the constituents of the respective Member State. To accommodate this, Volt proposes to:

- Use digital infrastructure to streamline and promote transparency of decisions made by governmental institutions and their contractors to ensure accountability;
- Oblige Member States to adhere to the digitalisation of their administration. In case of non-compliance, EU funding will be cut as an incentive to ensure this obligation is met;
- Allocate EU funds to support laying the infrastructure for such initiatives and for retraining civil servants to work with e-Government tools.

Lead by example on the transparency of party financing. Not only do individuals in government receive illicit funding, but so

do political parties. This is why Volt will publish the identity of all its relevant donors and the donated sums online. We will also introduce a code of conduct that regulates what kind of donations are allowed to be accepted by Volt.

Introduce requirements of full disclosure of the office expenses and spending of elected officials in carrying out their work, including Members of Parliament and Members of the European Parliament, along the lines [already taken by certain groups of MEPs {99}](#).

Expand implementation of Integrity Pacts and clean contracting in public procurement and public-private partnership, together with civil society, in line with Transparency International's recommended [best practice {100}](#).

C. Ending tax avoidance & evasion, increasing tax collection efficiency

Support the urgent implementation of the OECD/G20 Base Erosion Profit Shifting Actions (BEPS) project, aimed at ensuring that profits are taxed in the region where economic activities generating the profits are performed and [where value is created {101}](#).

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Push for full adoption and implementation of the “Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base” (CCCTB) proposal, which the European Parliament endorsed in March 2018 [{102.1,102.2}](#). Multinational online companies must be taxed for their “digital presence” and value generated in a country.

Set up an EU tax authority to tackle cross border avoidance and evasion.

- [Ban “letterbox” companies {103}](#), that allow multinationals to create empty registrations in countries for tax purposes, and prohibit ‘sweetheart’ discriminatory tax deals between governments and multinationals.
- Shine a light and create transparency in company ownership structures by requiring the disclosure of personal details of owners and beneficiaries of companies on the public register.

Push for administrative reforms across Europe at all levels of government to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of tax collection, and abolish tax havens and tax loopholes within the EU.

D. Corporate social responsibility and accountability

Pursue political, corporate and financial crime thoroughly and support initiatives to expand corporate social responsibility, ensuring compliance and ethical standards. Strengthen protections for whistle-blowing and extend due diligence across value chains.

Reinforce the newly created European Public Prosecutor’s Office, and encourage the development of **public prosecutors specialised in financial crime** in countries where they do not exist.

Support protection, anonymity and remuneration for whistleblowers disclosing information for the public good.

Advocate for international standards on corporate responsibility, including the UN Compact, and the new Binding Treaty on Business and Human Rights.

Put in place legislation that extends responsible practices and due diligence throughout supply chains.

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E. Law enforcement and police operations

Strengthen European police cooperation, define limits for state of emergencies, and ensure that police forces operate in a fair and effective manner while minimising the level of violence and eliminating discriminatory practices.

Limit extension of state of emergencies, ensure full and transparent monitoring of human rights during the period of a state of emergency and create stricter review mechanisms to ensure that such measures are truly needed.

Encourage Europol and Eurojust operations {104.1,104.2,104.3}, speed up and support integration, and ensure that human rights are always upheld.

End ethnic profiling {105} during police identity checks and require officers to issue a stop form for every identity check.

Limit officer's discretionary authority {106} by requiring reasonable and specific suspicion for all checks and searches.

Work to end police violence {107} through training, accountability mechanisms, and monitoring.

Limit the use of military-style policing for street-level protests and local conflicts.

Expand police force training on dealing with hate crimes {108}.

F. Prison reform

Ensure that prison conditions always comply with human rights and dignity regulations, as laid out by Council of Europe standards, and that administrative powers are not used in a discriminatory way. Additionally, ensure that prisons are as closely modelled to the outside world as possible in order to make reintegration and inclusion easier.

Encourage research for alternatives to prisons that achieve the aim of keeping society safe, as well as reintegrating individuals successfully into society, by encouraging classes and activities, and reintegration in society.

Prioritize alternative sanctions (other than prison, such as community service) for certain non-violent crimes.

Offer psychological treatment and/or psychotherapy for prisoners, especially for prisoners that **suffer from ADHD in combination with substance abuse {109},**

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including alternative treatments like meditation and mindfulness.

Ensure that juveniles are not detained with adults.

Develop an education system that serves both short- and long-term offenders. The curriculum should be varied, with particular emphasis on supplementing.

Ensure that prisoners undergoing strip searches are searched by same-sex prison officers. For certain inmates who adhere to strict religious or cultural obligations, all necessary precautions and measures must be adopted not to cross sensitive boundaries. Officers must anticipate these requests beforehand.

Provide cultural training for prison officers. All officers should undergo training to learn the techniques needed to work with incarcerated multi-ethnic communities. A basic program should be implemented across the board and, where higher concentrations of diverse prison populations exist, a more intense cultural education program could greatly enhance respect between inmates and officers.

V. Guarantee Digital rights and freedom

In a society that is shaped by technology and connectivity, our rights online are essential to our democracy. Volt will work to guarantee citizens' rights on the internet and extend digital education and technological literacy. Our freedom of expression and our economic, social and cultural rights depend on our ability to engage with technology. Volt will create a new type of politics, forming the forum to debate our common future with emerging technologies.

A. Internet access

Push the European Union and European countries to invest more to ensure a high-quality [internet connection across Europe {110}](#). This includes the fastest available mobile network connections and Wi-Fi in urban and rural areas, connecting the most marginalised communities to the internet. The economic benefits of widespread connectivity should be encouraged while ensuring that provision is equitable, fair, and universal as a merit good or public good.

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B. Digital education

Increase the focus on digital technological literacy education for all ages, including coding. Online education must begin at an early age and progress toward life-long learning and vocational training, including an emphasis on mental health and social well-being, given the effects of digital environments.

Push for investment in lifelong adult education programmes emphasising occupational literacy. As more and more jobs are made redundant through automation, an increasing number of people will have to re-train repeatedly to work in new roles or to use new technologies. Digital literacy will therefore be of growing importance and requires greater investment. Occupational literacy, or the idea that people should be able to develop their own interests given access to information and technology, should be part of a person's development throughout their lifespan.

Ensure that digital education includes an emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). At the same time, encourage and foster creativity and the arts (STEAM - Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics), expand best-practice public and civil society initiatives like WISE

(Women in Science and Engineering), which work to empower women and girls in the sector through mentorship and [peer-to-peer networks](#) {111}. Tech education must be used as a tool of social and professional inclusion, enabling those who are under-represented or marginalised in the field to excel, particularly in closing the gender gap in STEM, or overcoming socio-economic obstacles.

Work to construct a new political culture and vocabulary that is able to debate and address new issues as they arise. As technological advances accelerate, we will soon find ourselves facing questions that we now consider far-fetched and unimaginable, as technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) and the Internet of Things develop.

C. Digital single market

Prioritise developing the digital single market, enabling businesses and start-ups to make use of the 500 million consumers and the economies of scale that come with them, while working with the EU and other European countries. There must be accommodation for emerging online forms of organisations, as well as the potential of alternative business models such as cooperatives and mutuals.

D. Digital rights

Push for a [Digital Bill of Rights](#) {112} as a binding international legal instrument, based on existing internet governance norms. As far as connectivity enables citizens to participate in society, this instrument would guarantee individual and social rights in an interconnected world, including the right to access the internet, and it will also protect related rights in the digital environment such as privacy; data protection; freedom of expression, information, and association online; and stakeholder-based internet governance. Principles of Net Neutrality and open internet are at the core of an internet system that guarantees these rights. Volt will advocate for the EU to include digital rights and freedoms in its agreements with third countries.

Support and expand protections for privacy and data protection, building on [General Data Protection Regulations](#) {113}. Encryption is key to ensuring online privacy. Volt will work to promote encryption of online communications. While providing effective protection against threats of terrorism and crime is crucial, citizens must never accept mass surveillance as a norm, by state or non-state actors.

Advance and protect cybersecurity and digital rights as new revolutionary technologies emerge, in the coming era of the [“Internet of Things”](#) {114} where smart grids, smart roads, smart hospitals and even smart furniture determine crucial aspects of our lives.

Ensure that the principle of an open internet and freedom of expression, access, and information is compatible with the rights of authors and creators.

We need to balance equitable rewards and incentives to individual creators, and sustainable creative industries, with widespread access for consumers. Writers, composers, and other creators must be fairly compensated for their work, without overly limiting users’ access and freedom of information on the internet.

E. Security and Safety

Ensure that the internet is made safe by fighting organised crime and security threats online, and ensuring global resilience against cyber-attacks from non-state and state actors. This must be done through greater security cooperation between law enforcement authorities and online platforms, companies, and EU bodies such as EUROPOL and [EUIPO](#) {115}. Further measures must also be taken to combat online intimidation and harassment and its social implications,

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working together with online platforms and civil society groups.

Take on cyber-attacks, and campaigns of disinformation or media manipulation.

Work with global tech and social media companies (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) to fight extremism in all its forms.

Hold social media companies accountable for the propagation of misinformation like any other media platform.

Ensure that EU citizens' data stored internationally is handled strictly in accordance with European standards with full protections in place.

Bring together European efforts and resources on cyber-defence. Shift some resources from traditional military expenditure - such as personnel - to research & development to develop [European security know-how](#) {116}.

Modernise EU Strategic Communication campaigns to be receptive to the changing technological environment in this age of information in order to effectively compete and defeat violent extremist propaganda campaigns.

F. Ethical approach

Commit to an ethical, inclusive, rights-based approach to technological development. Technological advancement should progress according to a principle of fairness whereby an innovations' utility should be measured in terms of how much it benefits those that are most vulnerable as one important social metric.

VI. Open-Source Solutions

A. Open-Source Software (FLOSS)

In our age of digital innovation, we must protect the safety and resiliency of the EU's digital infrastructure by allowing an ecosystem of FLOSS (free/libre and open-source software, a form of software that allows users the freedom to use, adapt, and redistribute the source code of software applications without having to pay a license fee) providers to exist and drive innovation in a market favouring monopolies in absence of diminishing returns. To this end, we have to encourage replacing proprietary software with open-source solutions in public administration to create a transparent structure that reduces the risk of data breaches, unpermitted data usage and dependency on proprietary providers. To facilitate this, Volt will:

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Actively push to introduce a directive mandating EU departments and institutions to migrate to FLOSS software:

- Create a platform for public administration FLOSS software and mandate public servants to assess available solutions on the platform in terms of scope and cost following the examples of implementation in Brazil {117,118}, [Canada](#) {119}, and [Italy](#) {120}, before making a case for proprietary software;
 - Level the playing field between research initiatives, communities, NGOs and private companies that publish FLOSS solutions by investing in visibility and budgetary assistance;
 - Designate publishers as service providers in FLOSS-based public tenders;
 - Recommend adoption on a national level and raise awareness on the advantages of FLOSS software vis-a-vis proprietary solutions;
 - Assess preferred systems from a security perspective, grow community-based [EU security initiatives](#) {121} and evaluate the ease of usage and accessibility;
- Maintain a catalogue of implementations (use cases) showing how solutions are used in what context to quickly be able to assess available systems, their data analysis capabilities, accessibility and requirements.

Push for a bottoms-up approach and empower civil servants through basic software development training for the purpose of transitioning from usage to understanding.

- Start the transition from being able to use a solution to also understanding how it actually works, creating the capacities to request tailoring extensions to specific and evolving administrative needs;
- Develop uniform and standardized requirement specifications and centrally controlled change management to establish common use patterns across disciplines and a more homogenous software ecosystem;

Define standards for administrative software solutions allowing interoperability of different systems across departments and borders.

- Promote the adoption of existing FLOSS platforms in EU institutions and facilitate standardisation of

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software development according to the [ISA directives](#) {122}, with particular focus laid on the adaptation of the European Interoperability Reference Architecture ([EIRA](#)) {123} for technically, bureaucratically and legally interoperable development.

- [Follow best practices](#) {124} and move FLOSS projects for public administration software to publicly accessible platforms for code publication. Examples of such platforms include Gitlab and Github, but would ideally take place on a new European platform explicitly aimed at encouraging collaboration between public administration developers, contributors, and users, taking more of a [community approach to development](#) {125}.
- Emphasise reliable and consistent data governance including data definitions management in all EU languages.

VII. [Support Research](#)

Research is the foundation of our current living standard, economic prosperity and

political independence. To guarantee our future well-being and to master the environmental and social challenges of tomorrow, technical and scientific progress is needed. Volt's science policy aims to create an even more innovative and competitive European research landscape that at the same time incorporates its core values such as freedom and sustainability.

The current scientific program of the EU (Horizon 2020) aims to spend 3% of EU-wide GDP on research by 2020. However, given past and current dynamics, we are far away from [meeting this goal](#) {126}. Particularly striking are the huge differences in national research spending [across Europe](#) {127}.

In contrast, rising powers such as India and China show an impressive scientific development in international comparisons. This is shown not only through increasing numbers of scientific publications but also through the fact that, for example, China reportedly lists more patent applications than all of the OECD countries combined. The OECD's latest numbers on research spending also reveal that the EU average ranks below the US, China, and, even more alarmingly, behind the OECD average. This gives reason to intensify [European research programs](#) {128.1,128.2}.

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[Meet and increase Europe 2020 proposed spending targets](#) {129} of 3% of EU-wide GDP on research. However, EU member states will most probably fail to reach that goal. Therefore, we aim even higher and propose that 4% of the EU-wide GDP is used for research purposes by 2025. This is to remain internationally competitive and to guarantee our vision of a prosperous European future. Furthermore, increased research spendings positively affect productivity and economic growth.

Facilitate and support versatile ways of research funding, because we are convinced that this best guarantees the freedom of science while at the same time allowing public and private funding institutions to incentivise research in certain seminal topics. Therefore, we seek to involve not only government-funded institutions but also private foundations and companies. We aim to incentivise them to invest in research projects. Investments can either be of a general nature (like the German funding systems at universities), project-specific, or solution-based.

Support university industry collaborations. With respect to scientific approaches, strategies, funding, outcome exploitations, etc. both partners can [learn and profit from one another](#) {130}. Ultimately, this will make research efforts more productive. Create a platform where

companies and research groups can meet, exchange ideas, propose projects, [consider research group publications](#) {131}, and develop trust and long-term [relations](#) {132.1,132.2,132.3}.

Highlight innovative research focus areas, such as a European satellite system or renewable energy solutions, and incentivising research in European clusters, with [EU funding](#) {133}.

Incentivise and support European journals, conferences, academic interdisciplinary exchanges, and national and European academic societies.

Found European research institutes (like EMBL, European Union Security studies) and a European Informatics Laboratory.

Open tech incubators, or tech parks for technical startups. Focus on technology transfer to make use of findings, translation, and central consultancy for patent issues.

Advocate for research and science in the public sphere, create enthusiasm and motivate people to participate in research. Recruit foreign talent and researchers based on free and independent ethical research and occupational stability.

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Expand European databases and innovate uses of data to stimulate [new avenues of research](#) {134}.

Support worldwide research and innovation networks and turn the EU into a global hub of cutting-edge research.

Put in place R&D tax exemptions across the EU. Provide public funding to research through sustainable financial instruments (debt and equity).

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Challenge 2 -

Economic

Renaissance

Vision

The future of a united Europe relies on solving current economic challenges. This includes the lingering effects of the 2008 crisis on the European economies; high unemployment, in particular, youth unemployment; threats and opportunities arising from digitisation; and precarious sustainability in the budgets of the Member States. The economic vision set by Volt Europa requires our societies to reduce inequalities between EU economies and face future economic challenges with informed, data-driven approaches.

Volt will address these challenges by:

- I. Unleashing the potential of [entrepreneurs and small and medium enterprises](#) (SMEs) {135} to enable them to be competitive and show the youth the potential of entrepreneurship.
- II. Reviving innovation in our economies and promoting the industries of the future.
- III. Actively shaping the future of work.
- IV. Ensuring social protection. Volt stands for a European approach to social development, with practical minimum standards of social protection and decent work and pay. Volt further seeks to enable a successful digital transformation, contributing to greater prosperity and better working conditions.
- V. Reducing imbalances. Volt envisions a European Union that increases its positive reach across the whole continent, not just within its most productive areas. Together with close vigilance on the use of funds, Volt believes it is time for broader, smarter, and more environmentally sustainable strategies, aimed at narrowing socioeconomic gaps and creating opportunities for every citizen.
- VI. Developing economically challenged areas with a new unified strategy, working in concert with social actors across the EU.

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- VII. Harmonizing European corporate taxation to facilitate cross-border trade and curb aggressive tax planning, building in this way a stronger and fairer single market.
- VIII. Mobilizing Europe in a smart, safe, and sustainable way.

Volt supports a new way of shaping European economies, based on EU-wide cooperation to build an integrated, fair, and sustainable economic system.

I. Develop and reform our economies

A. Unleash entrepreneurship and small businesses

Create a Digital One-Stop-Shop to set up a business, automate and simplify reporting, tax files, and all other government interactions. Volt wants to cut red tape at the EU level to ensure that it is just as easy to do cross-border business as it is to do business in your home Member State. This way SMEs can benefit from the size of the single market and scale up quickly in order to ensure growth.

- Increase the range of services of [“Points of single contact”](#) {136} provided to enterprises through digital

platforms: simplify points of contact with public administration in national governments by creating adequate platforms that are easy to handle and offer solutions for companies operating on a national as well as cross-border level.

- Increase the diffusion of a One-Stop-Shop system to facilitate and control taxation reporting. Push for digitization and automation of balance sheets and reporting systems, as well as all other government interactions.
- The Digital One-Stop-Shop has a provision to support SMEs and entrepreneurs. This will include support to navigate government requirements and contacts of venture capitalists and startup incubators, partnerships with private companies that can offer discounted services to SMEs, etc.

Encourage harmonization of registration fees, times and processes for setting up a business across Europe by making it possible to create a company for EUR 1 within 3 working days with an additional cost of max EUR 1,000 (for licences etc.) all over Europe. Establishing a company should be equally easy and affordable throughout EU Member States. All registration steps should be feasible online (see Digital One-Stop-Shop above), as per

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the best practices of economies with quick business startup times ([such as New Zealand, Australia, Singapore, Canada, Portugal, Denmark and Estonia](#)) {137}. The legal status (Limited Liability Company, or LLC) obtained should require the entrepreneurs to slowly build up capital to ensure a higher credit rating.

- As a further step, Volt endorses the development of an EU procedure to create EU-based companies. Especially for freelancers, there should be a very simple legal form that can be completed online in a short period of time (e.g. one day). The procedure can be built on [Societas Europaea](#) {138} mixed with components of the Estonian model of [e-residency and company registration](#) {139}.

Make it possible to start a small business completely bureaucracy- and paper-free (for micro-enterprises in sectors not needing a licence): an entrepreneur should be able to start a small business by simply notifying the authorities; permission should not be necessary, where legal requirements are complied with. For example, to open a coffee shop or hairdressing business, one should be able to open as soon as it is ready.

Implement a network of European incubators with advisory roles and

matchmaking competencies. This measure can build on the European Business and Innovation [Centre Network](#) {140} and the Startup [Europe Club](#) {141}.

- Incubators would provide knowledge sharing for SMEs and startups doing business both on a national level and across Europe (e.g. guides and assistance on regulations and procedures to start business activities, information concerning taxes and social security, and financial and legal advice). In addition, create tax-reduced or tax-free advisory roles for startups to foster the exchange of advice from older professionals and corporations. Corporations would be incentivized based on their level of participation.
- Matchmaking should be facilitated between existing SMEs and startups. This can be achieved by proposing a network, supervised and created by the European Commission, to help companies across the EU [communicate with each other](#) {142}.

[Create a truly efficient European Open Data Platform](#) {143}. Improve the usability of the data available on the EU Open Data Portal, concerning areas such as mobility, smart cities, production, and tourism to encourage data-driven business and foster [pan-European business models](#) {144}. To

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guarantee that data gathered is usable in different countries, a [uniform privacy policy](#) {145} and a unified authority for data validation are needed.

Bridge Structural Funding Gaps. States should thoroughly assess structural investment gaps in the economies' growth process, and find innovative means to bridge these gaps by creating incentives for investors (e.g. co-investment funds, a financial toolkit for startups, centralized platforms for funding, matching investors and startups, European Investment Bank investment, etc.).

Promote venture capital (VC) investments. Set tax incentives to make venture capital investment and participation in business angel networks such as the EBAN (European Business Angel Network) or business angel funds [more appealing for investors](#) {146}. Tax relief for capital gains or the provision of loss relief on a more favourable basis than the baseline tax system could support the reduction of risk of investment in young, growing, innovative businesses. Tax incentives should be regularly monitored and evaluated in order to reform them or to design [further incentives](#) {147}.

Set up a European database with accredited Angel investors, incubators and VC funds. Inclusion in the database

should be decided by an independent European network of people capable of evaluating investors, incubators and VC funds. Those investors, incubators and VC funds included in the database should also be monitored regularly for ensuring that they comply with the requirements set for inclusion in the database. This database can build on and expand the member's directory of [EBAN](#) {148}.

Give second chances to entrepreneurs. Volt will encourage honest entrepreneurs who have undergone bankruptcy to fund another business so they can apply their previously acquired knowledge. A decisive distinction must be made between honest and dishonest bankruptcies, with special bankruptcy and discharge procedures for honest entrepreneurs (e.g. faster and less expensive bankruptcy procedures or shorter duration of negative rating). On the other hand, creditors' interests must be protected and the bankruptcy process must be simple and as quick as possible for investors, making it easier and faster for a corporation to fail. The maximum duration of the insolvency should be 2 to 3 years, depending on the size of the corporation and on the assets that need to be sold (i.e. efficient secondary market or not). In this way, the [loss given default](#) {149} decreases and thus the probability of receiving credit in the system increases.

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Support direct additional funding to develop SMEs in strategic industries and harmonize SME development among countries, regions and provinces.

Set tax incentives for SME owners who re-invest surplus in their corporation or create jobs within the first 1-3 years of business.

Support employee stock option pools and other employee shares when a company is not publicly listed via tax benefits to enhance employees entrepreneurial spirit as well as benefits from future returns (capital gains tax).

B. Profits-for-all mentality

Volt wants to incentivise and value social entrepreneurship. To do so, Volt will:

Create coherent and standardised legal forms for social entrepreneurs and introduce **public certification**.

[Relieve tax pressures on HR for social businesses {150}](#).

Develop incentives schemes for having corporations (including SMEs) adopt the best practices from other corporations, especially regarding continuous learning/training.

Ensure the presence of fiscal policies that proactively counter inequalities, such as the introduction of a progressive inheritance tax to avoid the concentration of wealth.

C. Service mentality {151}

Public administrations will be incentivized to offer effective and easily understood assistance to members of the private sector to ensure that processes are straightforward and regulations are easily followed. To pursue this objective, Volt will sustain policies that:

Curb waiting times dramatically by rewarding and evaluating offices on time-related measures.

Strengthen online services and integrate data across the entire administration. A unique EU-wide digital ID would fast-track this process by reducing friction.

Work towards completely paperless processes and harmonized information and communication technology (ICT) standards to allow for efficient services.

Introduce and monitor service-related key performance indicators (KPIs).

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II. Revive innovation in our economies and promote industries of the future

Innovation should be at the heart of long-term strategies for both corporations and governments. However, despite statements of intent and several good initiatives by the public sector, many European economies still struggle to create a favourable environment for innovation.

A. Idea generation and supportive infrastructure

Incentivise idea generation in our economies to stimulate growth and local knowledge generation in Europe. In order to achieve this, Volt proposes to take the following steps:

Ease and improve the flow of information and knowledge obtained from academic institutions and their applied research to the private sector. Additionally, increase the application of research findings ([e.g., via research institutes, corporate research funds, and public-private research centres](#)) {152}.

Create and support shared research facilities and innovation hubs, by for

example concentrating administrative efforts on the introduction of fiber optic networks, public and free wifi, as well as public clouds with servers in each country. Additionally, introduce affiliated institutes to foster collaboration between the academic and private sectors.

Support and finance pan-European research in [key research areas](#) {153}. Volt supports EU policy in defining and funding key research areas. We propose to synchronize the processes in order to assign research funds on national and European level, so as to democratize and align the choice of which [research areas should be supported](#) {154}.

Increase the ease and attractiveness of obtaining an expert visa, especially after absolving a university degree within an EU member state (e.g., after MINT Master), in order to attract talent (e.g. the US model, where a student visa automatically gives its bearer the right to work for one year).

Prioritise digital infrastructure improvements and define standards for open data to meet future needs of both the private sector and the general public.

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B. Supportive regulation

Push state interventions to guide, foster, and protect European innovation. Volt will do so by promoting the following measures:

Strengthen the international enforcement of patent laws by making them always applicable to international competition, and by penalising all imports of companies failing to comply with these standards anywhere in the world. A preliminary reasoning on specific sector differences should be made.

Reform patent law by increasing transparency and specifying a patent expiration date to ensure that unused patents do not block new inventions while ensuring the profitability of innovation.

Set standards, regulations, and guidelines to guide the development of transformational technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence.

Unlock innovative and disruptive startups while still requiring these companies to abide by standards (e.g., contributions for healthcare, pension system, etc.).

Standardise contracts (if possible) across the EU for different kinds of businesses and share best-practices (e.g., startup ownership contracts).

Review availability, necessity, and cost of notary services and consider incentivizing the use of online legal services, such as online certification for legal papers in order to register companies online or easier process for standardized contracts, to ease the burden on startups.

C. New markets and new energy

Support research & development in growing markets with strategic relevance, e.g., green energies and Industry 4.0 initiatives. Volt will support growth in these markets by taking the following steps:

Ensure long term political strategies to create investment security for companies.

Use the "public weight" (standards, fiscal incentives) to support energy efficiency in domestic and industrial environments.

[Support an integrated strategy {155}](#) across EU Member States by moving toward a single energy market & EU-wide

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schemes, in order to open up industries in the renewable energy sector.

Create "special research and testing innovation zones" (Innovation zones are very successful in emerging economies such as Shanghai, or Shenzhen) for new technology, in order to allow regions to set up such zones for sandbox approaches with light regulation. These zones could be used by startups and tech companies in the field of autonomous driving, drones and similar areas where AI has to be trained in a physical environment (There are many "Ghost cities" in semi-urban Spain that would perfectly provide the space needed for these innovation zones without the danger of hurting actual people). To secure that the zones will benefit Europe as a whole, transferability of application to other EU countries has to be ensured.

Regulation of space and use of the space technologies [{158}](#)

In the digital age, space is of central, strategic importance for the society and the economy. It is critical infrastructure and key to future technologies such as e.g. autonomous driving or Industry 4.0. Its applications can further contribute to the worldwide reduction of poverty, and to increase social fairness. In view of the requirements for networking in a modern

industrial and information society, its importance will continue to grow.

The EU has the largest number of space agencies in the world and the European Space Agency (ESA), an intergovernmental entity where not all European Union Member States (MS) participate, and where also countries outside the EU participate. Volt sees the need to further integrate European space institutions, to ensure stable and long-term financing, enhance efficiency and collaboration, and increase synergies. Many of the global issues, such as space militarisation, space debris and traffic management, or human exploration of Mars and the Moon fall in the scope of international space cooperation and law.

III. Foster a European Artificial Intelligence initiative

Artificial intelligence (AI) is poised to transform the economy, society, social and political systems across Europe and the world. The societal impact of artificial intelligence can be either very beneficial (such as safer roads, personalized healthcare, and efficient resource use) or lead to unfavourable outcomes (such as technological unemployment, widening inequality, or lethal autonomous weapons).

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There is an urgency to act, as technological development and practical applications are advancing at a rapid pace.

The debate has to be societal, not a narrow technical one. AI directly affects not only business models, labour markets, and income distribution, but also raises fundamental ethical questions about human-machine interaction, the nature of work, privacy of citizens, and distribution of benefits.

Artificial Intelligence development calls for a **European approach**, to gain **critical mass to compete globally**, to ensure AI technology is built on **EU's Human Values**, and to build a **'Social Union' so no one is left behind**, as the undesirable effects of AI, such as involuntary unemployment, will reverberate through labour markets throughout Europe.

Volt stands for a European AI initiative to:

- build a European legal and ethical framework, and make it enforceable
- build Europe's competence in AI Research and Development and AI Literacy
- prepare for addressing negative socio-economic consequences.

Member countries' AI efforts are to be aligned with this European approach in accordance with countries' specific strengths.

A. Develop the ethical and Legal foundation and boundaries for AI development

1. Develop and adopt AI ethics guidelines

Volt welcomes all EU efforts to develop such guidelines and binding standards, e.g. through the European AI Alliance. Volt believes that these guidelines **should reflect, i.a. the following values:**

- Machines are instruments to enhance human welfare.
- **AI should be 'explainable' and black box situations {159.1,159.2} should be avoided.** A European guideline shall regulate AI-generated content, with a specific focus on preventing manipulation of public opinion. Content generated by AI applications (e.g. articles, images, sound and video) must be transparently labelled.
- **Citizens are clearly owners of their own data.**

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- **Fair taxation** of the Digital economy contributes to a fair distribution of AI benefits.

2. Develop a legal and regulatory framework

A legal and regulatory framework for AI Development is needed, to ensure these core values are being applied in practice, including the following building blocks.

Establish a High Level Government AI Coordination Office. Volt recommends establishing at the European Commission a High Level AI Coordination Office in the office of the President of the EC, and a similar office in each member state. These offices would have to have: i) the competence to guide AI development

Establish a High Level Government AI Coordination Office. Volt recommends establishing at the European Commission a High Level AI Coordination Office in the office of the President of the EC, and a similar office in each member state. These offices would have to have: i) the competence to guide AI development across diverse sectors, ii) the mandate to develop a coherent strategy and iii) the legal authority to monitor that the emerging legal and regulatory framework is coherent and conforms with European values.

Develop a European Digital Bill of Rights as an umbrella legal framework and binding international legal instrument to govern the internet in Europe. This instrument should guarantee individual and social rights in Europe, including the **right to access** to the internet, and **protection of basic rights** in the digital environment such as privacy, data protection, freedom of expression, information and association online, and stakeholder-based internet governance. Principles of Net Neutrality and open internet are at the core of an internet system that guarantees these rights. Volt will advocate for the EU to include digital rights and freedoms in its agreements with third countries.

Ensure effective GDPR (EU General Data Protection Regulation) implementation. Data protection agencies need to be adequately equipped: i) to ensure consistent implementation across the EU so that companies do not migrate towards soft-protection havens, and ii) to help small and medium-sized organizations comply with the complex rules so that this law does not inadvertently privilege large international operators.

Implement regulation requiring algorithms to be 'explainable' and compliant to criteria of Trustworthy AI if used for high-risk applications or if used for

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decision making directly affecting citizens and consumers, in both the public and private sector. A new European AI Auditing Institution shall transform the Trustworthy AI recommendations of the High Level Expert Group on AI into European standards. It shall be mandated to set up a network of AI Certification Institutes which are licensed to certify that AI systems conform with these standards. The AI Auditing Institution will work in close collaboration with CERAI that shall provide AI monitoring frameworks and AI supervising AI. Human auditing teams and appropriate AI tools will ensure that regulation is enforced. For high-risk applications, these tools will allow for continuous supervision.

Assure fair taxation in the digital economy. Volt fully supports the EC proposal to levy a 3% tax on the turnover of large digital companies in the EU country where this turnover is being generated, to avoid tax evasion by shifting their net profits to tax havens.

Develop a common EU position on a Ban of Autonomous Weapons. Start a debate on the risks of autonomous weapons using AI, that e.g. could make a fire decision without any human intervention. As of now, EU countries have different positions on the topic and [different strategies to approach it](#) {160}. Consider adoption of an

international legally binding instrument prohibiting the development, production and use of such weapons under the auspices of the UN.

Cybersecurity. European and national institutions engaged in cybersecurity shall be supported by CERAI delivery streams against adversarial AI attacks and rogue AI.

B. Build Europe's Competence in AI Development

Volt supports a concerted European effort to build AI competence, with the following key building blocks: i) Research and Innovation, ii) Human Resources Education and Training, and iii) Infrastructure. The following proposed actions will contribute to this effort.

Invest EU wide in AI Research and Development. Volt welcomes the EC announcement of an [AI research and development initiative](#) {161}, including a budget target of €20 bn per year by 2020 for supporting multi-national efforts. Research topics should include in addition to technical aspects, societal challenges and changes, including in the labour markets, and how to address them, without strangling AI innovation and development.

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Center for European Research on AI (CERAI {162}). The challenges of rapidly growing AI capabilities and market failures can not be met by the existing initiatives and organisations alone. Volt strongly recommends establishing a new international organisation fully committed to continuous delivery streams of high-quality AI software frameworks where markets have no incentive to build these. An ideal research environment will attract the best AI experts who will push the boundaries of science. Funded by the EU and constituent states, this organization shall foster safety-related AI research at an unprecedented pace and support the Economic Renaissance in collaboration with the AI-on-demand platform.

Scale up education in digital literacy for all ages, starting at kindergarten. In a technology-driven society, education is key to fostering social inclusion, as well as awareness of the benefits and risks of technology use. In order to teach factual knowledge about AI, innovative didactic methods should be adopted, such as adaptive AI-based teaching and active learning. Centrally maintained (e.g. by CERAI) repositories make it possible to provide up-to-date exercises for the learner. In addition to technical competence, such as coding, Volt advocates training in behaviours and skills that lead to a healthy and sustainable lifestyle and that preserve mental health

and social well-being in a digital environment.

Develop a European "AI-on-demand platform". AI development will require major investments to boost the EU's technological and industrial capacity, from both the private and public sectors. A high priority is to make AI available and accessible to all, in order to spread its benefits widely. The platform will provide a **single access point for all users** to relevant **AI resources in the EU**, including knowledge, data repositories, computing power (cloud, high-performance computing), tools and algorithms. It will offer services and provide support to potential users of the technology, analyze the business case behind AI in their specific circumstances and help them to integrate AI solutions in their processes, products and services. For the implementation of the platform, the EC plans to build on the existing network of more than 400 Digital Innovation Hubs.

Provide access to 'Fast Internet'. Allow for high-speed data transmission and ensure broad access, including outside the urban centres, i.a. through minimum standards for speed, coverage, and inter-connectability at the European level, regulated access to minimize discrimination of smaller users ('net neutrality'), or public-private

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co-investment, such as e.g. in Germany through the 'Gigabit Investment Fund' with an estimated €12 billion, financed in part from the proceeds of broadband licenses.

Attract private investments for AI Development. Increase **European Investment Bank** support for AI investments from its tentative level of EUR 500 million in the period 2018-2020 to at least €1 bn/year after 2020, and roll out quickly the **Pan-European Venture Capital Funds-of-Funds** programme – Venture EU, a EUR 2.1 billion fund to boost investment in innovative startup and scale-up companies across Europe.

C. Prepare Society for AI Related Structural Changes – A three-pronged Approach

Artificial Intelligence is causing anxiety in many people. This anxiety needs to be taken seriously and needs to be addressed, otherwise widespread anxiety may slow a necessary transformation and populists could use anxiety to spread divisiveness with false promises and simple solutions. This anxiety is very manifested in the labour market, in the form of a widespread fear about the loss in the number of jobs and in the quality of jobs, although predictions about the actual impact of AI vary widely. **Volt proposes a**

three-pronged approach: *secure – prepare – create.*

Secure Livelihood in case of Job Loss. Set an EU wide standard for Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI) schemes, initially with at least a modest goal of converging on a minimum poverty threshold of 40% of the equivalent national median income ("extreme poverty"). To ensure fair and broad access to GMI, expand Social Security coverage to those working outside the traditional formal employment sector, such as platform workers, freelancers, self-employed and other forms of flexible work arrangements.

Prepare for a changing working environment. Instead of waiting until jobs are lost, it is necessary to move '**from an Unemployment to an Employment Insurance**' with a reorientation towards preventive schemes focused on maintaining lifelong employability. This includes **setting up a "Volta program" for Lifelong Learning.** The Volta program would become an umbrella for Europe-wide initiatives to prepare European workers for the future of work. It would include subsidized training programs for new tools and technologies and career counselling. It would target workers who are already affected or are threatened to be affected in the near future, by technological change at their

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workplace. Priority would be given to people who do not have the economic means to train and retrain. Training activities should be accredited by recognized training and academic institutions and trainees would receive certifications recognized throughout Europe.

Create the future of work. Initiate a *Work 4.0* public consultation process at European Level, to explore changing basic values concerning work across Europe, and to inform policy formulation at EU and member country level. It can draw on practical experience from Germany's multi-stakeholder [Working 4.0 process {163}](#) and from the Danish 'flexicurity' model, which combines generous public and social welfare benefits with flexible labour markets. Volt believes that there are two aspects, which deserve particular attention:

- **Develop a [Working Time Choice Act {164}](#) at European level**, that gives increased time sovereignty to workers, and provides rules for negotiating working arrangements that balance workers' and companies' flexibility needs. Particular attention should be given to the growing number of self-employed, start-ups, crowd workers, which are not yet well represented politically nor collectively

organized, and hence typically have less negotiation power.

- **Undertake large scale UBI (Universal basic income) pilot programs.** The prospect that AI-related technologies might reduce overall demand for human labour and that structural unemployment will increase, calls for a new concept of social protection de-linked from traditional employment. Pilot programs should have a relevant size (eg. 10,000+ participants, 5+ years, in diverse settings and countries), accompanied by rigorous monitoring of results. The overall program should be steered at EU level, and implemented by member countries, with EU funding for an ongoing and consistent evaluation of the result. Key questions the programs will need to shed light on include: Does UBI effectively replace traditional social welfare systems? What are the costs? How is UBI financed? Which effects do they have on work attitudes? Which effects do they have on self-esteem?

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IV. Shape the future of work and tackle unemployment with innovative concepts

A. Future of work – new working schemes

Volt wants to introduce measures to curb unemployment and promote new working schemes. We, therefore, need to increase the flexibility of our workforce, to better meet changing demands in changing economies. At the same time, we need to develop adequate legal and social frameworks and protections for these new situations. New technological possibilities enable new ways of working. Policies have to harness that potential by providing adequate frames for decentralised and more flexible working schemes.

Flexibility and work-life balance: Volt supports a Working Time Choice Act and will become the recognized political voice for the growing number of startups; the self-employed, crowd, and gig workers; and working parents/guardians. Many people leave the traditional 9-to-5 job routine and feel that autonomy is more empowering and satisfactory. Collaborative economies that operate across borders require flexible working hours and offer opportunities for people who want to work more autonomously and for those who

have fewer chances of finding a [permanent job](#) {165}. Furthermore, flexible working hours especially improve the work-life balance of [working parents](#) {166}. Any new policy to encourage and regulate work flexibility will have to balance at least three principles: (1) Enable more flexible, digital, mobile forms of working, while also (2) protecting workers' health, continuous employability, and base income during all life stages and (3) increasing the international competitiveness of companies.

- Flexible legal and tax-related solutions need to be found for citizens working in one EU Member State and residing in another, or working in multiple Member States throughout the year. The current regime of double-taxation agreements is too rigid to reflect the reality of many EU citizens, and as a result, can act as a deterrent to free movement within the EU.

Pilot more flexible “more-people-working-less” models. The sharp rise in productivity has created an imbalance in the labour markets. A reduction in individual working hours would absorb much of the [structural unemployment which has resulted](#) {167}.

Introduce measures to empower both women and men with children to have a

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successful career. Volt will introduce the following measures that will benefit all types of parents (single men, women, heterosexual and homosexual couples etc).

- **Implement Family Working Time following parental leave** to allow both parents to transition back to work starting part-time, with possible compensation of reduced income during specific life phases ([e.g. during early infancy as foreseen in the German Parental Leave Act](#)) {168} to better balance between parents' responsibilities for [family, caregiving and generating income](#) {169}. Family Working Time would follow parental leave and last up to three years. Both parents would, for example, work 80% full-time, and the loss of wages would be compensated with a [digressive rate based on income level and duration](#) {170}.
- **Enable equal paid maternity and paternity leave** for a specific period of time, and then extra time off that can be shared according to the parents' preferences. Heavily incentivize both parents to take their time off. The length of leave can be decided according to the countries' existing frameworks {171.1,171.2}, but equality shall prevail.

- **Incentivize companies' internal nurseries and working modes,** enabling flexibility suited for each parent's needs.

Foster cooperatives, as they are proven to be more resilient during financial crises, and allow for more economic democracy, citizen participation, greater corporate social responsibility, and efficient delivery of goods and services. Volt supports cooperatives (e.g. European cooperative societies) as an inherent European form of corporation with high working standards and revenue share.

Introduce temporary work reduction schemes in crisis-stricken industries to protect workers by subsidizing a share of salaries. These schemes are work-share programmes where a company can reduce the working hours of people (and their salaries) or even temporarily lay them off. Subsidies cover a percentage of the salary. A maximum amount of time exists that these schemes may be applied. If successfully implemented, such schemes reduce the need to lay off employees during a crisis and rehire them afterwards. This is one of the key pillars for providing more flexibility to employers.

Pilot programmes to reap the benefits of decentralised digital labour, such as lending devices to low income and

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unemployed individuals, making use of existing online training platforms, or setting up wifi-enabled libraries with coaches to teach people how to find jobs and earn a living via distance work over the internet.

Design distance-working models especially for the elderly, assuming that digital literacy will also soon increase for older citizens.

Incentivise part-time schemes, e.g., with subsidies or tax cuts, introduce relocation benefits, and subsidize training on the job for long-term unemployed. We advocate for a telework policy such as in the Netherlands, where employers cannot refuse an employee's request to work remotely unless they can clearly explain why their presence in the workplace is essential.

Assess and implement a best practice scheme for dual vocational education and training across Europe.

Introduce a paid, voluntary, one-year "Civic fellowship", allowing young people to support the state in various tasks, ranging from classical administrative jobs to military and social services. Combine this fellowship with geographical mobility schemes to encourage European exchange.

B. Preventive measures, targeted re-skilling and reintegration

According to recent Eurostat data, 3.722 million young persons (under 25) were unemployed in 2017 in the EU28, a decrease of 380,000 as compared with October 2016. The lowest youth unemployment rates were observed in Germany (6.6 %) and the Czech Republic (7.2 %), while the highest were recorded in Greece (40.2 % in August 2017), Spain (38.2 %) and Italy (34.7 %). Although these figures demonstrate progress, youth unemployment still remains high.

Despite attempts like the Youth Employment Initiative, Youth Guarantee and the European Solidarity Corps to mitigate youth unemployment, young people starting their careers continue to face challenging structural problems. The long practice of offering unpaid internships, poor protection services for young workers, and inconsistencies between the job market and skills cultivated throughout education persist. A better exchange of information between the teaching institutions, employers and employment services is necessary in order to enlarge the interface between education and available employment.

Volt wants to prepare the future workforce and the currently unemployed to be

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competitive in the job market. Special consideration should be given to hinder unemployment by preventive measures. These could include reducing the number of pupils leaving school without any degree and reacting to job shortages before their occurrence.

Set up a “Volta programme”: the Volta programme would become an umbrella for Europe-wide initiatives supported by a wide range of schools and institutions to prepare the European workforce for the future. It would include subsidized training programmes for new tools and technologies as well as career counselling. It would target those who are already affected or are threatened to be affected in the near future, by technological change at their workplace. Priority would be given to people who do not otherwise have the economic means to retrain. Training activities should be accredited by recognized training and academic institutions. Trainees would then receive certifications recognized throughout the European Union.

- **Lifelong learning for employability:** Volt supports a strategy to move ‘From an Unemployment to an Employment Insurance’, which is a preventive scheme focused on maintaining employability. Volt advocates for the immediate adoption of ‘Erasmus Pro’, a

European mobility programme for young people to fund 200,000 two-year-long apprenticeships each year, with an estimated initial budget of [€5 billion a year](#) {172}. Volt supports Individual Long-Term Accounts that support lifelong education, boosted by a periodic Bonus for lifelong learning and retraining, to remain employable within a fast-changing labour market. For people near retirement, consideration must be given to either retraining or early retirement, based on personal welfare and wellbeing as well as government budget constraints (i.e., careful attention is given to the sustainability of the pension system over the long term).

- **Retrain workers** in long-term shrinking sectors for promising industries, promote lifelong learning by making use of existing technology and digital offers such as MOOCs (massive open online courses). Subsidize on-the-job training and training programmes by companies who retrain people and hire a certain percentage of them.

Introduce a 'social year' or 'volunteering year' for all senior citizens reaching the age of 65 when they would usually retire.

Analyze the measures and data by the YEI (Youth Employment Initiative) in a

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standardized, transparent and coherent way and set up a best-practice database for reintegrating measures that can be used by all Member States. [{173.1,173.2}](#) Additionally, make sure that unemployed young people finish the measures they are supposed to do.

Invest in education centres connected to the artisanship excellences of the region (e.g. Naples shall create more education paths for tailors/ dairy producers).

Support the development of young unemployed people's networks by setting up a subsidized mentoring scheme with experienced people across all sectors.

Use pilot matching algorithms based on data analytics to forecast and react to future job shortages on a geographic and sectoral level. This enables preventive measures to be tailored before job losses occur, and could also include data from external sources, such as [social media](#) [{174}](#).

C. Ease job seeking and create fluid job markets

Tear down barriers that slow down or block the match between job seekers and offers by making use of digital tools, platforms, data analytics, and targeted language

courses and foster better cooperation with the private sector.

Create a European Labour Platform to match the labour force with jobs across Europe. Volt wants to expand on the EURESa European Labour Platform to account for differences in needs across member states, to assess an EU-wide demand-supply gap for skills and competencies, and to incentivize balance. A unified digital European job portal would reduce skill mismatch. By taking into account real-time information on skill demand, it could also improve policymaking and worker exchanges between member states. With universities and research institutions involved, this could also help close the skill gap and promote transparency between academia, its graduates, and industry needs. The European job mobility portal [EURES](#) [{175}](#) and the Skills Panorama of [Cedefop](#) [{176}](#) would constitute building blocks of such an initiative [\(for jobs and internships\)](#) [{177}](#). This, if properly matched with a “resettlement package” aimed at providing (1) an intensive language course and (2) financial support for relocation, could reduce overall unemployment by connecting already existing demand and supply.

Start the long-term unification process of labour markets by triggering

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negotiations to pilot a “European” contract, a homogenous working agreement that takes national specificities into account (e.g., quality of life, cost of living). Volt stands for a European approach to Social Development, with practical minimum standards of social protection, decent work, and pay, enabling a successful digital transformation that contributes both to greater prosperity and better working conditions within the EU. Volt envisions universal social protection and an adequate income to be core pillars of EU policy making.

Work in tandem with private sector teams to learn about and implement innovative and efficient methods for training, retraining, and allocating [unemployed people](#) {178}.

Reward young people investing in acquiring language skills which, combined with the willingness to geographically relocate, can help to incentivise balance of labour supply and demand (see European labour platform above).

[Differentiate minimum guaranteed wages](#) {179} by region (not by country) via the loosening of collective agreements. These guaranteed minimum wages must be equal to or above a living wage, the wage rate based on what people need to live, in a given region.

Encourage 'codetermination laws' to enhance cooperation between management and workers.

Harmonise qualifications to reduce search costs for employers and allow job seekers to be competitive in markets other than their home market.

Reduce administrative burden for employees when moving country (pension, income tax, health insurance requirements etc).

V. [Social policies](#)

Guarantee a minimum income above poverty levels. Volt envisions universal social protection and an adequate income to become core pillars of EU policy making. This requires a long-term perspective combined with short-term actions.

- Volt advocates for the strengthening of existing Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI) schemes across the EU, initially with at least a modest goal of converging on a minimum poverty threshold of 40% of the equivalent national median income (“extreme poverty”).
- The schemes should be conditioned not only on a traditional job search but also

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on the possible development of a new business or even an (unpaid) social activity.

- Volt endorses the principles proposed by the Social Platform for a European Directive on minimum income. This includes non-exhaustively, a set of common methodologies for defining adequacy, common approaches to coverage, avoiding exceptions and back doors, and efforts to ensure implementation and common information requirements. Furthermore, it should follow the principles of proactive granting of benefits and enabling gender mainstreaming, gender impact assessment, and gender budgeting, and should flexibly address the needs of particular groups ([for example single parents, the long-term unemployed, older people, young people, etc.](#)) {180}.

Assure minimum child benefits all over Europe. Volt will harmonize child benefits to minimum standards (Linked to national median income) in the EU. Universal child benefits substantially reduce child poverty. Efficient family policies such as providing adequate child benefits lead to better chances to secure the work-life balance and to protect children from social exclusion {182.1,182.2}.

Venture into unconditional income: Volt supports large scale experiments with unconditional basic income (UBI), in order to provide a solid knowledge basis to decide on the merits of this novel approach to social protection.

Start capital: Volt endorses the idea of a start capital for every young person in the EU. Such start capital can be seen as a social inheritance that enables a young person to develop their talents, choose a career, or start up a business, independently of the social status and wealth of their parents. Everyone is eligible, but depending on their parents' income/wealth, it is either a grant (poor parents) or a [soft loan](#) {183} (wealthy parents) with possible graduation in between. The eligible expenditure includes a broad range and definition of life/profession-enhancing activities. Volt proposes large-scale experiments with unconditional start capital to learn how to best structure such a policy instrument.

Integrate the increasing number of on-demand workers (Gig economy) in the social welfare system by providing a framework that allows for minimum standards and assures the accountability of employers.

- **Extend Social Security Coverage to self-employed individuals (opt-in**

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option). Including self-employed individuals in the community of solidarity of the statutory pension insurance system would give them the same rights and obligations as all other insured persons. The statutory pension insurance obligation should apply primarily to younger people who enter self-employment after the obligation enters into force. There should also be greater scope to reduce contributions while setting up a new business and in periods with low earnings (e.g. by an EU fund that supports programmes that support entrepreneurs in the early stages of their business). In addition, those who are already covered by an obligatory system, or other pre-existing voluntary arrangements for old age income, should be entitled to receive an exemption from the obligation of coverage by the statutory pension insurance system. This applies to, for example, farmers, freelancers, and lawyers who in many countries are covered by professional retirement schemes.

Rethink pension ages and whether we need differentiated pension ages by sectors (allowing people to work for long in non physically straining areas).

Part-time working models for the elderly, which could help mitigate the

pension funding issues present in some member states. This may also assist more people staying in the labour market longer.

VI. Develop economically challenged areas and champion trade

Fight inequalities among European regions by allowing challenged areas to recover and/or invest in their future. Continue championing free, fair and sustainable trade across the globe while improving the enforcement of EU-standard for all imported goods. In particular, ensure that non-EU partners completely comply with our standards. Instead of only maximizing economic growth, modern societies should work to close social gaps and guarantee a decent quality of life for everyone. Governments should not be evaluated on their economic performance, but on their success in creating cohesiveness among their citizens.

A. Develop Economically Challenged Areas

Create jobs by sponsoring smart and environmentally friendly structural investments in challenged regions. After years of attempts, blind transfers have proved to be inefficient, and challenged regions are often isolated from the more

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productive areas of Europe. Europe needs a serious and coordinated plan for creating real and long-term value. Volt aims not only to create new jobs but to do so while narrowing socioeconomic gaps between regions, as well as pushing for autonomous and greener power generation. This might be achieved by:

- Extending the European High Speed Railway.
- Investing in local, clean energy production sites or [pollution-eating highways](#) {184}.
- Improving accessibility and connectivity for rural regions to suburban and urban areas.

Options are broad for obtaining the much-needed transformation of our societies toward more sustainable and integrative models. Volt proposes to:

- Create a more concerted common strategy between EU institutions and National Member States (Instead of merely and randomly distributing EU funds to proposed projects, without any comprehensive and long-term strategy).

- Increment the portion of the EU budget allocated to these projects. Some of the investments could also be financed through bond sales to the ECB.

Based on the example of [Obama's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act](#) {186}, it is believed this will lead to the creation of hundreds of thousands of new jobs distributed in challenged regions. Moreover, it will provide immediate opportunities to all Europeans who are currently excluded from the job market.

Create EU-wide digital platforms to ensure accountability and transparency in deploying EU funds.

Huge infrastructural projects can carry the risk of wasting significant resources through corruption, embezzlement, and [non-deployment](#) {187}. Volt will create a monitoring body that provides transparency to ensure that all funds deployed in former and new projects directly reach those in need and are not hoarded through criminality and incompetence ([cf. Obama's ARRA](#)) {188}.

Foster the transfer of knowledge and qualification to increase productivity and reduce imbalances. Volt proposes to fund pan-European research programmes and initiatives in order to include lagging regions in high-standard production methods. The access to and diffusion of

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knowledge pushes the process of technological convergence. The programmes (research as well as concrete initiatives) should be focused on topics such as digital transformation for SMEs and micro-enterprises, the development of sustainable drive technology, and the production of clean energy from renewable energy sources.

Reorientate cohesion and structural funds towards education and training in economically challenged areas. We have too often seen European funds being spent on unnecessarily large infrastructure projects that were not needed. For example, big motorways or airports have been funded in regions that don't have the economic activity needed to make the investment worthwhile. Furthermore, funds are sometimes spent in areas where no more infrastructure is required because there are no other projects in which to invest. Instead, such money and effort should be redirected to projects that are truly needed, such as updating poorly funded schools and universities, training unemployed or low-skilled people, and supporting young, innovative entrepreneurs. Sometimes the most deprived areas have modern facilities, yet lack investment in education and human capital. If these regions are to catch up with their counterparts, a smart balance between investments should be obtained.

B. Champion Trade {189}

Push for creating fair and sustainable free trade deals with the fundamental drivers of growth in the world (Asian powers, the US). At the same time, emphasise civil rights and freedom while negotiating free-trade deals with, for example, Asian countries, and ensure that minimum EU quality standards are respected ([e.g. Chinese steel](#)) {190}.

Ensuring that free-trade deals benefit all European citizens. Trade has the potential to enrich society in its entirety. However, some benefit from commerce, while others are harmed by it. For this reason, when discussing new free-trade deals, we should include some mechanisms to distribute their potential benefits. These redistribution mechanisms, such as [progressive taxation](#) {191}, have to be included in the negotiation of trade deals if appropriate measures are applied.

VII. Fiscal policies

A. **Taxation: challenges and general principles**

Volt is aware that this will be one of the fiercest battles for European integration. Therefore, this long-term process is

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intended to be implemented gradually, one measure at a time.

Volt believes that European common taxation as an EU-based competence is necessary. Moreover, Volt thinks that all Member States' forms of taxation should be deeply aligned. This would ensure direct sources of funding for the EU, as well as securing a better answer to globalisation's challenges. Moreover, it would assure solidarity between EU members, while requiring more fiscal sustainability. Finally, it would ensure that non-European corporations could not easily arbitrage our national regulations.

- Volt wants to pursue multiple objectives on both individual and corporate taxation:
- Reduce the complexity of tax returns to increase transparency.
- Identify loopholes (e.g., within the deductions system).
- Review the fiscal systems to increase the fairness of fiscal pressures across society.
- Rebalance fiscal pressures.

- Fight evasion in the short term and build a long-term culture against fiscal evasion.
- Leverage fiscal incentives to ease entrepreneurship and support the birth & growth of new enterprises.

B. Concrete proposals about taxation

1. Individual taxation

Introduce a lower tax on dividends and on interest payments received from bonds issued by SMEs.

Lift the fiscal ceiling by allowing private investors to invest in SMEs and that investment to be fiscally deducted over the invested sum (e.g.: in France, a household can invest up to 10k€ and benefit from a fiscal redemption. This could be raised up to 30k€ per household).

Reduce the number of deductions in favour of lower tax rates and shrink the number of taxes to boost simplicity.

Anchor income tax to the level of inequality in the country so that its progressivity would increase when the GINI coefficient (level of inequality) increases in the country.

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Aim to reduce overall fiscal pressures on low- and middle-income groups.

Keep low VAT on basic goods (bread, milk), slightly higher on normal goods (mass clothing and cars), even higher on intermediate goods (fashion clothing, sports cars), and highest on luxury goods (boats, etc.). The various steps must be carefully assessed not to depress the production and consumption of luxury goods.

2. Corporate taxation

Make social charges deductible for the first 3 years of profit.

Introduce a progressive tax system according to the size of the business, and relieve tax pressure for startups. However, make sure brackets do not hamper growth incentives.

Develop methods to harmonize taxes across the EU, ultimately leading to [European corporate taxes](#) {192}.

Introduce a bandwidth for corporate tax rates across the EU to ensure the competitiveness of Europe as a whole, and fiscal competition among member states.

Introduce tax cuts for setting up businesses in all sectors for longer than the current period of time (e.g. 5 years).

3. General taxation

Develop easy-to-use digital platforms for everyone (individuals and corporations) to calculate and pay their taxes. Additionally, leverage innovative techniques to pursue and investigate tax evasion.

Reduce cash payments in order to minimise illegal transactions as much as possible. This could be pursued by increasing legal consequences of tax evasion and the effectiveness of tax fraud administrators on one side, and by making sure merchants do not pay excessive commissions on card transactions.

Review the effectiveness of penalties related to fiscal evasion, both monetary and nonmonetary.

Regularly inform the public via EU institutional websites about the level of fiscal evasion, breaking it down by sector, and showing the consequence on public services.

Work with regional administrations and the highest level of central governments in order to define regional long-term

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development plans, as well as short-term alleviating interventions that stimulate local economies.

Support the introduction of an EU-wide Financial Transaction Tax. Tax all financial transactions at 0.05% (transactions on derivatives and “financial market bets”) or 0.021 % on standard transactions ([securities trading: shares and bonds](#)) {193}. Exemptions have to be defined, e.g. for [SME growth markets](#) {194}.

C. A European corporate tax

The first step towards a European corporate tax would primarily concern larger EU corporations (please see below which characteristics would apply), as well as non-EU companies conducting business in the EU. Volt needs to ensure that non-EU corporations generating revenue in the EU are properly taxed for their profits related to their European revenue. As it is very easy for non-EU companies to transfer their profits out of the EU and thus pay very low taxes, Volt must find alternative tools that would assure a fairer competition scenario in Europe. This would also provide incentives to EU Member States to compete on non-fiscal features in order to attract businesses.

Transfer the national taxation authority of all EU companies generating revenue

exceeding 50m€ in more than 2 EU countries (each) to the EU.

Apply a unique minimum European tax rate for the companies mentioned above, which should be set at 15%, and then increased depending on the size, type of business, and the number of employees. Additional features may also be considered.

Transfer national taxation authority over non-European companies generating revenue in any European country to the EU. Funds obtained with this taxation would be used for financing the EU budget.

Tax non-EU based companies on their revenue rather than on their profits if:

- they present an annual global turnover of more than €500m and total taxable revenue of 50m€ [generated in the EU](#) {197};
- their European ponderate taxation rate is inferior to 15%
- Other features may be considered.

Non-EU based companies are considered those whose headquarter (HQ) or which parent company is based out of the EU.

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Companies included in these new “revenue taxation” rules may ask to be taxed on their profits. This can happen if:

- these companies transfer their HQ within an EU Member State, at which point they would be subject to European taxation as if they were EU businesses; or
- prove that the difference between their profit tax rate and their revenue tax rate is not inferior to 5% for businesses generating under €50m in revenues, and not inferior to 2.5% for businesses generating over €50m in revenues.

If a company falls into the above set of EU rules but is incurring losses instead of profits (i.e. startup phase, new product launch), then this company would be allowed to use accounting mechanisms that permit it to carry the loss onto future financial years.

Due to the extensive nature and length of the taxation topic, many technical mechanisms have not been included above but they will be during the legislative process.

D. Funding support and sustainable finance

Analyse available funding along the different stages of business growth and enable the private sector to fill in the identified gaps (e.g., “valleys of death”).

Find innovative means to bridge investment gaps, especially during early phases of business creation in order to create incentives for other players (e.g., state guarantees, co-investment funds, financial tool-kit for startups, centralized platforms for funding, matching investors and startups).

Scale up the European Investment Bank (EIB) with the clear mandate on investments where there are “valleys of death” for startups (e.g., ticket sizes of 50.000 to 1.000.000) or lack of available funds in strategic industries.

Standardize the definition of impact investment and enable institutional investment in impact investment.

Create incentives for institutional investors to (co-)invest in socially beneficial projects (e.g. infrastructure projects with a long horizon).

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E. European Taxation Agency

If a corporate group operates in 3 or more European member states, their taxes should be collected by a European tax collecting agency. This would manage the expectations of both companies and reduce the data collection burden on national taxation agencies.

Furthermore, the tax base should not be determined at an entity level but at the group level in order to avoid profit shifting through Transfer Pricing mechanisms. Volt, therefore, supports the Proposal for a council directive on a Common Corporate Tax Base (COM(2016) 685 final) and on the Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base (COM(2016) 683 final) [{198}](#).

Volt in general supports the action plan for fair and simple taxation supporting the recovery strategy as of 15 July 2020 (COM(2020) 312 final). However, our main priority is to alleviate burdens from national taxation agencies and assist in the fair recovery of taxes due by multinational corporations [{199}](#).

By creating a European Taxation Agency, Volt wants to limit bureaucracy and streamline information by expanding the current EUROFISC [{200}](#). The current proposal by the Commission to share more company data with member states [{201}](#),

will certainly increase the burden on member states on managing and processing the data while not guaranteeing fair taxation as the proposal anticipates sufficient capacity to manage it [{202}](#).

Rather, the European Taxation Agency should be supporting and liaising with national taxation agencies to support member states in their fight against tax evasion while ensuring tax collection happens.

Elements that the European Taxation Agency would look into:

- Where companies maintain high turnovers yet low profits, the ETA should conduct a tax audit.
- Liaise with national member states to coordinate relevant information.
- Be a resource to media to ensure transparency and public dissemination
- Provide administrative support to manage EU sanctioned state aid packages to reduce pressure on member states and limit the risk of fraud.

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- The European Taxation Agency would also seek to cooperate with relevant agencies beyond EU borders in order to join efforts against tax evasion.
- This European tax agency needs to hold all taxation-relevant data in up-to-date digital formats, protected against manipulation and unauthorized inspection, yet easily retrievable for tax-collection purposes. This allows for tax authorities from member states to easily get information on taxation-relevant transactions that happened outside of their sovereignty, as seen in circular trades to retrieve exemptions for taxes that have never been paid in the first place.

VIII. Mobilize Europe in a smart and sustainable way

In Europe, air pollution continues to take a heavy toll on health, causing around [400,000 early deaths annually](#) {206}. Road mobility also comes at a high price in terms of lives lost: in 2015, slightly over 26,000 people lost their lives in road accidents within the EU, [whereas the road death toll in 2015 is still more than 22 times the total number of fatalities in rail and air transport combined](#) {207}. Many European cities are polluted, noisy, and face massive congestion problems. In 2017, Bucharest, Romania, had the worst traffic in Europe,

with a score of 50%, meaning it takes drivers 50% more travel time to get to their destination in the city, a massive [7-point increase from the year before](#) {208}.

On the other hand, rural areas face the challenge of lacking transport connections. For many years now, freedom of movement has been fully recognised and applied throughout the European Union. However, putting aside some security limitations, travel across our continent is still complex. A lot has yet to be done regarding pollution, and the rights of travellers are not always protected in the best possible ways.

We follow the UN's definition of sustainable transport as "the provision of services and infrastructure for the mobility of people and goods - advancing economic and social development to benefit today's and future generations - in a manner that is safe, affordable, accessible, efficient, and resilient [while minimizing carbon and other emissions and environmental impacts](#) {209}." We envision a smarter and more eco-friendly transportation system, both for people and freight, that is built on cutting-edge technology, while increasing safety and leveraging concepts such as the sharing economy. Volt wants greener cities with reduced noise and as little pollution

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as possible, which will result in a higher quality of life for everyone.

Reduce pollution caused by transportation by promoting new ways of mobility and new transportation modes. These encompass [public hybrid buses](#) {210}, bike cities like Copenhagen (a policy which led to a 30% [reduction in private cars](#) {211} by installing “bicycle snakes” and other appropriate infrastructure) {212}, solar boats/cars/planes, [electric vertical take-off and landing jets](#) {213}, and Hyperloops between big city hubs. Smarter infrastructure may include ideas [as diverse as electrified roads](#) {214} and roads made out of solar panels, which can directly charge electric vehicles driving on them, and sharing economy concepts. To enable the implementation of these transport and infrastructure concepts, we envision cooperative ventures bringing together industry, research, and society in the development and testing of solutions for next-generation sustainable public and private transport {215}.

Enable the safe development of autonomous driving. This technology has the potential to substantially benefit social welfare by reducing road accidents, lowering the energy consumption of vehicles and optimizing traffic flows. Additionally, it allows for an optimization

of traffic flow, reduction of logistics cost and can lead to a revitalization of rural areas (cf Valentas Gružasuskas, Saulius Baskutis, Valentinas Navickas, Minimizing the trade-off between sustainability and cost-effective performance by using autonomous vehicles, Journal of Cleaner Production, Volume 184, 2018, Pages 709-717, ISSN 0959-6526) {216,217}.

Volt recognizes the two main challenges of AV technology as (1) technical development and (2) creating a stringent political framework on a European level.

- We are in favour of sandbox experiments, also to promote necessary technology such as sensors, algorithms and cybersecurity technology to be developed {219}.
- We believe that a political framework for AV needs to be developed on an EU level, and needs to cover at minimum safety regulations and liability rules, as well as necessary minimum levels of performance (eg. functional safety, cf ISO 21448). We are in favour of promoting open-source approaches for key software components of AVs (e.g. HD maps, decision algorithms, cybersecurity) to prevent the formation of natural monopolies, and promote active competition in the marketplace (Cf. Ghosh, Rishab Aiyer. "Economic

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impact of open source software on innovation and the competitiveness of the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) sector in the EU." (2007)).

AV technology should be permitted if and when it is [superior to average human drivers](#) {222}.

Get the most out of existing infrastructure by assessing and mapping infrastructure productivity levels per region, in order to create a European database that is available to all European citizens. Revamp current infrastructure utilisation with technologies and new pricing schemes.

Stimulate local economies by investing in infrastructure development projects to connect challenged areas to more developed areas. This includes urban clusters, incentivizing High-Speed Rail projects to connect more remote areas to the rest of Europe. Many European areas do not have efficient infrastructures and/or travel costs are prohibitive (e.g. Sicily: two major airports, an old and inefficient highway, lack of a high-speed railway that the island needs, expensive flight tickets, etc.). Fairer prices can be reached by increasing competition; however, priority is given to improving infrastructure in remote areas. Examples

include extending the high-speed rail network to minor provincial hubs, improving infrastructure connecting both [cities to airports](#) {223} and airports to airports, etc.

Build a more integrated transportation system. Foster multimodal transport to shift road transport and to other modes such as inland waterway transport and rail. Make rail transport more competitive to road transport by subsidizing investments in transshipment hubs by enabling longer freight trains and by reducing rail access charges.

Use the current low-interest market to launch infrastructure investments and improve mobility. Volt recommends that member states enjoying healthy financial and commercial surpluses take advantage of the current low interest-rate momentum and launch serious infrastructure/reform plans. By doing so, they would make sure that they will not need to do that in a less favourable financial market phase.

Assess, if possible, multiplier and welfare effects of public expenditure on different infrastructure projects in order to come to more productive infrastructures, such as free wifi and crucial connections between airports and cities.

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Legally require all transport companies receiving any kind of public incentive to send their financial statements to public authorities. If incentives are given to transport companies in specific cases (such as funding not-profitable routes), we cannot allow companies receiving them to distribute their eventual profits (if these exceed a certain amount) to shareholders. Moreover, public authorities and citizens shall always be able to check beneficiary companies' financial statements to verify that no abuses are carried out.

Revamp current infrastructure utilisation with technologies and new pricing schemes to make infrastructure more productive.

Social Equality

Challenge 3 - Social Equality

Vision

No one should be left behind. Everyone should be guaranteed equal rights and opportunities, and human rights need to be respected, applied and upheld.

It is unacceptable that in 2018 people are still subject to discrimination because of their gender, sexuality, appearance, origin, or beliefs. It is equally intolerable that almost [one in every four Europeans](#) {224} faces poverty or social exclusion, and that support is not provided for those who are most vulnerable. Finally, some Europeans still cannot make choices when it comes to their own bodies.

Volt is tackling social equality challenges by addressing four core issues and taking a holistic approach with the aim to end all forms of discrimination, stigmas and disparities, and ensuring that no one is left behind.

Volt strives to end discrimination against women and LGBTIQ+ people as well as discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity,

nationality, descent, skin colour and belief. These issues will be addressed in four sectors: the law, the public sector, the workplace and the education system.

Volt works towards alleviating poverty by empowering individuals to become active members of society; combating homelessness, reducing youth poverty, reforming the social benefits and healthcare systems and introducing new forms of social and community housing.

Volt recognises that inclusion in society is fundamental and as such special focus is placed on seniors, people with special educational needs and disabilities as well as children in care.

Volt emphasises a person's right to their own body and their freedom to choose. Our policies, therefore, discuss reproductive rights, surrogacy, prostitution and ending life with dignity.

I. End discrimination against groups and minorities

[“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights](#) {225}.” **Let’s make Europe equal by 2025!**

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A. End discrimination against women

Gender equality is a fundamental human right and one that should be rapidly achieved. In the current state of our societies, women are still treated unfairly, face more barriers than their male counterparts, are subject to specific types of violence, and are discriminated against in their private, public and professional lives. An example of this is the fact that women are heavily discriminated against in the workplace: they tend to have lower salaries, are underrepresented in senior management positions, and experience [workplace bullying and harassment](#) {226}. Another example is that menstruating persons are restricted in their ability to participate in society and are structurally disadvantaged due to their periods: **period poverty** is a global problem.

1. In the law

Promote legislation and concrete action to address persistent discrimination against women.

Work towards ending violence against women in a comprehensive manner, including through the ratification of the [Council of Europe Convention](#) {227} on preventing and combating both violence

against women and domestic violence (the “Istanbul Convention”).

2. In the public sector

Ensure that countries lead by example and apply inclusive and equal policies that actively contribute towards effective and sustainable gender equality.

Comprehensive strategies are needed to address the issues, with a broad range of measures, such as training and overcoming stereotypes. Women not only continue to be underrepresented in decision-making positions at all levels, but the rate of progression in this regard is slow {229}.

- Implement comprehensive programmes to encourage women to get into politics and support them once there, through training courses, mentoring, public campaigns, and other means.
- Educate the public about the benefits of [gender parity in political decision making](#) {230}.

Require political parties to ensure equal representation of men and women on their lists of candidates for elections {231.1,231.2,231.3}. The European Commission itself has explained that “formal quotas are an effective way to accelerate the pace of progress and

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encourage political parties to [seek the participation of women](#) {232}.”

Ensure gender parity within the public sector through various means, such as setting quotas or giving preference to female candidates [during the recruitment process](#) {234}. Such measures will be in place as long as necessary, up until the desired outcome has been achieved. The process to achieve, and the exact definition of, gender parity can vary depending on circumstances, and requires constant monitoring to measure progress made towards the goal.

Make reporting on gender representation mandatory at all levels of government, whether at the national, local, and regional level. This will draw attention to the lack of female representation. Public reporting can also prompt change due to possible reputational risks.

3. In the workplace

Require all mid-sized to large companies to disclose and report on gender balance and gender pay gap. Across the EU, wage gaps between genders are [still at 16.0%](#) {235}. Greater transparency on gender pay gaps will help to tackle gender inequality in the workplace and help to ensure the representation of women at all levels

throughout companies. Gender reporting increases accountability and drives action towards more inclusive and fairer policies. Volt is proposing:

- From 2020 onwards, mid-sized to large companies (more than 100 employees) will be **required to disclose how much they pay male and female staff** in terms of [salaries and bonuses](#) {236}, and by 2025 they will be obliged to obtain a government certificate demonstrating pay equality {237.1,237.2}. Failure to comply will result in fines.
- Businesses will have to **disclose gender balance across the company** in their annual financial statements, including the number of women in senior management positions, from the moment the legislation will come into effect.
- Every state-owned company, regardless of its size, ought to disclose its gender balance across the whole enterprise by 2020. All state-owned companies will also have to produce a report demonstrating equal pay on an annual basis.
- Sanction companies that do not extend to each individual the same benefits, salaries, opportunities for training or

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promotion because of their gender identity, and include reference to non-discrimination on these grounds in any vacancy announcements.

Set a 40% quota for women on the boards of all publicly traded enterprises {238.1,238.2}. In 2018, the average female representation on European boards stood at 33.6 {239}. This measure will not only positively impact the performance of companies, but will also lead to an increased number of women across the company as a whole.

- All companies that are publicly traded on a [stock market](#) {240} will be required to have 40% female representation on their corporate boards by 2025. Failure to comply with this regulation will result in heavy fines, suspended remuneration of board members, and/or a possible delisting from the market.
- Existing companies will be given a five-year timeframe to achieve the quota, while newly listed companies will be required to comply with the requirement at the time of listing {241.1,241.2}.

State-owned companies should act as role models. State-owned companies ought to have a 50% female

representation on their corporate boards by 2025.

Incentivize He For She programmes: make men part of the solution, not the problem. Volt believes that all parties need to participate in the conversation for a solution to evolve. For this reason, it is necessary to encourage more dialogue and to create initiatives in the workplace, consisting of men supporting good practices and sensitizing others to the issues. Those can and should take various forms: men attending women's meetings to take part in discussions, listen, and ask questions; men simply standing up every time a woman is treated in an unfair manner; or pledges consisting of men refusing to speak on a panel that has no women or participate in a meeting that women are not part of.

Require all mid-sized to large companies to have confidential channels and hotlines separate from general employee relations to report inappropriate and discriminatory behaviour, violence and/or sexual harassment. Women still face sexual harassment and violence, as well as inappropriate behaviours in the workplace. People of other genders face some of those types of violence as well and shall have access to the same channels. Volt will require employers to have those reporting

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channels in place, and have them be managed by an external company or by a separate human resources team that includes women.

Introduce measures to empower women with children to have a successful career.

The following measures will benefit all types of parents (including but not limited to single men, women, heterosexual and homosexual couples):

- **Incentivize companies' internal nurseries and working modes**, enabling flexibility suited for each parent's needs.
- **Enable equal paid maternity and paternity leave** for a specific period of time, and then extra time off that can be shared according to the parents' preferences. Heavily incentivize both parents to take their time off. The length of leave can be decided according to the countries' existing frameworks, but equality shall prevail.
- **Pilot more flexible "more-people-working-less" models.** The sharp rise in productivity has created an imbalance in the labour markets. A reduction in individual working hours would absorb [much of the structural unemployment which has resulted](#) {243}.

- **Implement Family Working Time following parental leave** to allow both parents to transition back to work starting part-time, with possible compensation of reduced income during specific life phases (e.g. during early infancy as foreseen in the [German Parental Leave Act](#) {244}) to better balance between parents' responsibilities for family, caregiving and [generating income](#) {245} would follow parental leave and last up to three years. Both parents would, for example, work 80% full-time, and the loss of wages would be compensated with a digressive rate [based on income level and duration](#) {246}.

4. In the education system

Educate students about the advantages and the importance of having a discrimination-free society and workforce. For example, a diverse workforce is profitable for companies as it improves both levels of productivity and employment.

Incentivize girls and women to enter careers in which they are often underrepresented. This could be done in many ways, including by setting up state-sponsored 'summer camps' for sectors that are generally dominated by

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men to incentivise equal representation in younger generations. This would provide an opportunity for women to familiarise themselves with possible careers and/or studies.

Have internal bias training for professionals in the education system, including teachers and professors, to ensure that girls and women have the same chances and opportunities as others and that they are not steered towards particular careers.

5. Combating period poverty

Menstrual hygiene is not a choice or a luxury, but a necessity that should be treated accordingly in the context of society, charity and taxation. Volt is committed to combating period poverty and achieving greater equal opportunities through access to free menstrual products. Therefore, this policy focuses on enabling access to free menstrual products such as tampons and pads in public buildings.

Governments and local administrations ensure the distribution of free menstrual products to schools and other educational institutions, prisons, hospitals, food banks, homeless shelters, women's shelters and similar facilities, as well as to public toilets. The primary aim should be to ensure free access to sanitary pads.

Handling in public spaces: Depending on local conditions, either hygiene items are provided in all rooms or easy and generally, access is made possible. For example, in a common, protected anteroom for all genders. It is important here that "all rooms" also include male toilets and disabled-friendly toilets.

Proper **education and awareness-raising** on healthy menstrual hygiene and the removal of taboos are an important part of the fight against period poverty. Everyone should have access to knowledge to develop an understanding of how to deal with periods. Also, Volt is committed to educating menstruating persons by schools and doctors about possible alternatives to hygienic pads and tampons. This shall provide an opportunity for use of environmentally friendly and healthy hygiene products.

Volt supports and promotes initiatives such as the EU Ecolabel for hygiene products to increase the production and consumption of hygiene products with a lower environmental impact. Every menstruating person should be entitled to a free menstrual cup from a gynaecologist every three years.

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B. End discrimination against LGBTQI+ people

Volt is based on the principles of equality for all, equal opportunities, and the respect of human rights. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) individuals are subject to discriminatory practices, violence, harassment, and so much more in every realm of their lives. LGBTQI+ individuals each face different challenges and have different needs; there is no one-size-fits-all policy. Volt aims to introduce regulations and concrete actions to achieve equality in law and in practice for all. By this, we don't mean an abstract concept of equality, but pure equality: we will settle for nothing less. We want to ensure that LGBTQI+ people have access to the same rights and protections as others. It is also key to eliminate all forms of discrimination, whether in the private or public sphere, through education, incentivization in the workplace etc. in short, love is love, and it's that simple.

1. In the law

Legalize marriage for all. Unfortunately, in many countries in Europe, some people cannot yet get married because of the gender of the person they love (Marriage for a same-sex couple is legal in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France,

Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Malta, Spain, Sweden, and the UK). The fact that other types of partnerships exist and are available does not mean that this is acceptable in any way. This is why Volt will work to legalize marriage for all across Europe where it is not already the case, in order for heterosexual and homosexual couples to have access to the exact same rights, procedures, and union in the eyes of the state. It is necessary to stress that this is not an affront to religion: Volt stands for secular states; as a result, is talking about civil rights and union in front of the state, and not religious ones.

Legalize adoption for same-sex couples.

So many children need families, and so many families - or individuals - want children. The only criteria that should matter are whether one can and will provide a safe and loving environment for a child. Equality means that all should have the same rights, including the right to adopt a child. No, same-sex parents are not less able to raise a child than heterosexual ones. No, a child does not need both a maternal and a paternal figure. Otherwise, how could we explain that so many children raised by single parents or by homosexual parents are like everybody else? Otherwise, how could we justify letting single parents raise children alone? For these reasons, Volt will work to:

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- **Give the opportunity to adopt a child to every adult** - regardless of their gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status - based on the same criteria as those imposed for adoption on heterosexual couples according to local law.
- **Ensure that the procedure will be the same as for heterosexual couples.** Homosexual couples and single parents should not have to jump through any additional hoops to be able to adopt. No discrimination should take place on the basis of a parent's gender identity, sexual orientation, or marital status.

Guarantee transgender rights:

- **Make gender-affirming procedures,** such as hormone treatment, surgery and psychological support, **accessible for transgender persons,** and ensure that they are reimbursed by public health insurance schemes {249}.
- **Challenge legislation that requires transgender individuals to** do the following to change their gender legally: undergo medical procedures (such legislations are still present in 23 countries in Europe, and need to be challenged rapidly) {250.1,250.2,250.3}, or be diagnosed as mentally ill.

- Ensure that people are able to use the facilities linked to one's own gender identification (e.g. bathrooms).

Guarantee intersex rights {251}:

- **Prohibit medically unnecessary "sex-normalising" surgery, sterilisation and other treatments practised on intersex babies and children** without their informed consent {252}. Such treatment shall be deferred "until such time as the child is able to participate in the decision," unless when there is a risk to the life of the child {252}. As of April 2018, Malta and Portugal are the only countries in the world to ban medically unnecessary surgery on the genitals of intersex infants.
- Ensure that there are **no administrative obstacles for intersex individuals in being recognized,** getting necessary administrative papers etc. Gender markers in identity documents and birth registries should be reviewed to better protect intersex people (see point below) {254}.

Promote legislation that allows non-binary people to choose their gender on IDs, forms, and official documents (as X or Q for example). Add the use of the singular "they" instead of

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only “he or she” or “he/she” in documents and forms. States could also consider making the registration of one’s gender optional on [birth certificates and other identity documents](#) {255}.

Promote and revise legislation that addresses persistent discrimination against LGBTIQ+ people. While legislation is in place to tackle discrimination, it is essential to increase their visibility and revise laws where necessary.

- Ensure that adequate deterrents, such as fines and criminal penalties, are in place and applied when acts of violence (hate crimes) or discrimination takes place because of a person’s orientation, sexuality, and/or gender {256.1,256.2}.

Conduct training for the police on hate crimes against LGBTIQ+ people {257}.

2. In the public sector

Ensure that countries lead by example and **apply inclusive and equal policies to actively contribute towards real equality.** Comprehensive strategies are needed to address the issues, with a broad range of measures that could be used to accomplish this goal.

- Implement **comprehensive programmes** to encourage minorities to get into politics, and support them once there, through training courses, mentoring, public campaigns, and other means.
- Educate the public about the benefits of diversity in political decision making.

Train judges, magistrates and other civil servants to recognize and address implicit biases towards minorities. The justice system is vital to ensuring that disputes are resolved in an orderly manner and that victims are protected. Volt wants to reinstate the confidence in the justice system and ensure that biases towards minorities are maintained at a minimum, if not eliminated, through training and other methods.

3. In the workplace

Sanction companies that do not extend to each individual the same benefits, salaries, opportunities for hiring, training, or promotion regardless of one’s sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics, and include reference to non-discrimination on these grounds in vacancy announcements.

Require all mid-sized to large companies to have confidential channels and

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hotlines, separate from general employee relations, to report inappropriate and discriminatory behaviour, violence and/or sexual harassment. Volt will require employers to have reporting channels in place that are managed by an external company or by a separate human resources team. These channels will be accessible to all.

Incentivize companies to train staff - especially managers - to raise awareness of issues faced by their LGBTIQ+ colleagues.

Provide incentives to companies to ensure that they address the specific rights of transgender {259.1,259.2} and intersex {260} people at work.

- Companies should adopt policies for trans inclusion, including the recognition of the gender identity of trans staff, customers, and other stakeholders, regardless of whether this is reflected in official documents (which includes establishing policies that require company staff to respect the name, pronouns, terms, and gender used by the person concerned).
- Companies should ensure safe and non-discriminatory access to bathrooms and other single-sex facilities and non-discriminatory dress codes.

- Companies also need to adopt policies to respect the rights of intersex people at work, including access to personal services and changing rooms, dress codes, healthcare and medical attention.

4. In the education system

Cover all subjects in sexual education classes:

education is key to eliminating inequalities and unfair treatments, and fostering a culture of mutual understanding and acceptance. It is important to make sure that in a [safe learning environment](#) {261} they have access to the information and resources that concern them, their classmates and the rest of the world. This is why Volt will ensure that during sexual education classes:

- Not only heterosexuality should be discussed, but also all other types of sexual orientations and gender identities (for example, what it means to be non-binary, cisgender, transgender, intersex),
- Methods of contraception and protection are explained and discussed,
- All of the above is to be done without shaming, false explanations, and

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religious commentaries, and in a way that is non-discriminatory and inclusive.

Educate students about the advantages and the importance of having a discrimination-free society and workforce. For example, a diverse workforce is profitable for companies as it improves both levels of productivity and employment

C. End discrimination based on ethnicity, national origin, descent and skin colour

Current legal instruments at the national, European, and international level fail to protect individuals facing prejudice, unequal treatment, and social exclusion. Minorities still experience discriminatory treatment and hate crimes, including in education, employment, social services, interaction with law enforcement, etc. Discrimination based on ethnicity and skin colour remains one of the most experienced forms of inequality, with these minorities remaining the most disadvantaged and [persecuted individuals in society](#) {262}. Additionally, discrimination against Roma people is particularly problematic across Europe. Roma people represent the largest ethnic minority in Europe: it is estimated that there are 10-12 million Roma people in total, some 6 million of whom live in the

EU, and most of whom hold [the citizenship of an EU country](#) {263}. Recent publications show that as many as 80% of Roma are still [at risk of poverty](#) {264}.

1. In the law

Promote and revise legislation that addresses persistent discrimination against certain groups. While legislation is in place to tackle discrimination, it is essential to increase its visibility and revise it where necessary.

- Ensure that adequate deterrents, such as fines and criminal penalties, are in place and applied when acts of violence (hate crimes) or discrimination take place due to someone's [ethnicity, national origin, descent, or skin colour](#) {265.1,265.2}.
- Immediately remove any exceptions which permit discrimination on these grounds.

Strengthen law enforcement systems in order to end police violence, harassment, and profiling, and ensure that the police fulfil their duty to protect society. The police practice of [ethnic profiling](#) {266} still exists in most countries (e.g. in France, young men perceived as black or Arab are 20 times more likely to be stopped than the rest of the population) {267}. Recent

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statistics show that in 2017, almost half of those who were stopped by the police believed that this was due to their [immigrant or ethnic minority background](#) {268}. Volt, therefore, proposes to work to:

- **End ethnic profiling** during police identity checks and require officers to **issue a stop form** for every identity check, to encourage well-grounded stops and greater accountability.
- **Limit officers' discretionary authority** by requiring reasonable & individualised suspicion for all checks and searches, and develop clear guidance for law enforcement officers.

End police violence through training, accountability mechanisms, and monitoring.

Remove the terms 'race', 'racism' and 'racial discrimination' in all legislations.

The current concept of different races is socially constructed, as scientifically there is only one human race ([Homo sapiens](#) {269}). The use of such terms should therefore be eliminated in law and the concept should be redefined. On this merit, policies against discrimination shall consist of the following terms: ethnicity, national origin, descent or skin colour. *N.B. Volt does not dispute the fact that "racism" - in the traditional meaning of the word -*

exists and needs to end, but believes that acknowledging that all humans are of one race is a key factor in ending discrimination.

2. In the public sector

Ensure that countries lead by example and apply inclusive and equal policies to actively contribute towards real equality. Comprehensive strategies are needed to address the issues with a broad range of measures, such as:

- Implementing comprehensive programmes to encourage minorities to get into politics, and support them once there, through training courses, mentoring, public campaigns, and other means.
- Educating the public about the benefits of diversity in political decision making.

Train judges, magistrates and other civil servants to recognize and address implicit biases towards minorities. The justice system is vital to ensuring that disputes are resolved in an orderly manner and that victims are protected. Across Europe, people who are, or seem to be, from minority groups linked to their ethnicity or skin colour are still more likely to face arrest, charging, prosecution or imprisonment {270}. It is therefore essential for judges, magistrates and other

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civil servants to demonstrate fairness and justness when carrying out their responsibilities. Volt wants to reinstate confidence in the justice system and ensure that biases towards minorities are maintained at a minimum, if not eliminated, through training and other methods.

3. In the workplace

Increase ethnic and cultural diversity in companies across the continent.

Achieving greater diversity is not only the right thing to do but is also profitable for companies: it is more likely to bring competitive advantage to a company and is linked to [higher financial returns](#) {271}.

Volt wants to ensure that both the private and public sectors respect and promote diversity and encourage the minority workforce to enter careers in which they are underrepresented.

Motivate and encourage minority workforce to enter careers in which they are underrepresented.

Require all mid-sized to large companies to have confidential channels and hotlines, separate from general employee relations, to report inappropriate and discriminatory and inappropriate behaviour, violence and/or harassment. Workplace discrimination can

take many forms. It occurs during recruitment and interviews and is reflected in [unequal pay, unjustified dismissals and harassment](#) {272}. Volt will require employers to have those reporting channels in place, and have them be managed by an external company or by a separate human resources team.

Perform temporary positive

discrimination (e.g., special practices aimed at fostering equality: “supporting groups of people who face, or have faced, entrenched discrimination so they can have similar access to opportunities as others in the community” {273}) to speed up economic, social and cultural integration.

4. In the education system

Incentivize and protect diversity in schools to promote better educational opportunities.

Promoting diversity in schools has several advantages, including educational benefits and the promotion of good relations between [people of different backgrounds](#) {274}. Volt wants school curricula to better incorporate diversity. For example, through cross-cultural exchange, the study of books by authors from different backgrounds and with different perspectives, with workshops, and by using more practical pedagogical tools. Additionally, provide internal Erasmus opportunities within

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different regions of the country to diminish regional differences.

5. Specific discrimination against Roma people

Ensure that Roma people have equal rights, both in the legal system and in practice, and that no more discrimination is tolerated. For this, ensure that they have equal access to education, housing, employment and healthcare [{275}](#).

- Ensure that during winter people cannot be evicted and advocate for a school year truce from expulsions, to enable children to stay in school.
- Create awareness-raising campaigns about the Roma community to decrease stigma.
- Ensure equal access of Roma children to public school, regardless of living situations. For this, eliminate administrative hurdles (such as requiring children to live in the neighbourhood of the school in order to be able to register there).
- Ensure that Roma people have access to basic infrastructure and human needs such as running water, electricity and heating.

- Incentivise programmes at the local level to help tackle issues Roma people most commonly face, including language classes, courses and training to help find employment, assistance in getting the right information on entitlements and access to healthcare, etc.

D. End discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief

Every individual has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, as long as it does not restrict or violate the rights and freedoms of others. Religious discrimination is an unjustified act against an individual on the basis of their religion or belief. Such an act can be a direct form of violence or harassment, or indirect, where policies and practices place certain populations at a disadvantage. Despite a diverse European society, discrimination on these grounds still persists. For example, two in every five European Muslims experience discrimination in their workplace, housing and when accessing social services. [One-third claim verbal abuse {276}](#). Volt believes that religion is a free choice and should be respected by others. Discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief includes the absence of religion or belief, such as atheism.

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Volt also believes in a secular state and will work to ensure that such principles are respected across Europe.

1. In the law

Promote and revise legislation that addresses persistent discrimination against certain groups. While legislation is in place to tackle discrimination, it is essential to increase its visibility and revise it where necessary.

- Ensure that adequate deterrents, such as fines and criminal penalties, are in place and applied when acts of violence (hate crimes) or discrimination take place due to someone's religious beliefs and practices.
- Immediately remove any exceptions which permit discrimination on these grounds.

Strengthen law enforcement systems in order to end police violence, harassment and profiling, and to ensure that the police fulfil their duty to protect society. Conduct training for the police on hate crimes against minorities.

Guarantee freedom of expression and religion, as long as it does not prevent others from exercising and enjoying their

rights, and human rights are respected. Balance national security concerns and personal freedoms, only restricting the latter when strictly necessary.

2. In the public sector

Ensure that countries lead by example and apply inclusive and equal policies to actively contribute towards real equality. Comprehensive strategies are needed to address the issues, with a broad range of measures, such as training, overcoming stereotypes, etc.

- Implement comprehensive programmes to encourage minorities to get into politics, and support them once there, through training courses, mentoring, public campaigns, and other means.
- Educate the public about the benefits of diversity in political decision making.

Train judges, magistrates and other civil servants to recognize and address implicit biases towards minorities. The justice system is vital to ensure that disputes are resolved in an orderly manner and that victims are protected. Volt wants to reinstate the confidence in the justice system and ensure that biases towards minorities are maintained at a minimum, if

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not eliminated, through training and other methods.

3. In the workplace

Require all mid-sized to large companies to have confidential channels and hotlines, separate from general employee relations, to report inappropriate and discriminatory behaviour, violence, and/or sexual harassment. Volt will require employers to put such reporting channels in place, and have them be managed by an external company or by a separate human resources team.

Ensure that no discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief takes place in the workplace.

- Workplace policies in both private and public sectors should not restrict religious rights. This includes the right to wear [religious symbols and clothing](#) {277}, for example, the right of a woman to cover her hair, and other practices. Volt believes that no employer should have the right to tell individuals not to wear religious symbols, unless necessary for health and safety reasons (hereby countering the recent Court of Justice of the European Union judgment) {279}. However, no religious symbol that

could be used as a weapon should be brought to the workplace.

Guarantee freedom of expression, including the right to practice one's religion, as long as it does not deprive others of exercising and enjoying their rights and human rights are respected.

Ensure that during application processes for employment, candidates are not discriminated against because of their religion. This includes ensuring that job descriptions do not use discriminatory language and avoid reference to personal characteristics. During the recruitment process, individuals should not be required to disclose their religion. Mechanisms should be in place to ensure that individuals can make a complaint if discrimination occurs during the recruitment process.

4. In the education system

Ensure that public school funding is not used for religious classes or activities and that students from all religious (or non-religious) backgrounds can attend.

Ideally, schools should be a religion-neutral environment which allows for students and teachers to express their own religion. Promote learning experiences:

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- In the event that schools provide civics classes in which religion is discussed, ensure that they include all (or the highest possible number of) religions, not only the dominant one. This policy does not include theological faculties in higher education.
- Foster cross-cultural exchanges, with workshops and visits to religious sites, and more practical pedagogical tools.

Educate students about the advantages and the importance of having a discrimination-free society and workforce. Teachers should present diversity as a positive element of human life.

Allow children to wear religious symbols as long as they are doing so of their own free will.

5. Special discrimination of the Jewish people (Antisemitism)

A clear voice against all kinds of Antisemitism, at all times, both to the outside world and within Volt. Based on the [Working Definition of Antisemitism](#) {280} from the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance.

Supporting organizations that fight against all kinds of hate (e.g. racism, ableism, homo- and transphobia), but specifically Antisemitism

Fostering an active engagement in learning and teaching about the rich history of Jewish life in Europe as well as establishing a positive image of Europe as a place for people of all faiths and ethnicities

Development of conceptual security measures, in cooperation with Jewish institutions and the security organs

- E.g. Year-round support of security detail around Jewish institutions with special attention to high-risk situations, including, cooperation with local law enforcement to coordinate security measures according to the actual threat level

Fixed establishment of Antisemitism representatives, both at the European and national levels.

- An exemplary best practice for this would be the designation of such a commissioner for Germany {281}

Cooperation and extensive expansion of the various reporting offices for antisemitic incidents and crimes.

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When future European armed forces are established, extend Jewish military pastoral care, as is already the case for other religions in several armies

Recognising Yiddish and Ladino as official EU minority languages, as is already the case in several EU member states (France, Sweden, Romania)

II. Alleviate Poverty

In 2017, there were 112.8 million people in the EU-28 who lived in households at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE), equivalent to 22.4 % of the entire population {282}. As the second-largest economy in the world in 2019 with a cumulated GDP of more than \$18.7 billion, the EU has the necessary resources to significantly reduce poverty and poverty risk in order to eventually eradicate it {283}.

A. Overall issues linked to Poverty

With almost 1 out of every 4 Europeans {284} facing poverty or social exclusion, there is a pressing need to meet the goals set out by the Europe 2020 Strategy that aims to have at least “20 million fewer people in – or at risk of – poverty/social exclusion” in the next two years {284}. The Strategy further aims to drop the number

of Europeans in poverty and at risk of poverty or social exclusion to less than 100 million by 2020 and to less than 50 million by 2030. Social benefits are essential and should be designed to help the most vulnerable; however, they do not represent a long-term solution for alleviating poverty. Therefore, the main focus of Volt’s policy consists of equipping everyone with the tools they need in order to have access to equal opportunities and fully participate in society.

1. Social benefits and healthcare

Ensure that social benefits guarantee a basic standard of life (taking into account housing, food, clothing, healthcare, professional programmes, etc. in a given region) and cover a broad set of measures. Use social benefits as a **transitory measure** aiming to support people to get back on their feet and provide for themselves.

Introduce a monthly child benefits scheme and send young parents a **welcome box** for their newborn child. In Finland, such a measure contributed to one of the lowest infant mortality rates in history (e.g. new parents receive a starter kit of clothes, sheets and toys, and the box of the package can even be used as a crib). The maternity package is not to be

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commercially available, but available solely as a benefit offered {286}.

Ensure universal coverage and [access to healthcare across Europe](#) {287}.

2. In-work poverty

Guarantee a minimum income above absolute poverty levels. Volt envisions universal social protection and an adequate income to become core pillars of [EU policy making](#) {288}. In-work poverty continues to be a burden for many workers throughout Europe. In 2016, 9.6% of EU citizens 18 and older who are currently employed faced in-work [at risk of poverty](#) {289}. In other words, people are not remunerated sufficiently for their work, which represents a deeply unfair situation.

Venture into unconditional income: support large-scale experiments with unconditional basic income (UBI), to provide a solid knowledge basis to decide on the merits of this novel approach to social protection.

B. Social and Community Housing

In the last few years, house prices have been growing faster than income in most Member States, with inequality and housing exclusion being [mutually](#)

[reinforcing](#) {290}. In addition to that, the presence of online booking portals (such as Airbnb) in major cities has affected accommodation availability and provoked a [rise in rental prices](#) {291}.

At the same time, economic inequality has been growing in European societies and a large share of the population experiences [periods of unemployment](#) {292}. Moreover, the flexibilisation of the job market has led to a diffuse decrease of security and social protection of workers in atypical forms of employment, with important repercussions on access to mortgages, a rental contract, and [affordable housing prices](#) {293}.

Hence, ensuring access to housing with affordable renting prices undoubtedly is an urgent priority, and Volt intends to tirelessly work to realize it.

Volt believes that it's crucial to acknowledge that the housing market is different from other markets. Land is distinguished from other forms of capital because of its unique characteristics: it is fixed in quantity and does not depreciate. In fact, as the population grows it tends to appreciate (see Ryan-Collins J., Rethinking the Economics of Land and Housing, 2017). It should therefore be the role of the government to make sure that citizens are protected and to endow public institutions with the task to ensure that housing

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policies are sufficiently elaborated, as access to safe, secure, habitable and affordable housing is strictly interwoven with human dignity.

1. A living space for everyone

Volt wants to ensure that there are enough living spaces dedicated to social housing across Europe. Governments should guarantee that there are sufficient residential stocks dedicated to social housing while promoting innovative forms of shared living and community-led housing. Housing policies should be tackled holistically as the right to decent living is often entwined with other sensitive issues, such as those of the peripheries, the delicate coexistence and integration between migrants and the local population, the re-urbanisation of areas at risk of abandonment and the environmental sustainability of buildings.

Ensure that there is sufficient social housing and that allocation is equally spread throughout the urban areas. In particular, Volt intends to:

- Encourage public spending oriented at investing in the construction of new state-owned dwellings, dedicated to recipients of social welfare.

- Incentivise the inclusion of private owners (both natural and legal persons {295}) into schemes that provide them the opportunity to entrust the management of their property to an association that lets it to low-income individuals for a rent price below market price. The private owner's revenue is guaranteed by the specifically instituted guarantee fund. This will ensure adequate state control against mismanagement of such properties {296.1,296.2}.
- Re-convert abandoned urban buildings and refurbish existing structures through public spending and, in a complementary manner, through the intermediary action of [private associations](#) {297}. Volt indeed believes that the promotion of urban re-densification is a more efficient, sustainable and environmentally friendly solution than urban sprawl {298}.
- Promote the uniform distribution of social housing within urban areas by ensuring that the distribution of social dwellings are not concentrated in just a few neighbourhoods, but are homogeneously spread across the [city centre and the peripheral areas](#) {299} (see van Heelsum A. (for EUROFOUND), Case Study on Housing in Amsterdam,

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Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies, 2007). Volt also intends to promote the development of basic public services in rural and peripheral areas in order to grant a standard of living to the inhabitants.

Promote community-led housing (CLH).

CLH refers to specific types of living arrangements, such as co-housing, co-living, intergenerational housing, and co-operative models and community land trusts {[300.1](#),[300.2](#)}. This will be pursued by means of:

- Valorisation of different models of CLH to help tackle housing shortage, increase affordability, sustainability and social cohesion, for more resilient and secure communities {[301.1](#),[301.2](#),[301.3](#),[301.4](#),[301.5](#),[301.6](#),[301.7](#)}.
- Subsidise forms of CLH. Subsidies should be offered -both to constructors and to private buyers- for buildings designed according to defined social living standards, with the aim to ensure shared and affordable living spaces. Volt will work to ensure that repayable funding, such as low-interest loans to buy new property or to renovate an existing property, is made available. In particular, subsidies should apply also in case of change of ownership (when

not connected with a change in the CLH nature of the dwelling), to support the diffusion of the model through the market.

Shared social living as a way to integrate individuals at risk of emargination,

such as lonely elderlies, or with individuals with intellectual disabilities {[302.1](#),[302.2](#)}. Fiscal advantages or other subsidies shall be offered to private house owners willing to contribute to and support these initiatives.

Deploy EU funds to subsidise housing policy across Europe.

In particular, Volt will work towards:

- Integrating social and shared housing into the EU Cohesion Policy by ensuring that sufficient EU funds are allocated to sustainable social and shared housing across Member States (Among the EU Funds that are able to intervene to support national housing policies, there are the European Social Funds, the European Fund for Strategic Investments, the European Regional Development Fund and the Fund for European Aid for the Most Deprived). This can be reached both by integrating affordable houses and shelters in the decisions for funds allocation and by providing forms of financial support for low wage earners, including marginalised groups (i.e. migrants,

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Roma people, etc.) earning a low income.

Mitigate the “Airbnb effect”. In many touristic places, it is financially more attractive for house owners to rent out to tourists rather than long-term residents. This increases accommodation scarcity and adds up to the increasing prices for housing. Volt intends to regulate the use of [Airbnb-kind of digital platform](#) {304}.

- Establishing [limitations across Europe](#) {305} in terms of the number of days that a certain apartment can be rented out [through such platforms](#) {306}.
- Imposing taxation on the revenue that online booking portals gain from the rental cost, regardless of the country of [registration of such portals](#) {307}.

2. Fair and efficient access to housing policies

Volt aims to ensure that low-wage earners and marginalised groups have access to the housing stock to enable life in dignity.

Establish a Public Housing Regulatory Framework. Volt aims to introduce a strategic Public Housing Regulatory Framework (PHRF). The PHRF shall indicate a set of principles and conditions to guide

the role of the public authorities to manage the public housing policy and the public, private, and no-profit entities that manage the housing stocks. The goal is to ensure that disadvantaged groups are granted fair and efficient access to social housing. Such principles are the following:

- Observation of the principles of good administration, transparency, equity and efficiency by public, private or public-private entities, at any government level;
- Assigning the right to access public housing to single beneficiaries. Such a right cannot be inherited by relatives of the beneficiary. Once the claimant loses the requirements to live in public housing accommodation, the space ought to be assigned to a new claimant;
- Define a share of the housing stock to be accessible only for individuals with special needs, such as disabled citizens, families in which a member is disabled (e.g. psychological trauma and disturbs, degrees of in-ability);
- Enhance administrative control in order to prevent abuse (illegal possession of the accommodation, illegal inheritance of the accommodation by members of the claimant’s family, circumvention of

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the allocation rules and illicit circulation of the existing living spaces).

- Establish criteria that regulate the yearly inflation rate of the rent, and utilities (e.g. heating, water, etc.) unless relevant and substantial improvements of the building are made. Similarly, establish criteria that regulate the frequency and amount of rent increase. In any case, increased rent and utilities prices charged to the lessee are justified when the prices are considerably lower than similar apartments (e.g. size, condition) in the same area [{308.1,308.2}](#).
- In case local institutions don't possess the capacity to fulfil the demands for public housing, higher government levels should be endowed with subsidiary competencies.

Digitalise housing services, regardless of the public or private nature of the entity or provider managing the housing stocks. Volt believes that digitalisation can provide an opportunity to enhance the accessibility of the allocation system to the recipients of the housing services, and can provide them with real-time information over the exact period of queuing, if any. This appears necessary in order to face the further urbanisation of European cities and the

consequent difficulties in accessing affordable accommodations [{309.1,309.2}](#).

- Volt intends to promote the adoption, by municipalities, of a digital platform system that grants the users (recipients of the housing policies) the possibility to choose among cheaper or rather more expensive solutions for [public housing {310}](#). The system is based on accumulated points in accordance with the waiting days.
- Volt encourages the adoption of a system that does not limit the choice to a single municipality, in order to improve mobility.

C. Homelessness

Homelessness levels have been [on the rise {311}](#) across Europe in recent years. The [EU's 2020 Poverty Target {312}](#) and Social Investment Fund were supposed to tackle poverty and homelessness, but European governments, with the exception of Finland, have fallen behind in addressing the issue [{313}](#).

Volt will work tirelessly to ensure that no one is left behind and to help those who are deemed the most vulnerable. Adequate social policies must be put in place to tackle homelessness and rough-sleeping in Europe. In an

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economically developed continent, there is no justification for people to live on the street, therefore every member of society must be given a chance to recover from hardship. Such a strategy is not only compassionate and fair, it is also a path to greater economic prosperity and social inclusion, through providing the means for homeless people to become active members of their communities. Homelessness needs to be tackled holistically; therefore, the following is not an exhaustive list, and other policies detailed throughout the document will all contribute towards its eradication, including, but not limited to social benefits, accessible and appropriate health care, a decrease in unemployment, and reduced in-work poverty.

Invest in sustainable and affordable public housing to bring down the cost of rent, and allocate high-quality housing for those in need {314}. Work with local governments to set targets for investment in social housing. Volt will push for a 'housing first' approach to ending homelessness, providing homeless people with social housing before other rehabilitation steps {315.1,315.2}.

Provide support for community-based social enterprise and rehabilitation initiatives. To do so, work with civil society organisations to expand initiatives

focusing on preventing homelessness, as well as providing solutions to help those who are already on the street. Such initiatives can focus on various projects such as providing homeless people with a home and an opportunity to work, and lifelong learning through vocational and entrepreneurial programmes, particularly in the context of cooperative businesses that they can participate in and co-own, etc {316.1,316.2}.

Combat indebtedness in vulnerable households, which can be a cause of homelessness among vulnerable groups {317.1,317.2}.

- Restrict abusive loan sharks and invest in awareness campaigns on exploitative practices.
- Invest in community-based access to finance, particularly micro-finance schemes for entrepreneurship, through community cooperatives in areas at risk.

Provide a mixture of services to meet needs related to age, gender and special needs. Addressing the needs of specific groups of vulnerable individuals is fundamental to ensure that they feel comfortable and safe, and implement measures to prevent the prolonging of their "homelessness journeys."

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- Provide treatment for drug use (often a cause and/or result of homelessness) and treat addiction as a medical condition rather than a crime {318.1,318.2}.
- Provide mental health support and social services to those who have experienced homelessness or social exclusion in order to tackle conditions that may lead to further alienation and worsening of the situation.
- Increase the provision of preventative services, such as family mediation and short respite accommodation, so that in cases where homelessness can be prevented, families are supported to work through conflict
- Tackle gender-based violence and related gendered causes of women's homelessness, including indebtedness and a lack of access to public services, and address underlying gendered aspects of poverty and homelessness.

Support existing European and national strategies to end homelessness and alleviate poverty. Volt will push for an EU strategy to end homelessness, as well as national strategies in every member state, and reinforce anti-poverty strategies. When the European Commission reviews national policies, known as the [European](#)

[semester](#) {319}, it must provide a social focus aimed at ending poverty, homelessness, and exclusion.

Shorten the time period until the final asylum decision is taken, allowing asylum seekers to work from day one, and [support and provide access to vocational training](#) {320}. Work with civil society to match persons in need with housing and public services, as seen in [Utrecht's Urban Innovative Action](#) {321}.

Encourage businesses to take on long-term unemployed and/or homeless persons by providing tax breaks and offering government subsidies.

D. Youth

Give access to free internet to all students, as it can help reduce poverty through growth opportunities. Access and connectivity to technology and the internet is not only a matter of economic potential or consumer protection but a [social, cultural and economic right](#) {322}. This is why Volt wants to ensure that there are [high-quality internet connections across Europe](#) {323} in terms of the fastest available mobile network connections and wifi, including in rural areas and marginalised communities, as soon as possible. The economic benefits of widespread connectivity should be

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encouraged, while provisions must be equitable, fair and universal as merit or public good.

Provide youth and students free access to participation and enjoyment of culture by showing their national ID or any other official document that indicates their age and/or confirms [student status](#) {324}. This includes free entry to museums, monuments, concerts, art exhibitions, music lessons, municipal theatres and cinemas.

Reform the European Youth Card to offer reduced prices for public and private transportation (intercity and urban) all over the European Union in order to promote travelling, as a positive initiative that develops a pan-European identity. This card should be available for free to all young people (0-30 years old) who can prove that they face poverty around Europe. Make public transportation free for youth in vocational training and general education, and who are job-seeking.

[Provide young people with free access to the healthcare system](#) {325}. Universal access to high-quality and affordable healthcare is a basic right for everyone in Europe. Volt will set European standards for fast access to specialised healthcare and standardize preventive health care programmes for children.

Equalize the minimum wage for all workers above the age of 18 in order to stop the age gap of salaries. This is to discontinue the practice in some European countries in which young people (18-25 years old) are legally paid less than those above 25 years old {326}.

Ensure minimum child benefits all over Europe and harmonize them to minimum standards in the EU. Universal child benefits substantially reduce child poverty. Efficient family policies, such as providing adequate child benefits, lead to better chances to secure a sustainable work-life balance and to protect children from social exclusion {327}.

1. Education

Provide free and daily school meals to all students to break the cycle of hunger and child poverty. Access to [free meals](#) {328} has nutritional and health benefits and supports productivity and educational success.

Improve the quality and accessibility of childcare services and promote early learning programmes for children to ensure early education services and [enhance children's learning skills](#) {329}. These should be available to all children under 6 years of age for free.

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Encourage skill-training (eg. woodworking, culinary, sewing, foreign languages, rhetoric, business management) while at school, aiming to develop skills that enhance human capital and lead to long-term gains in employment and standard of living {330}.

Ensure that students have access to career guidance. Such guidance will include opportunities available for students, including higher education and career options. Counselling will also provide an opportunity to learn about the job market.

Perform temporary positive discrimination to speed up economic, social, and cultural integration (i.e., special practices aimed at fostering equality: “supporting groups of people who face, or have faced, entrenched discrimination so they can have similar access to opportunities as others in the community” {331}). Include special tracks and exams that reward merit among students from disadvantaged backgrounds to increase their access to good schools and universities.

Ensure the necessary funding goes through all levels of education (including tertiary and vocational education), including through low or no-interest loans

for students and/or their families, subsidized by governments.

Reduce the stigma attached to homelessness through educational policies and by running awareness-raising campaigns particularly targeted at youth.

III. Include everyone in society

A. Senior citizens

1. Intergenerational engagement

Introduce intergenerational and multigenerational houses to revive the idea of interaction and mutual support between young and old. The subsidy programme for multigenerational living, run by the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens and Youth (BMFSFJ), is a model that other countries should investigate. It is implemented with EU, federal, and local funding in the form of a co-financing model {332}.

Introduce state-sponsored mentoring programmes that connect retirees with young people. Such intergenerational programmes are beneficial for both parties {333}. Young people gain attention and mentoring they often lack. Therewith, it could be part of the solution to tackle expensive childcare systems. Seniors

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benefit from learning new skills (e.g. technology), having company and a sense of purpose, which further tackles the loneliness of seniors {334}.

2. Infrastructures

Ensure the capillarity of services for seniors, including in remote locations and rural areas. This could, for example, help elderly people who wish to remain in their homes, but live outside centres of high service density.

Support programmes and centres for the elderly by providing seniors with geriatric healthcare services and supporting them in activities such as trips, lifelong learning, and other programmes as such. Ensure that seniors have access to goods and services, including the web. Volt will work to increase the focus on digital technological literacy education for all ages.

Ensure transport is accessible and affordable for seniors.

- Ensure that seniors can travel at a reduced cost on local public transportation.
- Provide discounts and concessions on train tickets. This would also apply to privately-owned train companies.

- Adapt public transportation so that seniors who are less mobile can freely use it. This includes requiring public transportation (e.g. buses, trams) to have wheelchair lifts and requiring every train to have at least one wheelchair-accessible railcar.

3. Work

Provide incentives for individuals to continue to be engaged at work, in accordance with their ability and skills.

Fight discrimination based on age in everyday life, in the workplace, and in seeking employment {335}.

Encourage lifelong learning to enable people to adapt to changes in the labour market and in society {336}. Volt supports a strategy to move 'From an Unemployment to an Employment Insurance,' with a reorientation towards a preventive scheme focused on maintaining employability {337}, including for the elderly.

B. People with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)

People with SEND shall be treated with decency, and shall always have access to (basic) services. They should have access to

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equal opportunities in society. People with SEND are people first, with their own lives, ambitions, and hopes.

1. Education

Education should aim to promote the academic, practical, social and emotional learning of all learners. Disabled children and children with special educational needs are entitled to an education that pushes them to reach their full potential {338}.

Ensure that educator qualifications include special educational needs and disability training and, where practical, placement experience in a setting caring for children with additional needs {339}.

- Ensure educational institutions approach teaching as a learning activity, where teachers take responsibility for their lifelong learning {339}.
- Promote learner difference as an asset to education {339}.
- Promote anti-bullying campaigns to promote inclusion and understanding {342}.

Create and enforce an inclusion requirement for educational facilities, which will consist of producing information on admissions policies and making reasonable adjustments to admit children with additional needs. This requirement should be supported by clear arrangements with local authorities to provide the necessary support.

Ensure that families of children with SEND have access to affordable, suitable, and high-quality childcare {343}. In order to do this:

- Identify where financial support must be improved to meet the extra costs of childcare for disabled children and remove barriers to access.
- Introduce a requirement for local authorities to publish clear information on access to childcare, including support for parents and providers.
- Ensure inclusivity is supported in mainstream schools so that children with SEND can be part of one inclusive system. This excludes cases where children would benefit more from specialised institutions.

Ensure data (including statistical and research data) is collected in a holistic manner to enable states to formulate

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appropriate policies while complying with legal safeguards and international norms to protect human rights in the collection and use of statistics.

2. Health and Wellbeing

Destigmatize mental health by:

- Easing access to mental health care.
- Openly discussing mental illness in education and at work.
- Incentivizing schools and companies to provide mental health support.

Ensure that people with SEND, their next of kin and carers explore and understand their rights and how to navigate the healthcare system {344}. This could include face-to-face training, online modules and online resources. Provide criteria for quality (a set of non-mandatory standards to delivering health services) so that healthcare providers can assess how their provisions meet the needs and preferences of people with SEND {345}.

Draft and enforce minimum standards for psychiatric hospitals, rehabilitation centres, and other hospitals with longer-term patients, which should include but not be limited to:

- Providing support to people with SEND {346}.
- Systematically involving people with SEND in planning and managing their own healthcare, when possible.
- Ensuring health professionals have training on how to communicate with people with learning difficulties and communication impairments {347}.

3. Into Adulthood

Ensure services facilitate the successful transition of young people with complex health needs from childhood to adulthood {348}. Transitional care should be commissioned collaboratively by child and adult services {349}.

Support mid-sized to large companies to make work experience schemes fully inclusive, so that people with special education needs and disabilities have opportunities to join the workforce and are supported to take up these opportunities.

4. Participation

Ensure the accessibility of public transportation everywhere and support barrier-free transport (e.g. barrier-free

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underground/ metro services, regular transportation in rural areas, etc.). People with SEND should be involved in planning decisions about local and accessible public transport so that transport issues do not become a barrier to people's participation.

Set minimum quotas across the private and public sector (mid-sized to large companies) to ensure that people with SEND are given the chance to work. If quotas are not met, companies should provide and contribute to vocational programmes to integrate people with disabilities. Give benefits to companies that employ people with disabilities and tax breaks to companies focusing on technological innovation for those in need.

Promote the supported employment model, which is an individualised model to ensure people with SEND secure and retain employment. Using a collaborative strategy, the model allows people with SEND to sustain employment and businesses to employ valuable workers [{350}](#).

Ensure that people with SEND are included in political decision-making processes. Provide clear guidance on how to involve people with SEND in strategic decision making, which should include indicators to measure the performance of

the development of inclusive participation opportunities [{351}](#).

5. Social Care

Establish a new statutory right to a period of 'adjustment leave' to enable parents to cope with the onset of a disability in a child and put care arrangements in place.

- Provide support to families from the time of diagnosis that their child has a learning disability. This could include a key worker to support the family, and it is particularly important if the parent/carer has SEND needs themselves. The Foundation for People With Learning Disabilities' First Impressions research project (Davies, J., (2005) First Impressions London: The Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities) emphasised the shortcomings in how professionals share the new child's disability. Nearly 50% of participants in the study reported a poor experience. If there is good information and emotional and practical support, this will positively impact the future of people with learning disabilities and their families.

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6. Holistic approach

Provide guidance and funding to ensure provisions such as leisure centres, after school clubs and holiday playschemes can accommodate people with special educational needs and disabilities. This includes training staff, ensuring buildings are accessible, and activities are differentiated.

Ensure coordination and co-operation among services (such as social care services, education, hospitals, transportation etc) to ensure a holistic approach and good communication between the key stakeholders.

C. Child in Care

Every child deserves a home and an opportunity to live a happy life. Institutions, or orphanages, across Europe are proving to be insufficient to accommodate and address the needs of children who were placed under the care of the state {353}. Deinstitutionalisation is a process of replacing institutional care for children with care in a family or family-like environment. The main focus should therefore be placed on supporting adoption policies and reforming the current institutional system. Poverty and social exclusion among families is a driving force of children's institutionalisation -

many children placed in orphanages have parents - therefore our children's care policy goes hand in hand with our policy on the alleviation of poverty.

Give the opportunity to adopt a child to every adult - regardless of their gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status - based on the same criteria as those imposed on heterosexual couples, according to local law.

Enable children to have more than two legal parents if it is in the best interest of the child {354.1,354.2,354.3}. Typical examples of this include a child raised by both their biological parents and by a third person who equally cares for the child, who could be a step-parent or a person who is also considered by the child to be a parent.

Reform existing institutional care systems to improve the quality of care, including re-training and training staff, supporting independent living skills and personalised transition plans, and strengthening existing services {355}. Increase public spending to strengthen such institutions and ensure they are of the highest quality.

Transition from institutional care to family and community care (deinstitutionalisation), with a focus on the integration of children into communities

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and wider society to avoid segregation and social exclusion {356}.

IV. Own your body

A. Sex Work

Legalize sex work, while heavily regulating the profession.

Legalise sex work, and ensure that safe working places exist; such as brothels {357}.

Ensure that sex workers get insurance, healthcare and other standard protections {358}.

Address violence, trafficking, and ensure access to legal services.

B. Ending life with dignity

Ending life is a profound existential process that cannot be reduced to a mere medical procedure.

Volt believes that every person has the right to determine how to end their life with dignity, as long as no other person's life is harmed. A wide range of support should be available and accessible for those people seeking help, in addition to

medical attention, e.g. palliative medicine to alleviate pain, hospices to offer psychological or spiritual support, or flexible work-time to allow family members to care for dying relatives. In particularly grave situations of "constant and unbearable physical or mental suffering that cannot be alleviated, {359}" a person may seek assistance to terminate their life and deserves to be supported to do so with dignity.

We distinguish three forms of terminating life upon request:

- **Passive Euthanasia:** Passive euthanasia occurs when the person dies because the medical professionals either don't do something necessary to keep the person alive, or when they stop doing something that is keeping the person alive, such as switch off life-support machines, disconnect a feeding tube, don't carry out a life-extending operation, or don't give life-extending drugs {360}.
- **Assisted Suicide:** A person makes the request out of their free will, not coerced or pressured by other persons, and with full conviction, to take their life, and seeks professional (typically doctor's) assistance. Before undertaking Assisted Suicide, the person should first be given the

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opportunity to explore other life and death options available. To the very end, the person stays in full control of the process and is solely responsible for their death. The physician's role is to supply, but not to administer, the lethal drug.

- **Active Euthanasia:** Active euthanasia occurs, when a doctor, or another person, intentionally administers a fatal dose of medication to cause the patient's death at the patient's request and with full, informed consent {361}. The main difference to assisted suicide is, that active euthanasia is entirely physician-mediated, including administration of the lethal dose, whereas persons committing assisted suicide administer the lethal dose to themselves.

Volt stands for the following policies:

Legalize passive euthanasia.

- Also, legalize living wills to guide the decision on passive euthanasia for people who wish passive euthanasia to be performed if they ever find themselves in a particular situation which they now regard as unbearable and offering no prospect of improvement (e.g. dementia) and in

which the person is incapacitated to make a decision her/himself {362}.

Legalize assisted suicide for competent adults who suffer from "constant and unbearable physical or mental suffering that cannot be alleviated". Ensure that the following criteria are met before allowing assisted suicide:

- The person is a competent adult who suffers from "constant and unbearable physical or mental suffering that cannot be alleviated".
- The person undergoes an ex-ante evaluation with at least two independent doctors and one psychiatrist, that need to confirm the person is a competent adult who suffers from "constant and unbearable physical or mental suffering that cannot be alleviated," and that the person is making the request out of their own free will, not coerced or pressured by other persons.
- The person's request must be made earnestly and with full conviction, as determined during the ex-ante evaluation.
- If the person is a minor, only allow assisted suicide in exceptional circumstances, with the consent of

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parents if they are younger than 16 years, and with the parents at least informed, if they are under 18, and confirmation by at least two independent doctors and one psychiatrist that the minor is competent to take such a decision.

Ensure that during the procedure,

- the person stays in full control of the process. Indeed, the physician's role is to supply, but not to administer, the lethal drug.
- family and friends are allowed to be present if the patient chooses so.

Put in place an ex-post committee to review all cases of assisted suicide, comprised of at least a medical expert, an ethicist and a legal expert. Every instance of assisted suicide must be reported.

Make publicly available information of doctors willing to assist. Ensure that no doctor is forced to take part in such a procedure.

Strictly oppose active euthanasia, with one exception:

- Allow active euthanasia only when a person fulfils all the conditions for

assisted suicide (see provisions above) but is physically handicapped in such a way that makes it impossible for the person to administer the legal dose themselves. Ensure that the doctor's intervention is as limited as possible.

- Volt opposes the legalization of active euthanasia, as it is a highly controversial issue that raises ethical and legal issues, in particular the fact that another party performs the act of taking the life of a person.

C. Reproductive rights

The right to health includes women's sexual and reproductive rights, which States have an obligation to respect, protect and guarantee. Women are entitled to reproductive health care services, goods, and facilities that are (a) available in adequate amounts; (b) accessible physically and economically; (c) accessible without discrimination; and (d) of good quality [{363}](#).

Access to health services is a human right. However, women are often either denied this right or have limited access to it, especially when it comes to abortion or contraception.

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1. Abortion

Make abortion accessible in the law and practice, and free for all women at least until the end of the first trimester [{364.1,364.2}](#).

- Ensure that abortions are not only legal but also accessible. This means that health centres and hospitals should offer the procedures across regions and that there are no unreasonably long waiting lists.
- Ensure that women have knowledge of, and access to, all possible types of abortion.

Make abortions accessible at a later stage as well, when a continued pregnancy would endanger the health of the mother or when the fetus is not viable.

Remove undue burdens on women such as “cooling off periods”, parental consent, spousal or partner consent, multiple appointments necessitating multiple days off, etc.

- For women under the age of 16, no parental consent is necessary, but an [adult needs to be present](#) [{365}](#).

- Enough doctors, hospitals, clinics and others need to provide abortions so that it is not only legal but easily accessible.

2. Contraception

Ensure that women have access to the morning-after pill without a prescription from a doctor, that pharmacies are required to sell them, and that it is reimbursed by public healthcare.

Ensure that women have access to doctors to be prescribed contraceptive means. Require pharmacies to sell the various contraceptives methods, and for those to be reimbursed by public healthcare.

Reform the healthcare system so that all contraception is reimbursed by providers of healthcare and services upon request, without any need to report patient age.

3. Education

Introduce accurate, mandatory classes on sexual reproductive health and rights in schools. Establish a European standard for the curricula and ensure that schools comply with it [{366}](#).

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Ensure that hospitals offer **free educational information and/or programmes on sexual reproductive health and rights** and that women are informed about their rights, contraception, and protection against sexually transmitted diseases.

D. Surrogacy

Surrogacy is a method of assisted reproduction. There are two types of surrogacy arrangements: gestational surrogacy, where the embryo is created via in vitro fertilization (IVF) using the eggs and sperm of the intended parents or donors, and traditional surrogacy, where the surrogate mother uses her own egg and is artificially inseminated using sperm from the intended father or a donor. A surrogacy agreement can be altruistic or commercial. Surrogacy is already legal in some European countries, including in the UK, Denmark, Ireland, Belgium, Greece and the Netherlands, given that the surrogate does not receive any financial benefit {368}. (Best practices include South Africa, California, New Hampshire, The Netherlands).

Legalize surrogacy agreements when they are altruistic (not counting reimbursement of expenses).

Research potential ways to legalize commercial surrogacy agreements, while ensuring that it does not increase the power of black markets.

E. Conversion Therapy

Conversion therapy refers to any form of treatment or psychotherapy which aims to change a person's sexual orientation or to suppress a person's gender identity {369}. The basic assumptions behind such therapy are that being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender is a disease, mental illness, deficiency or disability, that can be 'cured'. Conversion therapy is a delusory and harmful act, that can lead to depression, anxiety, drug use, homelessness, and suicide, with minors being the most vulnerable to such practice {370}.

Ban the practice of conversion therapy across Europe and the pathologization of trans identities (excludes the prohibition of voluntary gender-affirming procedures). Ensure that no person will be allowed to advertise, offer or force a person to undergo such therapy. Further, no person can be forcibly removed from a member state for the purposes of undergoing conversion therapy.

Promote social acceptance and psychological support to anyone undergoing gender transition or identity

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exploration and development, including sexual orientation-neutral interventions.

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Challenge 4 - Global Balance

Vision

In today's interconnected world, and given the recent developments in the international policy arena, Europe needs to re-assume its responsibility to take on global and future challenges. These challenges are diverse and manifold including topics such as climate change, international fair trade, sustainable farming, food security, biodiversity, migration issues, and international development cooperation. All proposals outlined hereunder are underscored by Volt's political values of "Equal opportunities, Justice, Liberty, Human Dignity, Sustainability, and Solidarity". Inspired by our pan-European members at Volt, "Volt Global Balance" proposes progressive, bold, pragmatic, and human-centred policies, with short-, medium- and long-term changes. Ultimately, our goals are to hasten the global eradication of poverty, to be quicker in moving towards a circular economy, to ensure that international trade is done in a free, fair and sustainable manner, and to put human rights first and opportunistic and national interests second.

Our aims can be summarised in sustainable development which resembles the highest priority and challenge that humanity faces today. Volt will ensure that Europe lives up to its commitments, as acknowledged in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have set out a clear international agenda to follow, tackling the fundamental ecological, social and economic inequalities. Volt endorses the SDGs and will support legislation and initiatives that can deliver on the SDGs. Implementation of the SDGs should be pursued with the overall aim of achieving global balance. While doing so, Volt acknowledges some inherent tensions between socio-economic development and ecological sustainability.

We believe these tensions can be addressed through systemic adjustments to our economic framework and by empowering the citizen to make day-to-day sustainable choices. By achieving the SDGs, we ensure that current and future generations will be able to live within the Earth's planetary boundaries.

This is the foundation for the better world that we want you to help us build.

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I. Energy system

Since the [2015 Paris Climate Agreement](#) {372}, the shift towards a more desirable, climate-responsible world has already started. However, it needs to be much faster and bolder {373}. Because the problem is structural, it needs to be addressed in a systematic way by taking comprehensive steps. Therefore, strong commitments and actions from all stakeholders across Europe are needed to achieve the targets set by the Paris Climate Agreement. Ultimately, Volt's vision is to live in a world in which clean energy is part of the solution. Volt envisions a world where individuals, corporations and public entities take more responsibility for the future of our planet. Economic profit and growth should not prevail over the well-being of people and the environment. Volt supports progressive policies that are taking the climate revolution to the next stage at the local, European, and global level.

A. EU-wide Carbon Tax

Introduce an EU-wide Carbon Tax

{374.1,374.2}. This would result in clear incentives for climate-friendly solutions and discourage the production and consumption of carbon-intensive products.

- Reducing CO2 emissions must be a high priority {375}. The existing measures, such as the recently reformed EU Carbon Trading Scheme, are not sufficient.
- In practice, a carbon tax would favour renewable energy over fossil fuels, and thus sustainable transportation over carbon-intensive ones.
- The tax needs to be carefully designed to make sure that no one is unduly burdened. National governments should ensure that their social welfare programmes consider the increase in the cost of energy, transport, meat, heating, etc., that the carbon tax requires.
- The tax revenue and the cost savings from the reduced subsidies shall be used directly to fund relevant climate mitigation and adaptation projects.
- To avoid penalising the European industry, the carbon tax shall also be applied to imports from outside the EU.
- Advocating for a wider uptake of this policy instrument by non-European countries is crucial, it will contribute to achieving a real "global balance".

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B. Stop subsidies for fossil-based fuels

Stop subsidising fossil-based fuels.

Kerosene, diesel, coal and other fossil-based fuels, currently amounting to as much as €200 billion per year {377}, need to be phased out as efficiently and as quickly as possible {378}.

Prohibit new permits to drill for fossil fuels. To limit warming to +2°C, 80% of all known fossil fuel reserves should be left in the ground {379}.

C. Strengthen the Energy Efficiency Directive goals and extend its scope

Increase the level of ambition of the energy-saving target to a binding 40% (of final energy consumption in 2030 against a business-as-usual scenario).

- The current goal of a 30% binding target to 2030 is considered not ambitious enough to deliver the full benefits of energy efficiency {380}. A higher goal would unlock secure investments and jobs for years to come. Furthermore, energy efficiency would reduce both emissions and energy dependence.

Extend energy efficiency obligations to the transport sector:

- The Energy Efficiency Obligation scheme would target transportation to discourage the use of fossil fuels, which is currently the main energy source for this sector {381}. Efficiency in the transportation sector includes RES integration (biofuels and electric motors), and may ultimately promote the use of public transportation.

D. Smart electricity grids

Support enhanced research on the development of smart electricity grids at the European level. This is necessary to ensure the development of a stable and clean energy system. Moving towards renewable energies means that energy systems will rely more and more on volatile electricity generation. Therefore, Volt advocates for the need to integrate electric storage systems, such as batteries, compressed air reservoirs, or power to gas systems (P2G) more efficiently in our European grids.

Promote enhanced and harmonised financing of relevant infrastructure for centralised and decentralised energy solutions.

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Introduce an EU-wide infrastructure of high Voltage “electricity-motorways” and storage systems funded by the EU budget {382.1,382.2,382.3}.

E. Responsible public and private financing

Incentivise institutional investors and the financial sector to shift resources away from fossil fuels towards climate-friendly solutions (Such as shifting towards a low-carbon economy, climate risk resilience, and environmental expertise on corporate boards). All public administrations, pension funds, etc. need to gradually take their funds out of fossil fuels.

Incentivize divestment strategies at the national level consistently across Europe.

Support research, training and capacity-building programmes for investors and business professionals to encourage corporate social responsibility together with effective and efficient financing for the climate revolution. Support the creation of such training schemes for responsible public and private financing.

F. Sustainable transportation and environmentally - friendly travelling

Incentivise emission-free and shared mobility and environmentally-friendly travelling. Support all measures and initiatives encouraging consumers to choose sustainable means of transportation and reduce their carbon footprint. A coherent set of policies shall be developed considering the following issues:

- Extend the ban on diesel cars by 2040 across Europe as long as toxic emissions cannot be drastically reduced by means of new technologies.
- The transportation systems in Europe shall be modernised, both for short and long distances. This includes the promotion of innovative road charge solutions {384} as well as the development of coherent re-charging station networks throughout Europe, which are, at the moment, depending on the region, quite deficient.
- Sustainable public transport holds great potential for reducing emissions of greenhouse gases at the local level.

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- The shift from fuel and pistons to batteries and electric motors and other emission-free solutions shall be incentivized, e.g. by establishing relevant infrastructure in cities, creating bicycle-friendly zones and bike lanes, promoting sharing solutions, introducing free public parking slots for electric cars, further developing clean energy solutions independent from fossil fuels, etc.
- Education and awareness-raising initiatives on environmentally friendly travelling shall be promoted, such as #FreeInterrail or Shift2Rail.

G. Low-carbon and disruptive technologies

Promote low-carbon and disruptive technologies, such as sustainable chemistry concepts and bio-based solutions. Shifting from theory and prototypes to large-scale applications is crucial.

Advocate for green public procurement standards to help accelerate the adoption of low carbon technologies and set an example.

H. Modernise our buildings

The heating, cooling, and lighting of buildings account for a large part of total energy consumption (e.g. in Germany this constitutes 24% of the energy consumption), and most of this energy comes from burning fossil fuels (90% in Germany). See “Anwendungsbilanzen für die Endenergiesektoren in Deutschland in den Jahren 2013 bis 2016, Arbeitsgemeinschaft Energiebilanzen e.V., Berlin, November 2017”.

Promote cost-effective energy efficiency measures, for example: better insulation, temperature regulating systems, thermal solar energy for warm water, and higher efficiency equipment, including green heat pumps, and develop standards to support the integration of renewable energy generation into the design of new buildings ([exemplified by the UN building in Copenhagen {387}](#)) to shift towards carbon-neutrality in the construction sector. Volt wants to support sustainable and resource-efficient building and living research, and enforce the European legislation on “[Clean Energy for All Europeans {388}](#)” by restoring and modernising older buildings and designing new buildings to save energy and water.

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II. Sustainability

A. Circular Economy

We exploit, create value, and then waste. This is how our current economic model works, and it is absolutely unsustainable. It is unfair to those who are affected by inhumane working conditions or poisoned living areas. It is also unfair to future generations, who will not be able to use the resources that we are wasting. Let's work to change this by moving toward a circular economy. More precisely, this means that Volt wants to solve the waste problem in Europe and stop plastic-based pollution. Volt promotes a world where economies are based on longevity, renewability, and dematerialisation. Concerted action is needed across Europe to take global responsibility for our actions, and to establish the right framework of conditions so that principles of a circular economy are consistently applied by all relevant stakeholders. There are already a number of instruments known or in place that describe how a transition towards the circular economy can be achieved. This includes encouraging innovative circular economy business models and technologies, considering new pricing models and price caps, introducing enhanced control mechanisms and stimulating transparency initiatives to facilitate market entry for new players.

In this regard, Volt builds on the [2015 EU Circular Economy Action Plan {389}](#) and welcomes current initiatives such as [The New Plastics Economy {390}](#). However, we can all do more and better: politicians, scientists, industries, and also consumers. The following list of actions reflects our priorities to kick-start the circular economy in Europe grouped by different stakeholders.

Help SMEs to successfully move toward the circular economy. For example, producers and service providers developing and implementing goods and services with longer usability and useful after-lives shall benefit from harmonised tax incentives and speedier regulatory processes.

Facilitate the compliance of big corporations with the circular economy by using more ambitious regulation, enhanced information technology, new incentive models, and close-the-loop systems. Funds shall be made available for rethinking the design and digitalisation of organisations and services.

Advance the circular economy by moving public authorities towards more sustainable consumption patterns: Promote [Green Public Procurement {391}](#) measures, e.g. by implementing new concepts for governmental car fleets and

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car-sharing of employees in the public sector.

Promote consumer awareness on the circular economy and of supply chains at various levels to enable conscientious consumerism to combat corruption, inhumane working conditions, environmental destruction, child labour, deforestation and resource scarcity. Therefore:

- Introduce an eco-label that is strictly related to the circular economy in order to promote products issued from circular industrial processes.
- Promote sharing economies.

Support largely scientific research on circular economy solutions.

In addition, Volt advocates for a couple of policy proposals addressing the circular economy issue from a system's/ multi-stakeholder perspective:

Ensure fair trade and foster efficient use and recycling of critical raw materials, a priority area in the EU circular economy action plan, in line with the European Commission's list of [critical raw materials](#) {392}.

Advocate for the implementation of harmonised circular economy solutions across Europe, e.g. by:

- Developing one coherent European system for bottle recycling;
- Developing standardised household waste management regulations and enforcement;
- Replicating best practices in sustainable waste management, e.g. the success story of Greece's first-ever integrated waste management centre {393}; especially with an eye on regions particularly affected by waste issues and pollution;
- Incentivising take-back systems (systems where producers take a product back from consumers after the end of its lifetime for proper disposal, reuse or recycling) with an emphasis on extended producer responsibility {394};
- Redesigning regulations on secondary raw material usage and recycling to achieve a coherent system where sustainability principles are applied consistently.

Take concerted action to move away from a plastic-based society and provide broad financial and political support to

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successfully implement the new EU Strategy for plastics in the circular economy {395.1,395.2}. Volt will:

- Support enhanced research looking at the entire product life cycle starting from new materials to waste recovery and design and advocate for policy instruments catalysing quick adoption of more sustainable materials and technologies across industries;
- Raise consumer awareness and build capacity among stakeholders;
- Promote innovative waste management approaches (e.g. solutions to collect plastic waste from lakes, rivers, oceans and beaches {396});

Support best practices and current EU policy proposals to create a less plastics-dependent future such as:

- Banning the sale of single-use plastic cutlery, trays and cups across all EU Member States and considering additional bans of certain products if appropriate.
- Banning disposable packaging in public buildings.

- Obliging the use of reusable items at large public and private events {397}.
- Examine additional policies and regulatory actions, including a tax for plastics and packaging.

B. Farming and cultivation

The current agriculture sector in Europe is characterised by either high efficiency or sustainability. Agriculture of the future must address issues such as food security for a rising population, climate change, low biodiversity, high nitrate levels in groundwater, and a foreseeable phosphorus deficiency. Volt intends to put forward effective ideas and implement more sustainable farming across Europe. Food security needs to be ensured across Europe and beyond, and a comprehensive strategy on efficient and sustainable production and distribution of food is therefore needed.

1. Agriculture

Develop a new system for the support of farms that are strongly committed to sustainability and product quality instead of keeping the current unfair and unbalanced subsidy system in European agricultural sectors across Europe. Certain subsidies may be part of the solution, but

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other reforms and incentives are urgently needed. Agriculture subsidies that focus only on production and favour large producers must be discontinued.

Establish pre-emptive rights of farmers to farmland to minimize agricultural land trade.

Support the ongoing testing and evaluation of agricultural land to ensure farming is sustainable and does not deplete the land or devastate its surrounding areas and waterways {398}.

Advance the closing of the nutrient cycle. Effective resource management includes a closed nutrient cycle and minimal use of mineral fertilizers. This leads to a reduction of agricultural greenhouse gas emissions (like nitrogen oxides). Therefore, Volt will propose the following measures:

- Promote the recovery of phosphorus from the sewage sludge {399}.
- Use individual plant-oriented fertilizer application techniques, catch crops, and green manure to minimize nitrogen input into the soil and leaching {400}.
- Store liquid manure surpluses in the form of fertilizer pellets.

- Support pesticide-free hydroponic production with closed water and nutrient cycles {401}.
- Introduce peat alternatives for horticultural substrates, like coconut fibres and compost. The extraction of peat leads to the release of climate-damaging carbon dioxide. Additionally, the increased use of compost substrates closes the nutrient cycle {402}.

Create species-appropriate livestock farming measures to address current problems:

- Promote livestock farming with species-appropriate herd sizes, adequate space, and the integration of playthings.
- Stop preventive use of antibiotics in livestock farming.
- In case of disease-related use of antibiotics, it has to be ensured that only non-reserve human antibiotics are used.
- Establish alternatives to imported soy as protein sources for animal nutrition. Explorable possibilities include the cultivation of soybeans in Europe and the use of alternatives such as

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duckweed.

explore how these techniques can support sustainable agrarian reform.

2. Research and use of new techniques

Support research programmes to identify and prioritise exploration of possibilities to realize sustainable and effective agriculture with new techniques. Examples include:

- Politically promote the implementation of Sustainable Land Management practices including the use of precision agriculture and GPS technology, which can ensure effective cultivation by creating fields at the same elevation along the slope {403}. Hedges and flower strips can thus be integrated into agricultural land without disrupting cultivation. This creates coherent biotopes that bring a veritable increase in biodiversity.
- Incentivise the use of individual plant-oriented sensors to calculate fertilizer demand, which will lead to optimal growth conditions and minimize leaching.
- Examine the chances and risks of innovative procedures like cisgene gene editing or artificial meat, and

Promote alternatives to the use of pesticides by integrating the knowledge of organic crop protection into conventional cultivation. A possible alternative for herbicides is the mechanical destruction of weeds by robots.

Support the establishment of food production systems that omit food waste.

- Set up bans for food waste from the distribution sector (supermarkets and wholesale food suppliers) as has been implemented in France {404}.
- Apply consistent, Europe-wide legislation and support best practice programmes making use of existing initiatives, such as those in Italy {405} or those developed by the City of Lisbon {406}, where food waste plans involving several stakeholders have been implemented successfully to tackle the problem. Coordinate effectively with local and international NGOs that tackle food waste.

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C. EU Common Food Policy

We are what we eat. To express our full potential as responsible citizens towards our society and our environment, it is essential to care about our food: how it is produced, traded, consumed and wasted. Because food is our source of energy, it can generate happiness {407}, ensure wellness and reduce environmental harms {408}. Thus, "zero hunger" is a key element of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations {409}. However, the current frameworks of food policies in the EU are contributing to the unreasonable waste of resources and ecological problems, as 1/3 of purchased food is lost in the supply chain every year {410,411}. Moreover, civilization diseases like obesity, diabetes, and dyslipidemia are causally related to unhealthy patterns of nutritional habits. From a global perspective, resilience, affordability and sustainability of food systems are today at stake, notably due to extreme weather conditions, depletion of available resources like water and fertile soils, changing food habits and a growing population {412}. In this challenging context, Volt imagines a European Union which takes today, the responsibility for tomorrow. We intend to encourage consumers, producers and retailers to take an active role as catalysts for solutions by making more sustainable and fair choices. In this regard, Volt wants to implement an

EU Common Food Policy that will empower our society to act, and pairs governments with citizens, academia and businesses alike; for a thriving society in a flourishing environment.

1. A FOOD Directorate for a strong EU food policy framework

In synergy with Member States, Volt wants to design an EU food policy framework able to tackle food systems in a systematic way, coupling biophysical and social issues. As of today, each Directorate General of the European Commission pursues its own targets in a siloed approach with distinct policy frameworks. This prevents fruitful cooperation between sectors and omits the development of several interlinked policies. This is why Volt will work to:

Create a FOOD Directorate in Directorates General (AGRI or SANTE). Just as existing directorates, the FOOD directorate must have the scope to a) stimulate and coordinate food policy actions across the Union, b) advance the Member States' efforts in food-related actions, c) monitor policy achievements, d) launch and coordinate awareness and promotion campaigns, d) stimulate research & innovation. The Directorate will not reinvent the wheel, but it will serve to develop a twofold approach: "From the

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fork to the plate as well as from the plate to the fork”.

Help farmers to live a decent life {413.1,413.2,413.3} off of a sustainable working environment {414} by

- Improving access to land for beginning farmers, prioritising selling and leasing to organic entrepreneurs with marketing concepts and to farms implying an inclusion of educational or social purposes;
- Breaking land taxes for landowners who provide (peri-)urban lands for organic food production in order to create “green belts” around cities {415};
- Developing an EU directive on fair and sustainable access to farmland, succession planning, and a transparent European land register {415};
- Increasing opportunities for local stakeholders and regional food networks to better process, transport, distribute or sell agricultural products to urban areas;
- Improving farmers’ position in the value chain by supporting the proposed blacklist of unfair trading practices (UTPs) {417};

- Developing the potential of urban farms to attain self-sufficiency via community empowerment {418};
- Halting biodiversity loss resulting from destruction of biotopes, over-fertilisation and intensive use of harmful pesticides {419};
- Enhance rural attractiveness for innovative and smart entrepreneurship, by providing fast and secure connections like broadband and other IT infrastructure {420}.

Grant healthy food access to everyone. In 2016, 43 million - 8,3% of the EU population - were unable to afford a meal with meat, fish or a vegetarian equivalent every second day. Looking closer, 21.3 % of the subpopulation of people across the EU-28 who were at risk of poverty reported being unable to afford such a meal every second day {421}. To address this, Volt will:

- Set up bans for food waste from the distribution sector (supermarkets and wholesale food suppliers) as has been implemented in France {422}, in Denmark {423}, the Netherlands {424} or Italy {425};
- Apply consistent, Europe-wide legislation against food waste {426}. Coordinate effectively with local and

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international NGOs that tackle food waste;

- Incentivize food donation via community fridges, encouraging neighbourhood collection and redistribution initiatives {427};
- Reduce food deserts by prioritising access to fresh and seasonal products, with mobile fresh product markets {428};
- Grant access to fresh and seasonal products at an affordable price for those in need, introducing Solidarity Purchase Groups, further promoting local development and social integration (Sustainable food, culture and integration in Solidarity Purchase Groups Movement: the case study of Barikamà in Rome, D. Bernaschi, The Cambridge Conference on Global Food Security, 23-24 June 2016);
- Facilitate citizens' engagements in social food initiatives with food donation days {430};
- Launch awareness campaigns on how to eat healthy at a reduced cost.

Reduce the environmental impact of the food system by:

- Working towards sustainable supply chains, by strengthening existing EU clauses such as the 2008 EU Regulation on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing {431};
- Incentivising local purchase and short supply chains by means of public procurement in school canteens, hospitals, elderly homes, and other public served facilities;
- Engaging in further research on city waste disposal systems to make reuse of nutrients for agriculture possible {432};
- Decreasing meat consumption with initiatives like the fruit and vegetable Commission initiatives {433};
- Tax carbon footprint generated in production, packaging and transportation, as well as water and chemical usage;
- Mitigate and control methane emissions in industrial meat and dairy farming {434};
- Harmonise the legislation on sale and production of insect-derived food, particularly of insect-based flour/powder as a sustainable source of proteins;

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- Harmonise the legislation on 'clean meat', also known as lab-grown, in vitro or cultured meat, and conduct further research on related satellite cells, costs of production and sale, fat incorporation and consumers acceptance {435}.

Raise awareness: reconnect consumers with their plate by:

- Harmonising food label requirements all over the EU to the highest standard practice, ensuring transparency and fostering trust towards citizens. Volt intends to prevent the use of the so-called traffic-light food labelling systems that do not take into account the 'good fats' (e.g. Omega-3 fatty acid), the amount of food vs. quality consumed, and the consequences of artificial food and colourants. Besides, Volt would like to conduct further research on specific food labels such as [NutriScore](#) {436} and the [SENS algorithm](#) {437}, which give consumers an overall appreciation of a product and help to make informed choices {438}. Nevertheless, a single label can not display the quality of nutrition and should therefore be supplemented with the following ideas:
- Introducing mandatory EU vegan, vegetarian and environmental labels

for food products {439} and imposing on food industry actors the responsibility of disclosure of unsustainable practices {440}, thereby increasing the ability for informed consumer choice to be a driver of sustainability;

- Setting up EU public information and communication campaigns, following Article 7 of the EU Regulation 1169/2011, enabling consumers to make informed food choices {441};
- Educating children about food and its benefits, with initiatives such as a weekly or monthly breakfast at school paid by the municipality {442}.

Advocate for healthier food choices, by

- Promoting balanced and diversified - including vegetarian - diets with more fruits and vegetables in schools, hospitals, and public facilities. Vegan options should be considered when suitable for the public concerned, with special attention required for children and people presenting cardiovascular risks {443};
- Preventing food-related health issues by raising food awareness on eating habits in collaboration with the World Health Organisation {444};

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- Introducing a sugar tax on soft drinks and sweets {445}.

Promote food research and innovation,

- Work towards the EU Food 2030 agenda, in collaboration with experts and all stakeholders at all levels, and ensure a holistic approach to tackle most EU food pressing issues in line with the SDGs incl. 2. Zero Hunger; 12. Responsible Production and Consumption etc.;
- Ensure advances in food technology and food science are applicable to real-life issues.

2. A participating and enabling EU food policy

The food policy needs not yet addressed by the market or state are increasingly being addressed by local communities exercising a bottom-up approach. Volt supports those movements that spur entrepreneurship and innovation both in terms of actions and in terms of governance. Citizens can also be organised in food councils within cities to support, advise, and propose food initiatives {446}. Nevertheless, in some cases there are low levels of engagement by city governments as well as a limited connection with key actors in food systems operating at higher

governance scales {447}, generating possible conflicting acts that can hamper policy implementation.

Volt wants to create an enabling environment for these initiatives to spread and for scaling up virtuous local initiatives. Obstacles today can be found in the application of EU rules that do not distinguish between citizen-led initiatives, start-ups, small enterprises and medium or large companies {448}. Rules should be rethought and adapted. To facilitate this, Volt will:

Develop the EU Food Lab, enabling a collective dynamic collaboration between citizens' representatives, academia, industry and policy makers. Among others, it will aim at fostering innovative entrepreneurship spirit in the food sector and ensuring the integration of industrial concerns in research and innovation {449}.

Empower EU citizens and involve citizens in food policy making. Volt aims at encouraging the creation of national and local specific food labs, such as the one developed in [Copenhagen](#) {450}, that coordinate bottom-up policy developments, scaling up citizens interests, needs, and initiatives, ensuring innovation can thrive and spread in a way that leaves nobody behind.

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Create an EU FOOD HUB, using the example of the [Rotterdam Food Cluster {451}](#), in which EU citizens and enterprises with a Food 4 Work approach could meet, exchange, showcase their ideas, find support for business development, and connect with investors. Together, they will be able to define new ways of addressing food issues like food poverty, sustainability, and food production impact, food access, green food supply and distribution, as well as food waste reduction.

D. Animal Welfare

[Animals are sentient beings {452}](#). Volt is conscious that humans share this planet with other forms of life that should co-exist together within an interdependent ecosystem. Volt aligns itself with the Five Freedoms principle adopted by well-renowned organisations for animal health [{453.1,453.2}](#). Animal welfare under human control should be expressed through freedom from hunger or thirst; freedom from discomfort; freedom from pain, injury or disease; freedom to express normal patterns of behaviour and, finally, freedom from fear and distress. Volt strongly condemns any kind of animal abuse, which shall not be tolerated and must be sanctioned. This is why Volt will:

Ensure that any acquisition of domestic and pet animals can be traced back.

- Volt strongly encourages the creation of online platforms that put into contact responsible ethical breeders, controlled by an ethical charter, with future owners and professionals [{454}](#). Volt also wishes to use shelters as a regulated channel to adopt pets.
- Previously automatically granted licences that record animal identification will be withdrawn if pets are found abused (e.g. beaten, abandoned or malnourished) [{455}](#).
- Volt supports the introduction of a compulsory microchip for pets when suitable [{456}](#).

Make it illegal to routinely feed animals antibiotics, steroids or other medication, unless strictly necessary for health reasons, as prescribed by recognised vets. Volt supports the procedure 2014/0257 (COD) on veterinary medicinal products that led to a regulation limiting the use of antibiotics in prophylaxis and metaphylaxis. We believe that more strict standards are needed in the long run to limit the risk of the development of bacteria resistant to antibiotics [{457}](#).

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Condemn any form of animal slaughter that does not include stunning and unconsciousness, and advocate for strict forms of control. Despite the Council Regulation (EC) N° 1099/2009 aimed at protecting the animal at the time of killing {458}, animal mistreatment cases are still reported on a regular basis across Europe {459}. Volt relies on best practices developed by the World Organisation for Animal Health, and further advocates for prohibiting any distraction methods as well as restraining methods which work through electro-immobilisation or immobilisation by injury {460}.

Regulate hunting as a sports practice. The use of wild populations as resources shall be monitored and controlled according to the health of the population and its associated ecosystem(s). Moreover, strict actions against poaching should be taken. In this regard, Volt supports the Council Regulation (EC) No 338/97 on the protection of species of wild fauna and flora by regulating trade therein {461}.

Enforce the EU Directive 2010/16/EU to protect animals used for scientific or educational purposes. In this regard, Volt strongly supports the Three R's principle: reduction in numbers of animals, refinement of experimental methods and replacement of animals with non-animal techniques {462}.

Uphold the European Convention for the Protection of Animals kept for Farming Purposes and the five freedoms in relation to animals that are relied upon for economic purposes {463} Volt believes it is necessary to ensure that scientific, cultural and societal beliefs are sufficiently integrated with policies regarding animal husbandry, commercial fisheries and other related practices. In order to ensure this happens, we rely on best practices as identified by expert organisations such as the Food and Agriculture Organization {464}.

Oppose the purchase, detention and usage of wild animals {465} for captive display and entertainment purposes. Volt will work to:

- Ban the purchase of cetaceans for aquarium, dolphinarium or aquatic park shows purposes. In total, 249 dolphins, orcas and belugas have been imported in 16 EU countries between 1979 and 2008 {466}. Volt condemns such a practice since it goes against the animal needs, therefore increasing the mortality rate and leads to depression and self-damaging practices {467}.
- Prohibit wild animals in circuses, to ensure biodiversity conservation, disease prevention and public health and safety. Unlike the EC Zoo Directive

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(1999/22 EC) {468}, no clear regulation demands are put on circuses. Only 3 EU member states so far have imposed a full ban on wild animal circuses {469}. Volt strongly pushes them all to take such a stance.

Ensure the end of Bullfighting in the EU.

- Prohibit any financial support given by public actors ([European](#) {470}, state, regional or local) or any fiscal benefit towards bullfights and similar traditions, as those show pure animal torture. Volt also encourages awareness campaigns against those practices in Spain, Portugal and southern France {471}.
- Harmonise all these aspects with the next Common Agricultural Policy. So that aid to these sectors is gradually phased out and is directed to other areas in order to create more jobs.
- Prevent any attempt of Bullfighting from becoming a cultural and immaterial heritage of Humanity, by [UNESCO](#) {472}.
- Fully restrict children and adolescents in events (public and private) related to bullfighting {473}.
- Work at a national level to consecrate animals as sentient beings in the civil codes and adapt the legal codes so they don't exclude bulls used in bullfighting {474}.
- Reject diplomatic attempts to export the practice to other countries.
- Ensure that public institutions have accessible and transparent mechanisms so any economic support to the bullfighting sector is effectively tracked.
- Establish the abolition of the practice in Europe, and in the world, as a collective goal.

Support the conservation of wild species in light of current research and species statuses, such as the [European Bird Species Actions Plan](#) {475}. Volt supports updating the [EU Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992](#) {476}, and will push for the establishment of urban corridors for pollinators and, where applicable, other species, to preserve and/or increase populations of key species (e.g. bees).

Strongly regulate the transport of live animals in the EU and ban long term exports of livestock animals to outside the EU.

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Details see “Regulations of Live Animal Transportation” in Volt’s Policy Portfolio.

E. Pollution prevention and biodiversity

Pollution-related causes led to one in every six premature deaths worldwide in 2015, according to a study published by the Lancet Commission {477}. Indeed, urban development needs to include a strong focus on cleaner air and reducing pollutants which, according to the WHO, contributes to elevated rates of heart disease, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and lung cancer {478}. The climate impact of urban environments urgently demands further action to avoid greater degradation of our environment and our health {479}.

Pollution is also one of the major risks for further losing biodiversity. Biodiversity not only refers to the number of species within an ecosystem but also to the genetic diversity within a species’ gene pool and the number of and interactions between different communities of species within a larger ecosystem. Each level is affected by human activity, and in many cases, this interaction results in a reduction in biodiversity. This raises severe concerns among biologists, environmental scientists, and other communities of researchers. A comprehensive approach to global balance

must take into account both measures on pollution prevention and nature conservation.

1. Pollution prevention

Promote the reuse, refurbishment and recycling of existing materials to avoid waste and overproduction, providing a real alternative to limit the introduction of contaminants into the natural environment.

Promote investment in research and incentivising changes in legislation to hasten the adoption of new practices that avoid pollution. This could include building roads made of more sustainable materials compared to current building blocks, road pricing for cities as seen in Oslo and London and the promotion of electrified communal transport.

Examine the idea of a pollution tax by supporting research on this topic.

2. Biodiversity

Commit to the United Nations Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, including the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and promote its overall vision of living in harmony with nature {480}.

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Promote biodiversity for agricultural land use by:

- Consistent installation of flower strips and hedges to link habitats.
- Stop eutrophication caused by excessive fertilizer use and the associated loss of species.

Support the development of stronger assessment systems for urban development in view of its impact on biodiversity.

- Support insect-friendly street lawns with high biodiversity by replanting with mixed trees, bushes, and open blooming flowers.
- Promote initiatives that empower citizens, like urban gardening and sharing economies to reduce waste as well as support and develop enhanced education programs on biodiversity for all generations.

III. Migration

Volt defines 'migration' to include all individuals and groups that voluntarily or involuntarily move from one place to another with the intention of settling, permanently or temporarily, in a new

location. This includes internal migration and migration between different countries. It is acknowledged that challenges differ depending on the different groups that are included in the broad definition of migration. However, Volt believes that the difference between groups is fluid, and that existing definitions create artificial lines that are less relevant now than at the time of their establishment {481}.

Therefore, different policies are proposed in reference to different categories of migrants. Each category will be defined along the lines of existing definitions as established by expert international organizations, such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (Red Cross), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

A. Asylum seekers and refugees

One of the biggest crises in the world since the Second World War is unfolding at Europe's doorstep, and the continent is only taking a secondary role in helping those affected by conflicts in the Mediterranean basin and beyond. An unprecedented 70.8 million people around the world have been forced from their homes. This means that nearly 25 people are forcibly displaced every minute as a result of conflict or persecution {482}.

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Contrary to discourse stating that EU countries are carrying the burden of African and Middle Eastern refugees, developing countries host 84% of the world's refugees {482}. The current focus in Europe is primarily on curbing migration flows - which, in 2018, accounted for 144,166 arrivals, equal to 0.03% of the population of the Union - instead of providing a safe haven and opportunities to those who are fleeing war {484}.

Volt aims to dramatically reform the way the European system deals with asylum seekers and refugees, to make it more effective, humane, and fair. Additionally, Volt wants to set up an international system to prevent and address refugee crises, and to address the issue of statelessness coherently: these are global issues that should be dealt with at the international level.

1. Reform the EU Refugee system

Set up a Unified EU Refugee Policy to define a unified approach to manage refugee flows from outside the EU.

Within the EU, some countries {485} are overwhelmingly taking in asylum seekers and refugees.

- [The Dublin system](#) {486} needs to be reformed and a settlement system must be defined (e.g. based on

population, population density, wealth, age, and growth). The amended system should provide for penalties for those countries that do not abide by it.

Increase and improve legal pathways into Europe in order to effectively manage flows of refugees and asylum seekers. This includes policies that go beyond the current Dublin Regulation and focus on relocation {487}.

Continue the practice of protecting refugees for the duration of the risk.

Additionally, offer permanent residence to refugees after a certain period if they are still at risk (five to seven years) when certain criteria are met (For example, clean track record, language skills, and knowledge of key elements of the country). There is little chance of refugees going back to their home countries after such a long period, as there is often nothing to go back to. Immediate permanent integration is also required for certain types of refugees, such as identified unaccompanied minors.

Make the asylum system fair, effective, and quick:

- By shortening the time period until the final asylum decision is made.

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- By always providing social, legal, and psychological support with specialised services.
- By allowing asylum seekers to enter the job market from the very first day (Asylum seekers are often not given the opportunity to gain employment or partake in other activities. This is problematic on many levels: it is expensive for countries to financially support them, leading asylum seekers to live in dire situations). Asylum seekers are often not given the opportunity to gain employment or partake in other activities. It is expensive for countries to provide them with enough money to live on. Often, insufficient resources are provided, leading asylum seekers to live in dire situations. Additionally, excluding asylum seekers from the workforce for the duration of the asylum procedure does not foster integration. Finally, it is against countries' obligations under international law, human rights law, humanitarian law, and European guidance to support asylum seekers' right to work. Indeed, "without the right to work, all other rights are meaningless (Louis Henkin, U.S. delegate at the drafting of the 1951 Refugee Convention)."

Ensure that asylum seekers' and refugees' rights are respected and that countries uphold obligations arising out of international treaties.

- Put an end to the practice of detaining asylum seekers under inhumane conditions. Practices that cause unjustified and undue detention should be stopped [{491.1,491.2}](#).
- Ensure that the standards for the reception of applicants for international protection are complied with by all European countries [{492}](#).

Involve the private sector and educational institutions in fostering integration by designing alternative accreditation systems for undocumented skills and qualifications, offering training courses and language classes, gathering early information to facilitate employment matching, and setting up platforms and communication channels to explain and openly discuss the rights and duties of people living in Europe.

Ensure decent housing for every asylum seeker and refugee. Additionally, incentivise the adoption of decentralised habitations to foster integration, increasing the chance of securing jobs and of creating a new life in the host country.

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- Integrate social and shared housing into EU cohesion policy {493}. The EU Council of Ministers has given priority to combating social exclusion related to housing in its EU cohesion policy {494}. In 2007, the European Parliament committed itself to a 'European Declaration on Housing {495}. As such, it is recommended to use available funds for social housing to improve the living situations of people including asylum seekers and refugees (One example is the Sharehaus Refugio in Berlin. Planned in collaboration with the Berlin City Mission, the Refugio provides refuge, community and skills development renewal for refugees, local Germans, and people of different cultures who have lost their homes or were forced to flee. Made up of 5 floors, the Refugio offers private rooms and shared communal spaces for 12-18 months. People are encouraged to learn German, make local friends and start working or studying as soon as possible. Residents cook and eat together daily in a creative community in which storytelling and singing, art and theatre are nurtured).

2. Set up an international system to prevent and address refugee crises

Move towards an international administration to cooperatively address refugee crises. The failure to do so is not only unfair, but it is also short-sighted, as it drives extra-regional asylum and prompts smuggling and trafficking {497}. This is why it is necessary to move internationally in the direction of “predetermined burden (financial) sharing and responsibility (human) sharing quotas {497}.” Refugee crisis must be addressed proactively, not reactively {497}.

Allow different protection roles for different countries, embracing common but differentiated state responsibilities. This means that “beyond the common duty to provide first asylum, states could assume a range of protection roles within their responsibility-sharing quota (protection for the duration of the risk; exceptional immediate permanent integration; residual resettlement)—though all states would be required to make contributions to both (financial) burden-sharing and (human) responsibility-sharing, with no trade-offs between the two {497}.”

Ensure safe passage by creating humanitarian corridors. While combating

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human smuggling is necessary, it must be acknowledged that often, closing one route forces the creation of another, sometimes more dangerous. Better communication with people attempting the journey, both in their home countries and in transition countries, is necessary.

Advocate before the international community for famine {501} and climate migrants to be classified as refugees, or to be afforded the same rights under international law. While this is a long-term process, Volt will advocate for it to become reality. These are key and necessary measures. Additionally, only [four countries](#) {502} are currently either at risk of or in a famine situation, and such migrants would not dramatically increase the number of refugees seeking refuge abroad. Many individuals in those countries already qualify as refugees, since they are fleeing on the grounds of persecution based on their ethnicity, national origin, descent, skin colour, religion, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion) {503}.

Help transform the protracted refugee camp situation to enable refugees and asylum seekers to contribute to society and ensure that they are afforded their full rights.

Work at the source and tackle the problems that create refugee crises in order to prevent them, through international cooperation and diplomacy.

- Strengthen international cooperation and governance of migration.
- Increase focus on prevention of conflict and the mitigation of other causes of refugee flows by political means.
- Use joint economic, financial, and military resources to diplomatically resolve existing conflicts in areas from which a large percentage of the population was forced to flee.
- Provide people at risk with protection and assistance in their own countries (including internally displaced persons).
- Invest in the creation and improvement of humanitarian centres in regions close to the affected area, and support opportunities and effective application processes for resettlement {504}.
- Promote the rights of refugees to ensure that the obligations of Member States are upheld. This includes positive incentives for those States that respect the rights of refugees and asylum-seekers in the form of financial benefits. Diplomatic and economic

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sanctions shall be applied as a last-resort measure.

- Increase financial aid for refugee-hosting countries and ensure existing funding commitments are honoured.

3. Statelessness

Put an end to statelessness in Europe.

More than 10 million people are stateless in the world {505}. Stateless persons are often denied the enjoyment of essential rights, such as identification documents, employment, education, and health services {506}.

Push all individual European countries to ratify and implement the 1954

Convention relating to the status of Stateless Persons - designed to ensure that stateless people enjoy a minimal set of rights - and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, which aims at reducing the number of stateless people in the world. As of April 2018, most, but not all, countries are parties to these conventions {507}.

Work to implement the objectives laid out in the UNHCR Action Plan to End Statelessness in the world by 2024 {508}.

Volt will focus on a number of challenges specific to the EU, including {509}:

- Increasing homogeneity among the procedures of European countries regarding the determination of statelessness, with respect to both administrative and judicial procedures.
- Facilitating access to nationality for children born stateless in all European countries. In addition, separate procedures should be established for children born en route.
- Ensuring access to the labour market, education, and social services, even when the residency status of a stateless person cannot be determined.
- Establish suitable procedures for unaccompanied stateless minors that are considerate to the specific vulnerabilities of this particular group.

Comply and share best practices among countries, as it was set in the December 2015 Council Conclusions to end statelessness {510}. **Stimulate the exchange of information between Member States**, in particular on policies regarding the prevention and reduction of statelessness and the treatment of stateless persons {511}.

B. Economic Migrants

Volt supports enabling labour mobility by removing existing barriers. At the bi-, multi-, and plurilateral level, much can be gained from liberalized commitments specifically targeting those groups of economic migrants that come from developing and least-developed countries. An important consideration, which should form the basis of any policy regarding the increased mobility of economic migrants, is the needs of the labour market, both in the Sending States as well as in Receiving States. Receiving States are often faced with an ageing population and an over-represented supply of professionals in the service sector. These demographic factors create a demand for the type of work that can be met by economic migrants. Furthermore, economic migrants send much of their income back to their home States in the form of remittance {512}. Investments made possible due to remittances greatly benefit the economic development of the home State (Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, Common actions for growth and employment: the Community Lisbon programme, COM(2005) 330 final, Brussels 20.7.2005, p. 2. See also Mattoo, A., Carzaniga, A. (eds.), *Moving People to Deliver Services*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2003). Also Münz, R. et al, "What are

migrants contributions to employment and growth", Hamburgische WeltWirtschafts Institut, Migration Research Group (2006), p. 5). Promoting economic growth through remittances is mutually beneficial, as it not only supports the development of Sending States, but it also prevents poverty-driven migration (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), "How Do People in Asia and the Pacific Migrate Legally for Work? An Overview of Legal Frameworks: GATS Mode 4, PTAs and Bilateral Labour Agreements", Trade and Investment Division, Staff Working Paper 03/11, p. 110). Volt advocates for permanent economic migration to be made possible by establishing transparent and coherent policies in all European countries. However, policies regarding permanent economic migration should include safeguards to mitigate the negative effects of permanent migration on the workforce and general development of the Sending State {515.1,515.2}.

1. Economic migrants as a temporary workforce

Target temporary economic migrants when liberalizing labour market mobility.

A policy designed in this respect should facilitate circular labour mobility (European Commission, "Policy Coherence for Development, Accelerating progress

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towards attaining the Millennium Development Goals”, COM (2005) 134 final, Brussels, 12.4.2005, p. 15. See also European Commission, “Policy Plan on Legal Migration”, SEC(2005)1680, Brussels 21.12.2005, p.4). Volt will:

- Actively assess the impact on the labour market of the Receiving and the Sending States to ensure a balance between the needs and demands. Commitments made should accommodate the outcome of such an analysis and mitigate the negative effects of increased labour mobility.
- Support the active involvement of relevant stakeholders, such as employers and trade unions, when designing policy on temporary economic migration, both in Sending and Receiving States.

Ensure that a level playing field is created, in which temporary economic migrants have equal access to justice.

- Use the expertise of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in designing policies that enable temporary migration of workers which adequately balances the interests of foreign and domestic workers [{517.1,517.2}](#).

- Support national and international prosecution agencies in the fight against human trafficking and in the creation of a global system to report trafficking crimes.

Develop a specific migration visa that should be made available to temporary foreign workers.

- Visas for temporary foreign workers should be subject to a separate regime. Temporary foreign workers should not be entitled to apply for permanent residency or social security in the Receiving State. In turn, the labour rights of temporary migrant workers should be ensured by ensuring access to medical services, necessary insurances, and legal services, as well as compliance with local labour laws of the Receiving State (Council for Trade in Services, Negotiating Proposals of WTO Members, India, S/CSS/W/12, 21 November 2000. See also Services Signalling Conference, Report by the Chairman of the TNC, JOB(08)/93, 30 July 2008, paras. 1–4).

Work to liberalize services commitments in the World Trade Organization to better enable the temporary movement of natural persons.

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- Adapt the definition of service supplier in the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) to include workers that fall into non-service categories, such as agricultural and fishery workers (M. Panizzon, M., "International Law of Economic Migration - A Ménage À Trois? GATS Mode 4, EPAs and Bilateral Migration Agreements", Journal of World Trade, Vol. 44(6), (July 2010); Society of International Economic Law (SIEL), Second Biennial Global Conference, University of Barcelona, July 8-10, 2010, p.6. Also Hertel, T. W. et al, "Agriculture and Non-Agricultural Liberalization in the Millennium Round", CIES Working Paper No. 16 (March 2000), p. 14-16).
- Utilize the possibility of negotiating additional commitments which support circular migration. Specifically, this means commitments that ensure the voluntary return and the prevention of exploitation of temporary workers.
- Actively work towards the further defining and utilizing of Emergency Safeguard Mechanisms, which enable the temporary protection of certain sectors of the labour market in case of an unexpected surge of temporary migrant workers which threatens to harm or harms the national labour market (WTO Secretariat, Trade Policy

Review European Union, WT/TPR/S/284, p. 31-32, para. 2.28).

2. Economic migrants as permanent workforce

Push forward the establishment of a separate administrative procedure for permanent economic migrants, in addition to facilitating temporary economic migration.

Support and further develop existing efforts to ease permanent migration for highly skilled migrants, such as the EU Blue Card visa [{521}](#).

3. Irregular economic migration

Ensure that the fundamental rights of undocumented migrants across Europe are respected in case of detention and deportation. Ensure that the principle of non refoulement is upheld.

Give particular attention to the rights of minors within the category of irregular economic migrants. The rights as contained in the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child must be respected in all circumstances [{522}](#).

Facilitate the creation of an administrative system within and across

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European countries which allows for the conditional change of status from irregular to regular economic migrant [{523}](#).

C. European Humanitarian Corridors

Volt believes that **the attitude of the European Union to offer asylum only to those who manage to reach its borders is anachronistic** in the face of the natural phenomenon of migration. In order to create a legal migration system, which allows an organic approach to the challenge posed by this phenomenon, we believe **it is essential to develop a system of European humanitarian corridors that allow to better coordinate the actions of the Member States**. Too often, due to the Dublin Regulation and, in particular, the readmission practice contained therein, states adopt discarding and disadvantageous demand analysis methodologies and parameters regarding most interested member states.

To combat human trafficking, to end the death of people along with one of the world's most dangerous migration routes, **we aim to create hubs, that is, free zones, under the control of international organizations, including the EU itself, which should be placed on the border, on the territory of the neighbouring State, with States recognized internationally as**

unstable and/or involved in internal or international conflict, in order to guarantee a short and safe journey to the subjects concerned by the program.

The nature of these hubs will be twofold:

- **The first category of hub considered temporary, will be designed for the temporary management of conflicts and positioned at the borders of the state participating in the conflict;**
- **A second, permanent category will be designed and positioned on the main migration routes.**

This strategic location would allow a greater interception of migratory flows, offering security, stability and legality to a large number of people.

Asylum applications would be submitted and evaluated in these hubs.

Transportation to safe countries, including non-European countries, would occur later if protection is assured and the necessary documents are released.

In the meantime, the **applicant must be hosted inside the hub under the control and protection of the international organization of competence.**

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We also find it necessary to **entrust the management of these hubs to international organizations** and not to the government staff of the country where the hub is located. This preference for international organizations is dictated by the desire to avoid cases of exploitation and repression of freedoms that occur, for example, in Libyan camps. The important factor in hub management must be the attention paid to possible radicalization phenomena.

As regards the **criteria for identifying the beneficiaries**, the personal and family situations of the applicants will be examined with reference to a plurality of preferential criteria:

- People from countries involved in international and/or internal conflict.
- Persons recognized as deserving by UNHCR, at least prima facie, of the recognition of the refugee status under the 1951 Geneva Convention and its 1967 Protocol;
- People who, although not included in the previous point, show a proven condition of vulnerability determined by their personal situation, age and health conditions;

- Each of the criteria indicated in the previous points, if proven in its consistency and seriousness, can motivate the person's admission to the project. In complementary form and not a substitute for the previous criteria, the following additional factors will be taken into account for admission to the project:
- Persons who can benefit from support in the European Union or third countries for the declared availability of individuals, religious authorities or associations, to initially provide for their hospitality and support for a suitable initial period;
- People who have stable family or social networks in European Union member countries and for this reason have declared that they want to establish and integrate in the member country indicated by them.

This criterion serves to facilitate the identification of integration paths and to exclude and/or limit any voluntary secondary movements.

Once arrived in Europe, or in a third country, migrants are welcomed by the promoters of the program and, in collaboration with other partners, are hosted in different houses and structures

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displaced throughout the country, according to the widespread reception model. Here they are offered an activity of integration into the social and cultural fabric, through language learning, schooling of minors and other initiatives. The reception part will be fulfilled by pursuing a correct distribution of the migratory weight, the respect for human dignity and integration.

The currently exposed project should develop along a medium / long-term axis, given the difficulty of the addressed topic.

Implementation: The implementation of the project on humanitarian corridors will be financed, according to the operating entity, with the funds of the same, to the extent deemed necessary, paying attention, however, to the needs of refugees and other categories present in the structures in order to avoid situations of neglect and abandonment. The funds in question must also be used to meet the possible expansion needs of the structures, in the event of particularly serious circumstances, to avoid creating situations of overcrowding.

IV. Development Cooperation and International Fair Trade

Sustainable development is the highest priority and challenge that humanity faces today, and Volt will ensure that Europe lives up to its commitments. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have set out a clear international agenda to follow, tackling environmental destruction, inequalities, and conflict {524}. The EU and its Member States must put people and the planet first in their foreign policy, to achieve global balance. Volt is committed to trade that is free, fair, and sustainable, and benefits the welfare of all people along the value chain. Trade policy must facilitate development and be compatible with development cooperation, as well as prioritise principles of democracy and human rights. Development cooperation policies centred on partnership with third countries need to take a geopolitical view, seeking to address conflict and instability and the root causes of migration holistically, empowering those who are most vulnerable and promoting peace, democracy, and human rights.

A. Development Cooperation

By adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the EU Member States acknowledged that a paradigm shift

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is necessary for international policies on development cooperation [{525.1,525.2}](#). Nowadays, it is impossible to speak about economic growth without taking into consideration its environmental and social impacts. Volt believes that Europe should lead by example and promote sustainable development objectives, not only in its internal but also in its external policies. In particular, Europe should focus on the objectives of poverty eradication, zero hunger, quality education, and inequality reduction. All this is to be achieved while respecting the environment, peace, justice, and gender equality.

Providing 48% of all global development aid in 2017, the EU and its Member States are collectively the world's leading donor [{526}](#). This entails a huge responsibility for Europe and Europeans, who are asked to respect their commitments while promoting the values of peace, democracy, and human rights. However, the coherency and consistency of the EU's external action are often undermined by the lack of coordination and vision. That is why Volt is committed to better-coordinated development and cooperation policies that are driven by common interests and shared values. We support such development and cooperation policies which are fair, transparent, and respectful of countries' development priorities.

Propose that Member States and EU-level planning and programming shall follow the same cycles in order to provide maximum support to developing countries and to speak with a single voice in our external relations.

- To this end, Volt proposes to replicate the Joint Programming Exercise, which already proved successful in Cambodia and Palestine, to the rest of our development cooperation relations [{527}](#).
- The extended use of Joint programming would not always allow national- and EU-level actions to be coordinated and synchronized, but it would lead to the elaboration of a joint strategy that is fully aligned to the partner country's national development plan.

Introduce a switch to a form of development cooperation that is not only based on public money but also intelligently mixes different sources of financing and leverage investments from the private sector. In this context, Volt welcomes the [European External Investment Plan](#) [{528}](#) and promotes the use of various forms of blended finance, in coordination with international financial institutions.

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Advocate for the economic development of Europe's partner countries to respect sustainability concerns. Initiatives for financial inclusion shall pave the way to creating fairer societies, where the differences generated by growing inequalities are substantially reduced.

Support the use of new technologies and of innovative methods of consumption and production to promote inclusive and green growth.

Promote and support the development of a good governance framework on the basis of sustainable and foreseeable criteria upon which the eligibility of countries to receive European development aid should be decided.

Coordinate development cooperation on the EU level as part of the common foreign policy based on the principle of sustainable development.

Introduce Results-Based Financing as part of the common foreign policy on development cooperation.

- Instead of financing inputs, the recipient country will take care of inputs and results. The results will be rewarded according to agreed-upon criteria and amounts.

Advocate for the establishment of sound fiscal systems as part of development cooperation. This includes:

- The generation of domestic finance in order to reduce aid dependency, e.g. by providing support for increasing tax collection, raising the public image of taxation and its benefits, as well as reviewing and improving tax policy.
- The prevention and punishment of tax evasion by individuals and (foreign) companies.
- The development of financial instruments, such as public and private sector bonds, to allow citizens to invest their savings at home rather than sending the money abroad.

Stimulate local economies and the creation of new jobs through the promotion of production and trade chains by using sustainable technologies.

B. International Trade

Volt supports global free and fair trade that is grounded upon the principles of sustainable development and puts people and the planet ahead of narrow profits. When negotiating trade commitments on the bilateral or multilateral level, a number

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of core principles should be included and respected. International trade should be rules-based, reciprocal, non-discriminatory, and actively work towards the sustainable development of all States involved. This means that free trade should be promoted but should not be unregulated. International trade should respect human rights principles and the limitations of the earth's resources.

1. Rules-based free, fair, and sustainable trade

Advocate for multilateral trade agreements rather than unilateral trade policies or agreements between a limited number of trading partners. Global free and fair trade is more effective and efficient if the same set of rules apply equally to all trading nations.

Support the WTO and related institutions such as the IMF, World Bank, UNCTAD, OECD, and ILO to ensure rules-based free and fair trade globally. Volt will work actively to adequately reform these institutions for the purpose of ensuring that their mandates prioritise sustainable development and that economic growth remains within the possibility of our globally limited natural resources. Due to the importance of achieving Global Balance in international trade, Volt, in particular, supports the OECD's "due diligence"

approach as requisite for companies operating in global value chains [{529}](#). This includes the maintenance and use of effective trade mechanisms, such as anti-dumping and anti-subsidy instruments.

Support the implementation of policies related to the UN Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights (UNGP) [{530}](#) and the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises (renewed version 2011) [{531}](#) that incorporate the UNGPs and lay the foundation for Responsible Business Conduct in value chains.

Actively hold European and other developed States to their commitment to diminish, and eventually stop altogether, export subsidies relating to agricultural products.

Closely follow the effects of newly established separate dispute settlement mechanisms and dismantle them if it becomes clear that such mechanisms negatively affect the people of Europe and the environment, or disproportionately favour the private investors making use of them.

- Structure the newly-proposed investor courts in such a way that democratic decisions made in the public interest cannot be interfered with. The new

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investment court should work on the basis of transparency and equity {532}.

Introduce binding oversight and arbitration mechanisms for the review of human rights breaches and environmental harm, with open civil society participation and complaint mechanisms.

2. Reciprocal free, fair, and sustainable trade

Build upon the existing EU policies towards imports from less developed countries, like 'Everything but Arms', and take away Intra-EU policies that prevent less-developed countries from effectively being able to export to the EU.

Support and defend the open trading character of the EU. The gradual lowering of external tariffs should remain a priority, as well as the elimination of non-tariff barriers.

Improve the democratic legitimacy of the Member-driven governance system of the WTO.

- Support a quick conclusion of the Doha Development Agenda, if necessary through the establishment of

plurilateral agreements under the umbrella of the WTO {533}.

- The EU and other developed WTO Members should work towards diminishing and eventually stopping all export subsidies relating to agricultural products.
- Market access for non-agricultural products should be ensured and promoted. Practices that work against gradual liberalisation, such as tariff escalation and the implementation of tariff peaks, should be countered.
- Negotiations on trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights should specifically focus on ensuring a balance of interests among WTO Members regarding the patentability of biological inventions, the protection of plant varieties, and the needed flexibilities for the protection of public health.
- Further liberalization of trade in services is necessary for those sectors of interest for developing or least-developed Member countries.
- The resources of the WTO Secretariat should be deployed specifically to facilitate cooperation among other international organizations to ensure

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that technical assistance is more efficient and effective.

- Possibilities of cross-retaliation and related conflict resolution methods should be explored to better ensure the enforcement of decisions made by the Dispute Settlement Body.
- Authoritative interpretations should be employed to enable multi-level judicial control of trade regulations so as to provide more democratic legitimacy to the Member-driven governance system of the WTO.

Support an EU 'Trade and Aid' agenda that stimulates Trade over Aid as soon as the level of development of the partner country allows reduction of development aid.

- The priority must lie with the development of a strong governance structure on the basis of people-oriented programmes. The integration of developing countries in the global economy should be the main objective of development aid, provided such integration benefits the citizens of the State in an equitable manner. Timely review of development cooperation structures should be institutionalized in order to ensure the

equal and equitable distribution of welfare.

Review and accordingly adapt the special and differential provisions in the WTO-covered agreements in order to ensure a holistic and coherent approach to development cooperation.

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Challenge 5 - Citizen Empowerment

Vision

For Volt, the EU is a unique political space waiting to be filled with democratic life. European citizens need to be empowered to make informed political decisions, be able to influence politics beyond elections alone, and exercise their democratic rights within vibrant, resilient, and deliberative democracies.

First, we encourage local communities to start looking at the European Union as a potential problem-solver - as opposed to problem-maker - and to collaborate across borders when tackling local problems. Volt will highlight opportunities to constructively use the European spaces where they exist, to use the tools already available for doing so, and develop new channels for citizens to participate in political life. Furthermore, Volt will engage in capacity-building activities to strengthen citizens' ability to meaningfully participate in and influence political processes. And of course, we will practice what we preach by

applying the standards we put down for citizen empowerment to ourselves.

We want to foster vibrant, pluralistic and accessible public spheres, which is why we advocate for a range of measures to safeguard media freedom and pluralism throughout Europe and support fostering the emergence of a transnational European media landscape. We also support strong and dynamic cultural and creative industry sectors, as these are key to maintaining European pluralism. We also want to ensure the openness of public data. We think open data provides an ideal and effective gateway for citizen empowerment: it can provide an objective basis for analysis, debate, and education, as well as empower citizens to make innovative use of the data available to them and to acknowledge their role in generating change.

We want to multiply citizens' opportunities to influence political and policy processes. Throughout Europe, citizens choose their European, national and local representatives through the act of elections, and we want to make sure that elections across all of Europe are free and fair. We also acknowledge that political innovations in general, and digital technologies in particular, have given rise to a variety of tools and processes that make it possible for citizens to actively take

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part in democratic civic life beyond elections alone. This is why we advocate for a range of concrete tools for strengthening participatory and transnational European democracy.

I. Foster vibrant, pluralistic and accessible public spheres to enable citizens to make informed political decisions

Empowered European citizenship requires vibrant, pluralistic, and accessible public spheres in the individual EU Member States and in Europe as a whole. Informed political decisions are only possible under conditions in which information is freely accessible. This requires a functioning, healthy and independent public sphere, one in which citizens not only have access to quality information, but are also able to process this information; where diverse perspectives are publicly deliberated by media, political actors, and civil society, and where citizens are able to choose between valid political alternatives.

A. Promote free and pluralistic cultural and media landscapes

“The freedom and pluralism of the media shall be respected {534}.” Media freedom

and pluralism are essential pillars of democracy and thus are enshrined as fundamental values in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union {535}. Unfortunately, today’s European media landscapes are under high pressure and stress: independence and pluralism of media are threatened in many European states, and a transnational European media landscape is still in its infancy {536}. Furthermore, many citizens’ information and communication habits have shifted towards the Internet. On the one hand, the Internet facilitates access to information and offers citizens new opportunities for participation, discussion, and shaping opinions. On the other hand, the emergence of a digital marketplace of news poses fundamental challenges to quality journalism, both online and in print. News outlets everywhere are struggling to find sustainable business models, while coordinated misinformation campaigns are undermining the very essence of rational discourse and decision-making across the globe. This undermines public trust in democratic institutions {537}.

Volt strives to support innovative solutions to these challenges by challenging citizens to use the available tools needed to navigate today’s complex media landscapes. Volt, therefore, advocates for a range of measures to safeguard media freedom and pluralism throughout Europe and to foster the emergence of a

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transnational European public sphere. Volt also advocates for the strengthening of Europe's diverse cultural landscape in order to safeguard the pluralism that underlies the European project as a whole.

1. Ensure media pluralism

Encourage the treatment of quality journalism as a public good, not a commodity {538.1,538.2}. While public broadcasting institutions in many European countries are expressions of an understanding of quality journalism as a public good, the quality media landscape also depends on a range of private actors. The vast majority of these actors struggle significantly to finance their endeavours with the tools available to them under free-market criteria (i.e. advertising). In the digital realm, users often access news via social media, where non-transparent algorithms often cannot distinguish between quality and misleading media, and users expect to consume journalistic content for free. Some actors have moved their top quality content behind paywalls, excluding non-paying users. Others, like The Guardian, have so far refrained from doing so, relying instead on readers' subscriptions and a foundation model to keep their product accessible to all. Volt strongly encourages the exploration of innovative funding mechanisms to ensure the provision of quality journalism as a

public good, safeguarding its non-excludable and non-rivalrous nature, all across Europe.

Work to ensure freedom of information and freedom of expression. An engaged citizenry is not possible without the freedoms of information and expression {539.1,539.2,539.3}. These freedoms must be upheld on the Internet as well as offline {540}. Volt will work to ensure that relevant actions are taken to uphold freedom of information and expression in Europe, particularly in places where these freedoms are in danger. Volt, therefore, calls on the Commission and the Member States to fully support and strengthen the tools already developed with regard to the promotion and protection of the rights and freedoms enshrined in Art. 11 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, such as the Media Pluralism Monitor and the Council of Europe Platform for the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists {541}.

Ensure the safety and security of journalists. The safety and security of journalists are fundamentally important for a pluralistic media landscape. Volt will support a range of measures to ensure journalists in Europe are safe and have secure working environments, e.g. by calling on the Member States to fully support the initiative launched by

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Reporters Without Borders for the creation of a Special Representative to the United Nations Secretary-General for the safety of journalists {541}.

Demand transparency of media ownership and influence {543}. In order to be able to make informed decisions, consumers of media must be able to understand whose interests a medium serves. States are invited to ensure the independence of their audiovisual regulatory authorities and to take appropriate measures to achieve genuine transparency of media ownership and funding sources, safeguard the right of journalists to protect their sources and to protect journalists from undue influence, and, depending on their national context, to prevent possible negative effects of excessive concentration of media ownership {544}.

Foster education on media literacy {545}. Media literacy includes all technical, cognitive, social, civic and creative capacities that allow a person to access the media, to have a critical understanding of the media, and to interact with it {546}. In today's news and media landscape, it becomes ever more important to be able to distinguish between credible and fake news sources and content. Volt will seek to support educational measures undertaken by educational institutions such as schools,

as well as aim to strengthen the role of civil society, public institutions and academia in this area {547}. As also mentioned in our Smart State chapter, Volt supports efforts to teach "critical thinking" in schools, not only in relation to media but also with regard to information disseminated by individuals (e.g. politicians) and institutions (e.g. NGOs, civil society organizations, think tanks, political parties).

Push the EU to safeguard the democratic public sphere necessary for the functioning of a European democracy {548}. In order for public spheres to be conducive to a functioning democracy, they need to be places where open and free deliberation amongst a variety of actors - citizens, civil society organizations, political actors, media, etc. - can take place. Volt will strengthen the ability of the EU to uphold its citizens' fundamental rights and to intervene effectively in cases where media freedom and pluralism are threatened in EU Member States {549}. For instance, Volt calls on the Commission to propose an Anti-SLAPP (strategic lawsuit against public participation) Directive that will protect independent media from vexatious lawsuits intended to silence or intimidate them {550}. Volt will explore the introduction of further mechanisms that allow for the effective oversight of media independence at the European level, which would be conducted by a politically independent body.

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Create a truly pan-European public sphere. Volt shall encourage the EU to act where common rules in the Single Market may be necessary to prevent distortions in the functioning of the media arising from divergent Member State laws, especially with regard to online news and public media {551}. Volt will advocate for the creation of pan-European media outlets and for the dissemination of media content throughout the EU, in order to support the emergence of a transnational political public space and democracy, advocate for the cross-border accessibility of national public broadcasting content throughout the EU, and call for an increase of EU support and funding for training of journalists, as well as for quality and investigative journalism in the EU.

Incentivise greater media coverage of EU affairs. Volt will encourage live coverage of national and European parliamentary gatherings by public media as a contribution to fostering the emergence of a pan-European public sphere. It will call for practical measures at the EU and member state levels to incentivize more general media coverage of EU affairs. At the EU institutional level, this might include encouraging regular interviews of Presidents of EU institutions with panels of national media outlets from across the EU {551}. The goal would be to promote a deeper general understanding of the

European dimensions of various national policies {551}.

Support the standards put forth by the Council of Europe to ensure media pluralism in Europe {554}.

2. Fight to ensure that strong and independent public media exists in the member states

Ensure sustainable funding for public media. Encourage member states to grant public funding to media organizations only on the basis of non-discriminatory, objective, and transparent criteria. Work to ensure that a funding provision exists for media that are essential for pluralism (including geographical, linguistic, cultural and political pluralism), but are not commercially viable. Ensure that the EU has the ability to intervene in cases where state budget cuts to media actors endanger media freedom and pluralism. Specify that any EU funding is contingent on the adherence to core EU values as specified in Art. 2 TEU.

Ensure media's independence from government interference. Ensure that public media in the EU member states are free from government interference. Ensure that public media are overseen by independent bodies, such as media

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councils, that are composed of a politically and culturally diverse membership {555}.

Work to ensure a healthy balance between public and private media journalism.

Public non-profit media have a special role to play in maintaining pluralism and democratic values; were media to only follow free-market principles, cultural and linguistic diversity in Europe would be imperilled. However, in some countries, concerns exist regarding the risk of unfair competition. Recognizing the different legal and organizational contexts in the Member States, Volt will advocate for the strengthening or implementation of relevant control mechanisms, such as the introduction of independent media councils or media ombudspersons, to ensure that a healthy balance between public non-profit and private media exists.

Push for the exploration and establishment of innovative mechanisms to involve citizens in public media's programme selection.

Promote the creation of a European media space. Call for an increase of EU support and funding for the training of journalists as well as for quality investigative journalism in the EU.

3. Create a European Public Broadcasting Platform

Work towards the establishment of a common European Broadcasting platform {556} in order to supply EU citizens with an effective means of receiving information about the political situation in the various member states. Encourage the European Broadcast to serve as a platform for translated content from the national services, with the content being made available through multiple channels (radio, television, and internet). The French-German channel [Arte](#) {557} may serve as an example.

4. Support strong and dynamic cultural and creative industry sectors

Stress the importance of the cultural and creative industry sectors for vibrant democracies. Cultural and creative industries are vital to vibrant, pluralistic, and accessible public spheres, as they complement the media in processing information and cultural content in any society. Politically relevant debates are often the subject of literature, music, or theatre productions. Furthermore, culture and creativity play an important role in strengthening the unique identity of places. They can also be important drivers and enablers for innovation and

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entrepreneurship. Culture also has an important role to play in promoting social inclusion {558}. Europe's shared cultural heritage has served as a unifying force ever since the commencement of European integration after the Second World War, contributing to a shared sense of belonging across the EU. Volt fully supports the European Union's "unity in diversity" motto and stresses the importance of the cultural and creative industry sectors in fostering constructive dialogues within Europe's democracies.

Call for an increase in EU funding for transnational cultural cooperation in Europe. EU funding for culture, through the Erasmus+ programme, supports programmes for Europeans to study, train, gain experience, and volunteer abroad {559}, thus contributing to exchange among Europeans and fostering the emergence of a shared European identity. Funding for the audiovisual, cultural, and creative sector is provided through the Creative Europe programme {560}. The EU also supports projects promoting conservation and research in the area of Europe's cultural heritage {561}. Volt advocates for an increase in EU funding for transnational cultural cooperation.

Decrease the administrative burden to receive funding. EU funding is often associated with an extremely high

administrative burden for applicants, requiring a sizable investment of time and coordination. This makes it disproportionately difficult for small actors and civil society organizations to apply for funding. At the same time, external funding is of existential importance for many of these smaller actors, with EU funding playing a significant role with regard to their potential to engage in cross-border collaborations. Volt advocates for a decrease in this administrative burden while ensuring that necessary transparency and accountability criteria are upheld.

Foster measures to reach the goals of the UNESCO 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions {562.1,562.2}.

B. Open Public Data

Digitalisation, increased connectivity, openness and transparency are leading to changes in citizen expectations with regard to communicating with and accessing the data of public authorities. Open data - data collected by public institutions which are shared with the public - provides an ideal and effective gateway for citizen empowerment. It can provide an objective basis for analysis, debate, and education, as well as empower citizens to make innovative use of the data available to

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them. It can also be used to foster trust in government institutions, as public authorities have the opportunity to become more effective and efficient, and citizens have the ability to verify political realities. In order for this to happen, however, citizens need the ability and skills to interpret this data. Our call to open public data on the one hand entails a strong commitment to the protection of private data on the other hand, as well as a call to foster educational measures with regard to data interpretation literacy.

Strongly advocate for the public availability and openness of public data.

Advocate for understanding open data as a public good, meaning it is non-excludable (everyone has access to it) and non-rivalrous (usage by one person does not reduce the availability to others). Encourage the sharing of public data under an open license and in an open format. Specifically, insist on the open-source character of publicly funded research.

Insist on the protection of private data and ensure that published public data does not compromise privacy. Insist on the protection of citizens' privacy with regard to the possibility of aggregating large amounts of data collected by government actors and private authorities. Ensure that no data may be linked to citizens' personal information such as

name, identification number, address, etc. Call for an increase in research about measures to safeguard the privacy of citizens, as data about them is collected by public (and private) authorities over a prolonged period of time {563}.

Advocate for a general increase in government transparency {564.1,564.2}.

Encourage making government data, priorities, and findings regularly accessible to citizens in a way that is easily understood, e.g. by regularly publishing "user-friendly" budget reports and by shedding light on legislative processes. Encourage the sharing of data and services between administrations in order to trigger savings and efficiencies {565}.

Stress the potential positive effects of open data with regard to knowledge building, citizen engagement, and innovation.

Make sure that all EU member states and their local authorities comply with the Open Data Charter {566}.

Data should be (1) open by default (i.e. all data gathered by public institutions is published automatically unless governments can justify keeping it undisclosed), (2) published in a timely and comprehensible manner, (3) accessible and usable (machine-readable and under an open license - this ensures that not only

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companies with highly paid staff can access it, but also ordinary people like high school students or interested retirees), (4) comparable and interoperable, (5) used for improved governance and citizen engagement, and (6) used for inclusive development and innovation.

II. Strengthen the ability of citizens to influence politics

Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantees for all people “the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives”. The functioning of the European Union itself is “founded on representative democracy” as well as participatory democracy {567}, with a wealth of different variations of democracy at local, national and transnational levels. Everywhere throughout Europe, citizens choose their representatives through the act of elections. Yet electoral democracy is complemented and can be further strengthened, via elements of participatory democracy. Political innovation in general, and digital technologies in particular, have given rise to a variety of tools and processes that make it possible for citizens to more actively take part in democratic civic life beyond elections alone.

Through widespread public participation in civic affairs and the use of democratic tools, citizens can help assure that their individual and collective interests are being heard and responded to by governments that are held accountable by citizens. Volt advocates for a strengthening of EU democracy and its member states’ democracies through the creation of additional accountability mechanisms. Starting locally, citizens are encouraged to elevate issues to the European level by collaborating across borders using both existing tools - such as freedom of information requests or complaints to the European Commission and EU Ombudsman - and new channels for citizen participation, such as European Citizens’ Initiatives. Volt will engage in a range of capacity-building activities with the goal of enabling meaningful citizen engagement, allowing citizens, governmental institutions, and other actors to enter into a meaningful exchange. In doing so, Volt will strengthen citizens’ ability to influence politics beyond elections alone.

A. Improve accessibility of elections at European, national and local levels {568.1,568.2}

Ensure that all European citizens have the ability to vote in free and fair elections. The right to vote is one of the fundamental rights of European citizens.

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However, several groups of people - such as the disabled, elderly or sick - are currently experiencing difficulties exercising their right to vote due to a lack of accessibility of elections {569}. Volt will push for the removal of current barriers to participation in elections, such as restrictions on legal capacity, lack of access to information and polling stations, and a general lack of awareness among affected groups {570}. Ensure that organization and scheduling of elections encourage high voter participation.

Encourage EU citizens to exercise their rights to vote in the member state in which they live. Remove barriers currently hindering EU nationals living in another EU Member State from voting in elections in which they have the right to vote. Encourage Member States to make it easier for mobile EU citizens to register to vote and ease the administrative burden {571}.

Promote measures to incentivize mobile EU citizens to take advantage of their rights and opportunities to participate in their home country's civic and political life.

Explore e-voting {572}. Advocate for the further development and implementation of e-voting, once security concerns have been successfully addressed. Encourage

further research around the issue of e-voting, with the goal of providing all European citizens with a secure, anonymous, verifiable, and accessible electronic vote.

B. Strengthen the ability of citizens to influence politics beyond elections

Volt is strongly engaged in democratising Europe at every level - locally, nationally and transnationally - with a specific focus on giving Europeans a voice regardless of whether they live in their home country or not. Importantly, Volt actively works towards democratizing Europe by treating the European Union as a unique political space for action. Furthermore, Volt is deeply convinced that citizens can provide valuable information, opinions, innovation, leadership, and action, which can contribute to solving local, national, European, and global challenges. In today's fast-paced environment, in order to counteract estrangement between citizens and their political representatives, more productive interaction is needed between them.

The goal is to empower citizens and make them active participants in the political process, creating an environment more conducive for citizens to voice their concerns, offer their ideas, take initiative,

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and hold governments and their representatives accountable. Government officials and politicians, on the other hand, will be empowered to be closer to their constituencies, able to better understand their challenges, and able to tap into and build on the capacity of their community in order to solve identified challenges more effectively and collaboratively. Citizen engagement shall be promoted as a key factor in shaping the future of European democracy.

1. Strengthen transnational European democracy

Utilise and promote the European Union as a unique transnational democratic space. Volt recognizes the EU as a unique political space that can and should be used for citizens to articulate and organize their political demands. This may happen through coordinated action using established tools at the European level (such as European Citizens' Initiatives, public consultations and petitions) and informal, innovative actions. Volt will enable citizens and civil society organizations to share their challenges and solutions across borders, and learn from each other's best practices. Many regions and local communities across Europe can identify similar challenges. Volt encourages citizens and civil society organizations to organize together around these challenges

to find solutions, and bring their challenges to the attention of the relevant institutions and politicians, if necessary.

Diminish the threshold to file a European Citizens' Initiative (ECI). The European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) allows EU citizens to participate directly in the development of EU policies by allowing them to call on the European Commission to make a legislative proposal on matters where the EU has the competence to legislate {573}. However, a citizens' initiative currently has to be backed by at least one million EU citizens from at least 7 member states, with a minimum number of [signatories](#) {574} required in each of these 7 member states {575}. Volt wants to lower the threshold necessary for a European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) by cutting the minimum number of signatories in half, to 500,000.

Promote the establishment of a pan-European discussion platform for European citizens. Europeans everywhere are faced with similar challenges, yet, currently, there is a lack of spaces beyond social media (which pose privacy problems and the algorithms of which are not conducive to substantial debate) where issues can be discussed not only across language barriers but also with relevant stakeholders. A pan-European moderated discussion platform should aim to identify

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issues Europeans care about in order to then facilitate a moderated exchange beyond party lines among citizens and politicians, political institutions, civil society organizations, and other relevant interest groups. Discussions and exchanges should be moderated by an independent, multi-stakeholder entity adhering to a clear set of principles and values. Facilitation should involve a strong commitment to clear (n)etiquette and bridging party lines.

2. Strengthen tools for direct citizen engagement in politics

Introduce digital platforms to communicate with administrations.

Administrations shall be incentivised to introduce open digital platforms through which citizens can actively participate in relevant political discussions and decision-making processes {576}. Subjects discussed on these kinds of platforms might include local infrastructure proposals or plans for restructuring public spaces. Deliberative processes taking place on such platforms should be transparent, respectful, and take existing administrative rules, frameworks and procedures into account. Participation should be free to all interested persons affected by a particular measure. The online deliberative efforts taking place on the digital platform should be complemented by face-to-face

consultations. The highest privacy and security standards should be implemented on the digital platform.

Encourage the introduction of citizen assemblies.

Citizen assemblies are an innovative tool to allow citizens to deliberate complex political issues. They can increase the quality and legitimacy of political decisions, especially when the results of citizen assemblies directly influence policy or spending of local funds {577.1,577.2}. Citizen assemblies should be constructed in such a way that diverse groups of citizens are randomly represented so that the diversity of the populace is mirrored in the composition of the assembly; this diverse group of people then meets in order to tackle a specific issue. A clear process - involving comprehensive briefings and independent expert input - should enable these citizens to shape informed opinions. These can then be debated in a group, in order to reach a shared output. Respective politicians should be held to account for the implementation of the citizen assemblies' output; for this reason, it is important to secure the commitment and support of local politicians from the very beginning. Volt advocates for the implementation of clear mechanisms to trigger a citizen assembly, such as requiring a quorum of signatures to be reached within a particular time frame.

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Promote participatory budgeting.

Participatory budgeting allows citizens to directly influence and allocate government investments, provided that political buy-in and a respective budget exist [{578.1,578.2,578.3,578.4,578.5}](#). The process of allocating the budget collectively entails a process of deliberation and learning, with the goal of allocating budgets in such a way as to serve the public interest. The set-up of participants should reflect the diversity of the community affected by the budgeting measure. Training and capacity-building for citizens should be provided. Lastly, it needs to be ensured that the process is linked to assemblies or councils that have the power to supervise implementation by the administration [{579}](#). Thus constructed, participatory budgeting may strengthen citizens' democratic experience and impact. Implementation of participatory budgeting at the European level should also be explored.

Explore further political innovations for implementation. All over Europe, innovative ideas regarding the topic of how best to involve citizens in deliberative and political decision-making processes arise all the time. Volt shall continuously explore such novel ideas and approaches. For instance, diverse citizen juries could be involved in shaping the debate around complex and highly politicized European decisions. Citizen audits could complement

already-existing checks and balances on EU institutions [{580}](#).

3. Empower citizens and governments to take concrete action

Enable and empower citizen and government actors to utilize citizen engagement techniques. Volt advocates for a new way of doing politics, one where citizens feel empowered to actively participate in democratic life and feel their voice makes a difference. Citizens shall be enabled to organize in their communities around issues that are important to them and to act upon their values; they shall also be enabled to hold their government and politicians accountable. Government officials, institutions, and politicians everywhere, on the other hand, should be more responsive to, and might even encourage citizen action. If citizens are at the centre of political decision-making, and government actors know how to respond to such engagement, democracy will be strengthened.

- **Enable and empower *citizens* to utilize citizen engagement techniques and tools.** Volt strongly advocates for an increase in funding for citizen engagement projects throughout the European civil society sector. Volt also advocates for the

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introduction of citizen engagement techniques, strategies and tools into educational programmes at the high school and university levels. Such educational measures might be achieved by adding citizen engagement to existing curricula, or they might take the shape of additional (one day or several days) civic engagement classes. Moreover, community organizing and leadership development training shall be conducted in local communities, with the goal of actively educating citizens on how to organize and exercise their rights. Volt will also aim to empower citizens through community organizing campaigns, where citizens select the campaign issue and receive training in campaigning and leadership. Volt will thus create and foster the emergence of new community leaders.

- **Enable and empower government institutions to be responsive to citizen engagement.** Volt advocates for the training of government officials and civil servants in the basics of citizen engagement, also with regard to fostering a supportive institutional and organisational culture of respecting and supporting citizen initiatives throughout government. This effort will be helped by the creation of online platforms that enable interactions between citizens and institutions on a

local, national, and European level. Institutions shall be enabled to include more or stronger deliberative elements to their decision-making processes, encouraging well-structured public discussions using analogue forums as well as relevant technology.

- **Enable and empower politicians to be responsive to citizen engagement.** Volt will also encourage training on community organizing and other citizen engagement frameworks to different political actors, in order to contribute to a general change in culture within the political landscape.

EU Reform

Challenge +1 - EU Reform

I. Vision for Europe

The European Union is our common project. Following centuries of conflict, we have managed to come together and build a Union that has **ensured peace and prosperity** for over sixty years. **We are proud** of this achievement.

Yet, the Europe we live in has its shortcomings. While others have enjoyed a quicker recovery from the economic crisis, EU countries have remained stuck in their austerity plans and structural deficiencies. Adding to inefficient and opaque public administrations, this has led to **high unemployment rates**, impeding investment and the growth of small businesses. Larger companies have benefited from easier access to a wider market and enjoyed cheaper labour, but workers have **not received harmonised social protections**. Wealthy individuals and companies also continue exploiting legal differences between countries to **avoid paying their fair share**, making everyone else foot the bill. And overall, people **do not feel represented** in the

Union and see decisions as imposed upon them from above.

Volt was born out of a crisis of European integration in a time of mistrust for common endeavours. **We came together to affirm the strength of the European project, our commitment to joint efforts, and our belief in our shared future. Ours is a message of hope, of audacity, and of solidarity. A message for all to see that the sirens of division will not tear down what we have patiently built.** Volt rose in order to be a pillar of the European project and to re-energise its construction. Volt offers European citizens a new vision for Europe, one that **embraces our common aspirations** and remedies our shortcomings.

We believe in a Europe that **balances the freedoms of its single market** with strengthened social protection and inclusion, where companies and labour can move around everywhere and where this flexibility is not detrimental to workers anywhere. Our vision is therefore that of a **social Europe** that successive leaders have often mentioned but never implemented. We support a Europe where **solidarity means supporting each other and accepting joint responsibility** for our common future, where we actively support the development of our poorer regions and help raise their standard of living, and

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where citizens across the Union can come together to defend their common interests.

We believe in a Europe that works equally for all, not just for the privileged few. A Europe where individuals and companies contribute their fair share wherever they may live in the Union. Our vision is therefore that of a Europe that guarantees **equal access to education, healthcare and social protection, and to employment opportunities for all**. One where citizens across the continent have the same rights and trust that they all **contribute and benefit equally** from their involvement.

Finally, we believe in a Europe that ensures the **full representation of all citizens and opinions**. A Europe where citizens of all States, large and small, have their voices heard and their interests represented. Our vision is therefore that of a Europe where a **vibrant democracy** creates an **open space for debate** and allows for all to participate and be recognised and respected in their **diversity**. One where citizens directly elect all their European representatives, hold them accountable for their positions and have their needs included in the decisions we make for us all. We believe that this new Europe will enable us to be captains of our lives and choices and to strive for the achievement of our individual ambitions

while being part of a stronger community – a community of values.

Beyond its boundaries and despite its flaws, the European project carries a message for the world. It is a testament that centuries of war and opposition can be overcome by common values, that we have more in common than what divides us, and that we can shape our destiny together. Some support a world of “each country for itself”; we have chosen a different course, one of collaboration, where commonly-agreed rules bind the strong and protect the weak, and we are all the better for it. If history is about the choices we make, then we choose to create a more robust and more sustainable Union for future generations and the world at large.

Through the shared peace and prosperity it has provided, Europe has been a tremendous **force for good** in our lives. We are convinced that current shortcomings can and must be addressed through a better Europe. We believe that with more inclusive and more representative institutions, we can create a **new sense of community** based on common values, and together, united, ensure a **better life for all**.

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II. Institutional Reform and Governance

Reform of the European Union must start with the reform of its governance and institutions. A house divided against itself cannot stand, and the EU can no longer remain half-integrated and half-split, economically unified and politically nationalised. Therefore, the solution to the Union's ongoing troubles is not a question of "more Europe" or "less Europe", but of a "better Europe", including better institutions.

We believe in democracy; we believe that democracy is the best political system for protecting our individual liberties, human rights, and the rule of law.

And if we believe in democracy, we cannot circumscribe it to certain areas of policy-making only; we must instead exercise it at the local level, at the national level, and at the European level. This very democracy, at all levels, is the key to restoring the trust of European citizens in their institutions, and in agreeing on common solutions to common problems. As we can already see in our national systems, democracy was never about all agreeing – this we can never do – but about managing our disagreements and building a fair decision-making process that we can all support.

Expanding and ensuring democracy at the European level will require fundamental changes in our institutions: some we can achieve right away, yet others will require treaty changes. Volt is fully aware of the difficulty of reforming EU institutions, but we will not let this deter us from pushing for reform in favour of more transparency, more efficiency, and true democracy. This is the only way to achieve a qualitative change and finally realise a federal Europe.

The proposals below are further detailed in Volt's adopted [Provisions for a European Constitution](#) {580.1}.

A. General principles

First and foremost in the establishment of good governance and a good government are guiding principles, which all institutions and organisational decisions must aim to entrench. In its policy proposals, Volt follows six guiding principles.

Democracy. Volt supports institutions that give more decision-making power to the European people. This implies both ensuring that citizens' representatives hold the bulk of the power and that these representatives have incentives to represent the general interests of their constituency.

Subsidiarity. Volt supports increased competencies at the European level only if

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that is the level at which they are best handled. All matters should be handled by the most appropriate level of government.

Efficiency. Volt supports the establishment of institutions that can act, in particular those that are not gridlocked by the need for consensus.

Transparency. Volt supports popular involvement in political decision-making and believes that the people need to have access to what their representatives discuss and decide.

Clarity. Unlike the current institutional setup, Volt supports institutions and procedures that citizens can understand and make their own.

Ease of citizen involvement {581}. Volt supports a system that, from elections to popular contributions, is designed to simplify and encourage citizens' involvement. Our policy proposals below rest upon these principles.

Future Fit (Ready). Volt reflects their decision-making with regard to the needs of present and future generations.

B. The legislative branch

Expressing the voice of the people through their representatives, the legislative branch is the most important institution in a democratic system. It must be elected democratically and be as close to the people as possible and empowered to draft, discuss and adopt our legislation. Despite national differences, this is a democratic requirement that all European countries have long adhered to, and enshrining democracy at the European level requires a similar arrangement.

The current European legislature is limited in many ways. The European Parliament is directly elected, but its election modalities differ from country to country, and MEPs are often elected at the national level, not locally. Despite having increased its role among European institutions, the European Parliament also still lacks the basic power to draft legislation. And, for its part, the Council of the European Union is made up of various configurations of national ministers depending on the topic under discussion and often trumps the legislative power of Parliament. As a consequence, some legislation is only passed if there is consensus among the national ministers, bypassing any involvement from the Parliament. Finally, the European Council, an executive body whose role is limited to strategic

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decision-making by the Treaty of Lisbon, regularly intervenes in day-to-day decision-making, bypassing the regular legislative process.

Give the European Parliament the right to legislative initiative. A Parliament consisting of directly elected representatives is the best-suited body to design laws that respond to the people's demands and needs. As the first step for a more democratic law-making process, Volt supports allowing the European Parliament to initiate laws by granting it the right to legislative initiative. Empowered with this right, the European Parliament will finally be able to propose and discuss legislative proposals stemming directly from the representatives of the people, and not at the initiative or through the filter of national or European executives.

Harmonise the adoption of EU legislation. Currently, the adoption of legislation depends on the topic under discussion. Volt supports submitting all European legislation to both EU legislative bodies – Parliament and Council – for it to become law when approved by both. In case of lingering disagreements between both houses, a dedicated mechanism will attempt to iron out differences. Should there remain disagreements, the European Parliament, as the direct representative of the people, must have the final say.

Reform the election of the European Parliament. The current “degressive proportionality” negates the core principle of “one person, one vote” which ensures equal say for all citizens in the political system. Volt, therefore, proposes a voting system that enshrines this principle and combines the election of representatives at the lowest level possible with the proportional representation of political parties in Parliament.

- In this system, Member States are divided into electoral districts with roughly equal populations; this division should be made, as far as possible, along pre-existing administrative boundaries, and will be controlled by an independent electoral commission to avoid attempts at gerrymandering.
- Citizens will have two votes on their voting ballot: one for their local representative – one for each electoral district, thereby ensuring the election of representatives close to the citizens – and one for national lists of European political parties – filling supplementing seats to ensure fair party proportionality in Parliament. The details will feature in a European Electoral Law and apply equally to all Member States.

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- Volt also supports the direct election of the President of the European Parliament by Members of Parliament.

Reform the Council of the European Union.

Formerly known as the Council of Ministers, the Council is the EU's second legislative chamber and currently gathers ministers of Member States in charge of the topic under discussion. In the short term, and in order to bring coherence into the Council's work, Volt supports abolishing the Council's system of topic-based configurations and replacing them with a single representative for each State. As is the case in Parliament, the Council's work will be split between initial discussions in preparatory committees composed of a small group of representatives, and plenary sessions for discussions, amendments, and votes.

Turn the Council of the European Union into a full-fledged legislative chamber.

In the longer term, Volt strongly supports further democratisation of the Council of the European Union through the election of its members either directly by the citizens of the European Union or by States' lower houses. This upper house would ensure the equal representation of States or feature a low level of demographic proportionality. This would also counterbalance population-based apportionment in the European Parliament

and strengthen the representation of smaller Member States. Volt also supports terminating the current practice of a rotating presidency. Under this system, every country leads the Council for six months; despite a welcome alternation in leadership, this system prevents any long-term work and keeps important policies issues from being followed through, since the responsible staff is constantly changing. Volt proposes the direct election of a President of the Council by Council members.

Improve transparency provisions.

- According to our general principles, Volt calls for full transparency of the legislative branch, where discussions are broadcast live and recorded, and each representative's vote is registered and made public.
- As a follow-up measure, Volt supports incorporating an obligation for members of the legislatures to vote, and where they do not feel that any choice is appropriate, they may submit a blank ballot.
- When the vote is for an election, in order to give a proper voice to blank ballots and popular discontent, Volt supports invalidating votes with a majority of blank ballots and

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re-organising them with new candidates.

- In order to prevent backroom deals and late-night arrangements that are clearly detrimental to the proper functioning of democracy, Volt proposes a seventy-two-hour delay between the online publication of a bill and its vote in either legislative house. This is to ensure that citizens and the watchful press are provided at least the minimum amount of time to review and react to the bills that are voted on by representatives.

C. The executive branch

The executive branch has the crucial role of guiding the implementation of laws and contributing to the policy-making process. In order to carry out its duties, it must be reformed to properly reflect popular opinion and be made more efficient in its actions.

Enforce existing limits on, and eventually abolish, the European Council. The European Council currently consists of the European Heads of State or government. In the short term, Volt recalls that its prerogatives must be strictly limited to those prescribed in the treaties, which are to provide “the Union with the necessary impetus for its development and [define]

the general political directions and priorities thereof.” It is clearly stated that “it shall not exercise legislative functions.” The European Council should therefore not be involved in everyday political matters, leaving elected representatives to decide. The European Council also enshrines intergovernmental decision-making, which gives undue power to economically strong countries, which can strong-arm smaller or poorer neighbours. In line with our democracy principle, Volt supports executive decision-making by truly European, supranational bodies. In the medium-term, Volt calls for the European Council to be abolished entirely.

Make the Commission’s portfolios subject-oriented. Despite a provision in the Lisbon Treaty to limit its size, the Commission is currently hampered in its functioning by the requirement to include as many commissioners as there are Member States and to provide a portfolio to each Member State. These constraints – which no country would ever implement for itself – are clearly detrimental to the efficient work of the Commission. Volt calls for removal of these rules and for the President of the Commission to freely decide on the size, composition and attribution of his/her/their team, with due regards for gender representation, but no considerations for national citizenship.

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Strengthen the Spitzenkandidaten.

Following the introduction of the Spitzenkandidaten in 2014, Volt supports the nomination of leaders of parties or coalitions for European elections and proposes the election of the President of the Commission by a vote of the newly-elected European Parliament.

Move from Commissioners to Ministers, starting by creating positions for Finance and Foreign Ministers. As an immediate measure, and in order to strengthen economic governance, Volt supports the creation of the position of finance minister for the Union. Likewise, in order to streamline the governance of foreign affairs, Volt calls for the full integration of the European External Action Service (EEAS) into the Commission and the replacement of the position of High Representative/Vice President (HR/VP) by that of Foreign Minister.

Establish a true European government.

To thoroughly reform the European executive and increase citizens' empowerment, Volt supports the creation of a parliamentary democracy, where a Prime Minister, elected by and from the European Parliament, leads a federal cabinet of ministers and guides the day-to-day policy work of the Union. The Prime Minister will be directly accountable to Parliament and depend on its

confidence; Parliament will be able to withdraw its confidence upon agreeing on a new Prime Minister. A European President elected either directly by citizens or by a body of democratically elected representatives will act as an overarching figure of unity. Among others, he/she will sign bills adopted by the legislative branch into law. In periods of regular political activity, the prerogatives of the President will be mostly limited to a ceremonial role.

D. The Judiciary

The Rule of Law is an essential foundation of democracy and ensures that laws are compatible with our principles and values and, in particular, do not infringe on citizens' fundamental freedoms.

Extend the prerogatives of the European Court of Justice (ECJ).

In line with the Court's growth in recent years, Volt calls for the extension of the prerogatives of the ECJ to remove the need for national referral, and include a review of the compatibility of national and EU law with EU treaties, and the settlement of relevant disputes to which the European Union is a party, disputes between Member States, between a State and citizens of another State, between citizens of different States, and other similar cases. Appropriate and dissuasive sanctions must be made

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available to ensure that Member States abide by EU law.

Create regional branches of the ECJ.

Accompanying this increased role of the ECJ, Volt supports the creation of branches of the Court, with each branch covering a few countries, to make it better able to handle an increased caseload, place the court and European law closer to the citizens, and improve its overall efficiency.

E. Dispositions for European elected officials

Ensuring democracy and fair representation at the European level is as much a question of institutions as it is of elected officials.

Enforce gender equality on party lists.

Mindful of the importance of promoting gender equality in political representation, Volt proposes that all party lists for list-based elections be gender-alternated in their ranking of candidates, meaning the list would not have twice the same gender consecutively.

Reform regulations on European political parties. Volt calls for a reform of the regulations on European political parties in order to support the creation of real European parties, in lieu of the collections

of national parties we see today; this must include the recognition of national branches as part of one single European structure and the possibility of joint financing for campaigns across European countries, with proper regulations and monitoring.

Ensure a link between representatives and their constituents.

Within the framework of a reformed European voting system, and with a view to strengthen the link between European citizens and their European-level representatives and avoid parties sending unknown candidates across the Union, Volt supports a requirement for locally-elected MEPs to be residents of the district they seek election for (An exception shall be made for MEPs who would have moved their residence from their district to Brussels following their election; they shall be able to run for re-election despite not being residents of their districts of election). Likewise, Volt supports candidates to the reformed Council to be citizens of the State they seek election for, regardless of whether this citizenship was acquired through birth or naturalisation.

Regulate elective mandates. In order to propose the constant renewal of the European elected officials, Volt supports reasonable term limits for all European elective positions. These limits, which will

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be defined in the electoral law, will aim at allowing for the development of professional and qualified political elected officials, while avoiding the encroachment of politicians to their positions. Volt encourages durations of terms for the various mandates that allow a synchronisation of elections, in order to limit the occurrence of electoral campaigns that alter the regular political process. So as to limit the influence of money in politics, campaigns themselves will have a limited duration, and campaign finance, including fund acquisition and limits on spending, will be strictly controlled by an independent electoral commission.

Build trust in the people's representatives. Finally, with due concern for the public trust in its institutions and representatives, Volt proposes strict requirements to prevent conflicts of interest. On the one hand, this means a requirement for all European elected officials and candidates to disclose past and present sources of income and any affiliation with or contribution to private businesses, lobby groups, political parties, and associations, be it in a paid or voluntary capacity. On the other hand, it means barring from eligibility to elective Office individuals duly convicted of certain crimes, including corruption, embezzlement, or wilful misuse of public funds. Considering popular representation as a full-time activity, Volt also believes

that it is impossible to combine a European elective mandate with other mandates or positions.

F. Other provisions for good governance

Following these main measures for improved European governance and institutions come supplementary provisions aimed at clarifying and facilitating the Union's functionality.

Allow the creation of dedicated new institutions. The European legislature must be given the power to establish all required agencies for the good functioning of the Union. In particular, Volt supports the establishment of an intelligence agency and the transformation of Europol into a real European law enforcement body. Mindful of the importance of regional development and planned and sustainable urbanisation, Volt supports the Committee of the Regions, as well as a new Committee of European Cities, as consultative bodies and platforms for dialogue and best-practice exchange for local decision-makers. Volt also supports the creation of an "Office for Future Generations" on the European Level, which consults and audits decision-makers with advice and support towards the needs of present and future generations.

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Facilitate working communications. In order to facilitate the Union's policy work, Volt supports the adoption of English as the single working language for European institutions – this is irrespective of the languages spoken by the Member States and relates to our principle of Efficiency.

Set more predictable rules for secession.

Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty allows Member States to leave the Union but gives no indication as to the way to reach this decision. In order to strengthen rule-based processes and increase predictability, Volt supports the adoption of harmonised rules for secession at the EU level. Volt recognises the complexity of this issue and calls for an open debate for the adoption of proposed rules.

Establish a clear and harmonised framework for regional self-determination

(Volt considers "region" any given determined area within a Member State, whether it formally holds the title of region or not).

- Seeking to bring all Europeans together for the benefit of all and believing that we are stronger when we come together, Volt sees secession from a Member State as a last resort. Volt therefore strongly encourages Member States to take all necessary measures to ensure the full representation of all

citizens and to account for the legitimate recognition of regional cultural identities. In this spirit, Volt encourages people to work on living together in good faith and emphasises the need for open and inclusive dialogue between local, national and European levels and for proper subsidiarity and decentralisation [{584}](#).

- Should a genuine effort at dialogue fail, if necessary with the intervention of a mediator, Volt recognises the right of a people to self-determine via the organisation of a peaceful, legal and transparent process in full respect of the rule of law and with a clear assessment of the legal outcome of secession, including outstanding financial obligations [{585}](#). Unless under exceptional circumstances, including clear and large-scale violations of human rights [{586}](#), a region should not unilaterally declare independence from its Member State.
- If a strong will for self-determination is expressed, for instance through a qualified majority and with a turnout threshold, Volt supports a negotiated process of secession between the self-determining region and its member-State; should a genuine and constructive effort at negotiations fail or one party willingly stall, Volt

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recommends the intervention of a European mediator – for instance, the proposed President of the EU (In the absence of a President of the EU, a mediator can be agreed by the parties or proposed by the European Parliament) – to ensure the process moves forward [{588}](#).

- Should the self-determining region choose to leave the European Union as well (In the case of a referendum for self-determination, voters should be provided with the opportunity to express whether they wish to remain in or leave the Union), a negotiated process will take place with the Union. For self-determining regions wishing to remain in the Union, Volt recommends the creation of the status of “Territory of the European Union”, where the region would be temporarily placed following its secession from its Member State and before its potential access to full EU membership [{590}](#). A Territory would remain subject to EU legislation and would be required to fulfil all obligations of a Member State. It will retain benefits such as full access to the single market and free movement; however, it would not benefit from new EU funding or investments and only have a non-voting representation in the European Parliament and no representation in the Council (In either councils, in the

current structure of the EU; in the only remaining Council, in Volt’s proposed structure). The decision to admit a Territory as a member of the Union would be similar to the regular accession procedure to EU membership.

Set up a two-tier integration system.

With the goal of promoting increased European integration and avoiding a blocking need for consensus, Volt supports proposals for a two-tiered integration model that allows willing countries to move forward with the integration of policy competencies. This system should aim at deepening integration in a coherent manner, and Volt strongly opposes “à la carte” models where Member States pick and choose the policies they subscribe to. In this system, countries willing to move forward with integration would make up the first tier and uniformly forge ahead together. This system must not seek to penalise members of the second tier but, on the contrary, give them incentives to join the first tier and contribute to a more integrated and unified Europe.

Draft and adopt a European

Constitution. Finally, in order to streamline the Union’s functioning, Volt strongly supports the adoption of a European Constitution replacing existing EU treaties and detailing the fundamental

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rights and responsibilities of citizens and the EU's institutional arrangements. As a legal and political document, this Constitution should be concise, readable, and understandable by citizens. Unlike current treaties, it should not try to integrate all aspects and provisions of EU law, but focus on core institutional aspects and leave the rest for the legislature to record into regular EU legislation. Volt strongly supports the writing and adoption of this Constitution by representatives of European citizens. In particular, this constitution should include the points detailed in the following chapter. Details with regards to the underlying constitutional concepts can be found in the respective policy portfolio document, "[Provisions for a European Constitution, underlying constitutional concepts](#)" {589}.

G. Provisions for a European Constitution

1. Constitutional principles

In addition to the six principles guiding its reform of the European Union listed in the Mapping of Policies — democracy, subsidiarity, efficiency, transparency, clarity, and ease of citizens' involvement —, Volt subscribes to the following principles for any constitution of the European Union.

Republicanism. Volt supports a republican form of government for European institutions where the European people, endowed with a common European citizenship, is the sovereign, and where the rule of law applies to all citizens equally. This provision is not meant to force a republican model on Member States so long as their institutions are democratic.

Representative democracy. Given its attachment to individual liberties, Volt supports a system of representative democracy, where citizens periodically and freely elect their representatives to deliberate and decide on legislation.

Parliamentary system. In line with a long-standing European tradition and in order to avoid an undue concentration of powers, Volt supports a parliamentary system of government, where the Union's executive stems from and derives its democratic legitimacy from a majority of the European Parliament.

Federalism. In order to ensure an efficient common government while respecting the EU's diversity, Volt supports a federal structure for the Union. The EU's federal government and its federated State governments share the EU's competencies and are endowed with rights as prescribed in the constitution. While initially based on the EU's Member States and expected to

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remain largely stable, State boundaries may evolve following a constitutional process involving citizens.

Principle of subsidiarity. As far as possible, competencies shall be distributed to the level at which they are best handled. While cooperation between the federal and state levels shall be encouraged, the constitution shall entrust each level with relevant responsibilities and accountability. Where appropriate, we further encourage devolving competencies and associated funds to the regional and local levels, for increased efficacy and the proper expression of Europe's regional diversity, including where these regions cross State borders.

Primacy of federal law. Federal law shall have primacy over State law. In case of dispute, the federal judiciary shall decide on the interpretation of competencies and may invalidate specific federal and, in certain cases prescribed by the Constitution, State laws.

Majority rule. In line with our support for democracy, Volt supports decision-making processes based on majorities and explicitly opposes the unanimity principle. Exceptional cases, such as constitutional amendments, may require qualified majorities as prescribed in the Constitution.

2. Individual and collective rights

Recognise human rights. Any Constitution for the European Union must include the recognition and respect of human rights and human rights texts, including, but not limited to, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, the European Convention on Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. These rights shall be inviolable and inalienable.

Respect and protect human rights. The respect and protection of human rights shall be binding on Federal and State institutions. Rights may only be limited in the public interest, provided for by law and where the principle of proportionality is met. Individuals affected in their rights and freedoms shall have access to redress through the courts, with fair, effective and timely access to justice for all.

3. Institutions

Legislature

- The European Parliament shall be the lower house of the legislature. It shall be directly elected according to **Volt's**

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Improved Bundestag Method, which provides citizens with a vote for a candidate in a local constituency and another for a European party on a State-wide list.

- The legislature shall comprise an upper house representing citizens as members of the States; its members shall be elected by citizens or by States' lower houses. States may be represented equally or with a low level of proportionality based on the States' population. The upper house shall participate in the law-making process and constitutional amendments.
- The Constitution shall detail the respective powers of both legislative houses. Each house shall have significant powers to influence the regular federal law-making process in a meaningful way and have the right to legislative initiative.
- In particular, the process for bills to become law shall ensure that both legislative houses have a proper say, whilst striving to avoid legislative blockages. In case of persisting disagreements, a conciliation committee consisting of members of both houses may be convened. Should the bill proposed by this committee fail to be adopted, Parliament, as the direct

representative of European citizens, may adopt the bill using a qualified majority.

Executive

- The President of the European Union shall be the Head of State. The President shall be elected by citizens or a body of democratically elected representatives and act as an overarching figure of unity with mostly ceremonial powers. The President shall sign bills into law and may refuse to do so upon clear and expressed concerns for a bill's constitutionality; he may send the bill back to the legislature for review or request a ruling from the Constitutional Court. The Constitution shall delineate a process for such cases.
- A Federal Prime Minister shall be in charge of leading the government's political action via a cabinet of Federal Ministers. The Federal Prime Minister shall be elected by the European Parliament from its ranks. The European Parliament shall have the right to remove its confidence from the Federal Prime Minister by agreeing on a new Prime Minister (known as a *constructive* vote of no-confidence); the exercise of this right may be suspended for fixed periods following the election

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of a Prime Minister and ahead of parliamentary elections.

Judiciary

- The judicial power of the Union shall be vested in a judiciary comprising a Constitutional Court, a Supreme Court, and lower courts as necessary.
- The structure of the judiciary and the appointment process of its members shall be based on the values of independence and accountability. In particular, judges shall be protected from undue political interference.
- In line with international standards (These include the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the UN Basic Principles on the Independence of the Judiciary, and the Minimum Standards of the International Bar Association), an independent, non-political judicial council, comprising judicial and non-judicial members, shall contribute to Federal judicial appointments, as well as to additional administrative, supervisory or advisory roles. Specific requirements may apply to the appointment of judges of the Constitutional Court.

- The Constitutional Court shall have the power to assess the constitutionality of Federal and State laws. Federal and, in certain cases prescribed by the Constitution, State laws may be invalidated. The Supreme Court may be the Constitutional Court or a separate court.

4. Competences

A European Constitution should address the distribution of competencies, including at least the following competencies.

Principle of subsidiarity. Competences should be distributed to the level at which they are best handled. Cooperation between the Federal and State levels shall be encouraged. Unless explicitly stated otherwise in the Constitution for specific competencies, the Federal level shall have the power to decide on the distribution of competencies.

Exclusive Federal competencies. Some competencies shall be reserved to the Federal level. For instance, the Federal government shall have exclusive competence in matters relating to foreign, defence and monetary policy. The European armed forces shall be under the responsibility of a European Minister of Defence and under parliamentary control.

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Taxation powers. The Federal legislature shall be empowered to directly and indirectly lay and collect federal taxes, duties, and any other relevant revenue for the European Union.

Constitutional amendments.

Amendments to the Constitution shall be initiated in a similar process as regular legislation but require the approval of both houses by a qualified majority prescribed in the constitution.

Amendment of Article 7 TEU, in order to safeguard the values of the EU and to be able to act against violations. The votes in the procedure of Article 7 TEU must be able to be decided by a two-thirds majority at all levels and in all bodies. As a nuclear option paragraphs must be added to Article 7 TEU, which provide the possibility of suspension and exclusion from the EU. Even after suspension or exclusion Groups and activists supporting the furthering of rule of law principles will receive continuing financial support.

Rule of law mechanism. The European Treaties will be adapted in such a way that a future, tightened rule of law mechanism will make cuts in EU funds possible, even if just the values of the European Union are in danger, regardless of the use of EU funds. Decisions in this strengthened mechanism will be taken by the

Commission and confirmed by the European Parliament with an absolute majority.

EU financial projects at the

intergovernmental level. EU financial projects are unlawfully blocked again to prevent decisions in other matters, Volt encourages nation states to implement financial projects such as the Recovery Fund outside the Council, which, as enhanced cooperation, is possible under EU law. This option is suboptimal and should be a last resort to prevent values and economic progress from being played off against each other.

III. Economic & Finance Reform

A. Vision

Volt envisions a European economic and financial system that works for all its citizens and for European society as a whole. This means that the European economic system should serve all European citizens and enable them to pursue their individual ambitions and act as full members of European society. Volt believes that we can only flourish as individuals if we respect and contribute to a community based on common values which apply to all of us. These values and

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principles – solidarity, sustainability, equal opportunities, liberty, justice and human dignity – build the groundwork for our community and must also apply to our economic and financial systems.

Volt believes that a strong Europe requires fiscal and monetary institutions, which (1) are democratically legitimised, (2) act in accordance with our shared norms, and (3) are able to act in the interest of the Union as a whole. Hence, we envision an institutional completion of the Eurozone, creating a better Union for all residents.

In terms of its economic setup, we believe in a European Union that holds true to being a Union of solidarity, in which every country feels responsible for the destiny of the Union. Hence, the individual States need to be responsible for their economic activity, and in times of sovereign debt crisis, States should be able to go into default. At the same time, automatic stabilisers should alleviate the hardship in times of crisis and a Eurozone+ Budget should serve as emergency insurance to guarantee basic functions, such as unemployment benefits and payment of civil servants if a State is stripped of its capacity to do so. The economic setup should smooth the buildup of asymmetric shocks, as monetary policy and interest rates cannot be adapted to individual economic conditions in a currency union. In

sum, while European economic governance should always aim to function for all its citizens, in times of hardship there needs to be a social safety net that will ensure that the most vulnerable groups remain protected and that a minimum living standard is guaranteed.

B. Euro Summit & Eurogroup

With the creation of the European Monetary Union (EMU), the responsibility for monetary policies was transferred to a new European supranational institution, the European Central Bank, as a single monetary authority. However, the economic policy-making decisions remained to be made by national governments. This became particularly evident during the Eurozone crisis when the Heads of State or Government and the 18 Ministers of Finance and Economic Affairs served as key policy-makers. Economic policy-making was mainly done at the intergovernmental level, excluding the scrutiny of the European Parliament and the involvement of the Commission or EU Member States outside the Eurozone. Institutional manifestations are, for example, the Eurogroup and the Euro Summit. The Eurogroup entails informal meetings of the Eurozone's finance ministers and played a decisive role in managing the Euro crisis. The Euro Summit is an informal platform for meetings

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between the Heads of State or Government of the Euro area.

Provide democratic legitimacy to EU economic policymaking and make it work for everyone. Volt thus proposes economic and financial policy to be decided by the Parliament and Council as co-legislators. First, Finance Ministerial meetings need to be formalised in an entirely transparent setting in preparation for the transition to a two-chamber federal system. Informal meetings of, and decisions taken by, Heads of Governments in general, and in particular of countries in the Eurozone, need to be abolished immediately to ensure the realisation of the principles of democracy and accountability by a clear divide of competency between legislative and executive branches. Therefore, the position of an EU Economic and Finance Minister will be established to increase democratic accountability for EU economic policy.

C. European Central Bank

The European Central Bank's (ECB) primary objective is to maintain price stability of the Eurosystem and of the single monetary policy to enable a "favourable economic environment and a high level of employment." {593}

Broaden the mandate of the ECB. Ten years down the line, the effects of the Eurozone crisis – namely high unemployment, persistently low investment, and minimal economic growth – are still being felt, particularly in the South of Europe. This poses major societal challenges. Europe also faces global environmental challenges, such as environmental degradation and climate change. This is why, for improved monetary governance, Volt envisions an ECB that, while still firmly independent, is empowered with a wider mandate, including considerations of unemployment, sustainable growth, and crisis prevention and mitigation in its policy-making, similar to the mandate of the US FED {594}.

D. Eurozone+ Budget

All Eurozone countries share a common currency with a common interest and exchange rates, while their position in the business cycle (This indicator shows whether a country is doing well or not compared with the past performance), as well as the structure of their economies, may differ substantially.

Set up a Eurozone+ Budget. In order to address this, a budget needs to be set up through new EU-own resources, including a common corporate tax and other means. This will have three major features: (1)

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Given the cyclical nature of the economy and taxes, the EU budget will implicitly smooth business cycles across countries. (2) Such a budget will allow for common European public goods (such as defence and transnational energy networks) to be financed at the European level. (3) Lastly, this budget will serve as an insurance mechanism in times of crisis: Volt will allow for emergency funding at the European level to provide basic services such as unemployment benefits and payment for public sector workers, in case a State is incapable of fulfilling these obligations. While this budget will be primarily aimed at the Eurozone Member States, it should be open to all other EU Member States for voluntary participation – hence, Eurozone+.

E. European Stability Mechanism

The European Stability Mechanism (ESM) is the Eurozone's bailout fund and a key mechanism for the stability of the Eurozone. It is currently run by national governments and thus works as an intergovernmental mechanism. Volt supports the ESM becoming an institution under EU law supervised by the European Parliament. The transformation of the ESM should respect the following three key aspects:

Make the ESM a credible backstop for banking resolution [{596}](#). The Single Resolution Fund lacks a fiscal backstop and is limited in its financial capacity. Whilst this may be sufficient for individual bank failures, the risk of this fund draining in a systemic crisis remains. As this would in turn reinforce the bank-sovereign nexus, there needs to be a credible European fiscal backstop. The ESM should provide this function by providing a standing credit facility backed by the ECB.

Integrate the ESM into regular EU law.

The current form of the ESM is dysfunctional and undemocratic. Decisions to provide financial assistance to a member country are not taken by a majority vote but by unanimity and require prior approval by some national parliaments. The European Parliament in contrast has no rights in this regard. The governance of the ESM should reflect common voting procedures in the EU (qualified majority voting), and should become a full EU body, subject to EU law and fully embedded in EU accountability mechanisms under the watchful eye of the European Parliament. In the short term, regarding governance, the ESM board should be composed of national Finance Ministers as well as Euro-area officials appointed by the European Council and elected by the European Parliament. In the long term, the ESM should fall under the competency of

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the EU Finance Minister, who will be accountable to the European Parliament.

Provide for debt restructuring under certain conditions. Volt opposes any automatic debt restructuring, as it may give rise to self-fulfilling speculation against a State's insolvency. However, Volt acknowledges that there may be room to codify IMF practices concerning debt restructuring within the ESM if debt sustainability is threatened. Nevertheless, any such move forward should be conditional on the completion of the banking union, the creation of a European safe asset and a solution for legacy debt.

F. Banking Supervision

The single supervisory mechanism (SSM) is the first pillar of the banking union. Under the SSM, the ECB is the central prudential supervisor of financial institutions in the euro area and in non-euro EU countries that choose to join the SSM. The ECB directly supervises the largest banks, while national supervisors continue to monitor the remaining banks. The ECB and national supervisors work closely together to check that banks comply with EU banking rules and to tackle problems early on {597}.

Create a fully European banking supervision system. Europe has progressed significantly with respect to

banking supervision. The approval of a Single Supervisory Mechanism (SSM) allows for a harmonised approach to regulation, where the ECB and national central banks share responsibility and labour. 118 banks, comprising 82% of total banking assets in the Euro area, are now under the direct scrutiny of the ECB {598}. Volt strongly supports the Europeanisation of Banking Supervision, as it creates a level playing field for European banks and increases financial stability through harmonised rules and increased transparency.

G. Competences of an EU Economic and Finance Minister

Currently, executive decisions in Eurozone and EU economic policy-making are being made in an opaque manner involving the Commission, the Eurogroup and Euro Summit.

Create an EU Economic and Finance Minister. As a first step of economic governance reform, Volt supports the Commission's proposal to create a European Minister of Economy and Finance. This will strongly increase accountability and transparency in EU economic governance. In the short term, with the current institutional structure, this Minister would be both a European commissioner and chair monthly meetings of eurozone finance ministers – the

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so-called Eurogroup. The position should be created as soon as November 2019, when a new European Commission takes office. The Minister will have to report to the European parliament and represent Europe on the international economic stage, such as the International Monetary Fund. Significantly, the ministerial role would be a pan-European job, rather than a Eurozone-only one - a sign to stress unity [{599}](#). The inclusion of non-Euro countries under the representation of the EU Finance Minister will have to be subject to their compliance over the proposed EU fiscal policy reform. In the long term and with the abolishment of the Eurogroup, the position of EU Finance Minister will have its own ministerial staff, guide the implementation of economic and fiscal laws, and contribute to the policy-making process under the scrutiny of the legislative branches.

H. EU Corporate Tax

In order to stop tax evasion and generate tax revenues at the European level that feed a European Budget, Volt proposes to introduce an EU Corporate Tax. The tax implementation will centre around three critical issues:

Introduce an EU-wide definition on how to calculate corporate taxes to reduce avoidance opportunities. An EU-wide

definition of what constitutes taxable profits or revenues needs to be introduced. Clear accounting rules that are equal across Member States will determine how taxable income is calculated, which is needed in order to allow taxation where revenue and profits are generated. Companies active in one country and lacking agility due to limited financial and legal resources should not be subject to unfair competition with multinationals. Introducing a common corporate tax base at the EU level should be the first step, although a global deal is the ultimate goal. In particular, common definitions of what can be accounted for as Research & Development expenses, Debt and Equity financing, as well as Investments and Depreciation need to be established. Clear rules to link tax payments to the origin of the income need to be created, as do geographical rules that allow for the nations to benefit from profits that are made within their jurisdiction.

Introduce a baseline corporate tax rate to fight tax havens. Volt supports a baseline corporate tax rate across the Union and to be levied by EU institutions; Member States will be able to supplement this with a State-level rate.

Implement monitoring practices within large corporations. A full-scale review of corporate tax systems across EU countries

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should be implemented to monitor practices within large corporations, in particular transnational corporations, that aim at reducing their tax burden through sophisticated legal structures with no real economic purpose. This effort is complementary to the OECD's BEPS initiative and aims at monitoring and countering new tax evasion practices.

Register beneficial owners of every company, organisation, and trust {600}.

Tax evasion comes at a dramatic cost for societies and therefore cannot be tolerated, especially when perpetrated by large and profitable corporations. A first step in fighting tax evasion is to force offshore/mailbox companies, organisations, and trusts to register their beneficial owners in a compulsory and public registry.

I. Concentration charges

Within the Eurozone, the fate of a State and its banking sector are intimately linked to each other due to the so-called "home bias". This "home bias" describes a situation in which banks hold significant portions of their own State's debt (e.g. government bonds), creating a situation where failure of any of the two parties can easily lead to the failure of the other. This vicious dependency of banks and States is called the "sovereign-bank nexus".

Break the sovereign-bank nexus {601}. If a sovereign restructuring regime is to be credible, then the sovereign-bank nexus must be broken for good. In order to build on efforts of reducing contagion from banks to States, Volt proposes the introduction of concentration risk charges for sovereign exposures to reduce contagion from States to banks. This could take the form where banks would have to diversify their national bond portfolio and also hold bonds from States other than their 'own'. Introducing capital charges for concentrations to sovereigns will incentivise a diversification of banks' sovereign portfolios across Eurozone Member States. This allows for risk-sharing and an orderly default, if necessary.

J. European deposit insurance

Create EU-wide deposit insurance. A European Deposit Insurance will add to breaking the sovereign-bank nexus. This is because the risk of bank runs is no longer dependent on the solvency of the sovereign that provides the deposit insurance. Such a Europeanisation of deposit insurance consequently reduces the likelihood of bank runs and thereby increases financial stability. Due to moral hazard concerns, its introduction must be conditional on a prior diversification of sovereign exposures and a risk reduction in balance sheets. This means that a bank has

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to demonstrate it has invested in a wide range of areas so that its risk on investment is responsibly spread out. Otherwise, banks might use the new insurance scheme to pile into riskier investments, undermining financial stability.

K. The Stability and Growth Pact

The Stability and Growth Pact (SGP) is an agreement among the 28 Member States of the EU aimed to facilitate and maintain the stability of the EMU by ensuring fiscal discipline and agreeing on common limits on government deficits (3% of GDP) and debt (60% of GDP).

Reform the SGP. The Stability and Growth Pact proved to be ineffective at preventing the buildup of unsustainable debt levels. The pact is too inflexible to allow for strong countercyclical policies once a crisis materialises, and its rules prevent necessary smart and sustainable investment across Europe and lead to unnecessary and harmful reductions in public service provisions. This stifles economic growth, leading to social and political instability, distrust, and alienation. Volt proposes transparent fiscal rules which incentivise prudent fiscal policies and allow for flexibility in counteracting cases of macroeconomic shock.

IV. Justice & Home Affairs

A. Vision

Volt wants a Europe that ensures citizens' rights are respected throughout the Union. Citizens must be able to participate fully in the democratic process. This includes the right to vote for and stand as a candidate wherever they are registered as a resident, be it in local, regional, national, or European elections. Citizens must not be discriminated against on the basis of their nationality, sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, or sexual orientation.

Volt wants a Europe in which citizens shall be able to move and reside freely within the EU. This is one of the four pillars on which European integration rests, and is essential for a prosperous, free, and inclusive European society. To guarantee free movement internally, external borders need to be managed more effectively, efficiently and humanely. This is a common challenge that should not be left to individual States, but one that Europe should take on as a community respecting the common principle of solidarity.

Volt wants a Europe whose Member States adhere to the principles of democracy and the rule of law, building on the European Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental

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Rights. These principles are the bedrock of the political community: both aspiring and current Member States need to fully respect them, and if these are violated, Europe must have the power to restore them.

Volt wants a Europe that protects its citizens and makes them feel secure. Europe needs more than just police cooperation and intelligence sharing between Member States; it needs its own capacities and legal competence to safeguard the security of its people. This is much more important than the sensitivities and prestige of national elites. At the same time, threat perceptions by political leaders should not be exaggerated; the level of objective security is unprecedented in European history, and it is the responsibility of political actors to act on objective facts and not exaggerate threats to pursue their own political agendas.

B. Border protection

The protection of European borders should become an exclusive competence of the European Union. Current national border protection should be integrated into a coherent and efficient European border protection system. The EU needs a political community that supports all its Member States when necessary to protect common

borders. Volt believes we must insist on a political community that ensures human rights are upheld throughout its jurisdiction, including on its borders and beyond.

Functioning protection of the EU border is a prerequisite for the free movement of people within the EU. Therefore, we want to create and support a system that upholds the integrity of EU borders, fights cross-border crime, and ensures the safety of European residents. We want an EU border protection system that provides initial reception of asylum seekers in an orderly and humane way, upholds European values and makes sure that first points of contact with refugees exemplify what European citizens stand for.

Develop the capacities of a fully operational European border protection agency.

Volt supports developing the European Border and Coast Guard Agency from an intergovernmental agency that largely coordinates national services to an integrated European agency with a full mandate and capabilities to act and react. The European agency will be staffed with its own border guards and equipment through new funds from the EU budget, to act independently of Member States' contributions. Initially, it will conduct joint training for national border guards. Later, this will develop to integrate national

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structures into the European agency in order to avoid the inefficiencies that come from duplication

Ensure European Parliamentary scrutiny.

Competencies and budgets need to be clarified between EU institutions and Member States in order to increase transparency while ensuring that mixed accountabilities between national and European parliaments are a matter of the past. Ultimately, there needs to be clear parliamentary control by the European Parliament of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency and the future European border protection agency.

Ensure the protection of values at our borders.

The protection of our borders goes hand in hand with the protection of our shared values. It is here that people from all over the world receive their first impression of Europe. Their aspirations for building a better life in Europe must be encouraged by how we welcome them; they must always be treated with respect and dignity, as well as with respect to the rule of law. Therefore, the European Charter of Fundamental Rights should be a guidepost for the agency, incorporated in its mission statement, compliance system and accountability to the European Parliament. The disruption of human smuggling and trafficking networks should always go hand in hand with search and

rescue operations, as well as welcoming operations for asylum seekers and refugees.

The ongoing intra-Schengen border controls should stop as soon as we have a functioning external EU border.

The personnel involved in controlling intra-Schengen borders should instead be deployed to external borders, including internal-external borders (e.g. international airports), on a rotating basis, with extra compensation for being far away from home. Countries without an external border should commit a quota of personnel to the external border based on their population size. Where this turns out not to be feasible, countries should provide extra funding for the protection of the external border instead.

C. European police, intelligence, and cyber security

Volt supports the unification of national police, intelligence, and cyber security services across Europe, starting with automatic information-sharing, to identify and address cross-border crimes and threats. As the EU's law enforcement agency, Europol's competences in these areas should be gradually extended, its capabilities strengthened, and it should be brought under tighter parliamentary oversight. In the long term, the agency

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should develop into the EU's federal-level police department.

Extend Europol's competencies.

Cooperation between European police agencies on information sharing should be strengthened. There should be more binding mechanisms for sharing information that is vital for combating cross-border crime, terrorism and cyber security threats. Europol's direct access to relevant information from Member States' police forces should be considered. In the long-term, Europol should be given exclusive competence for fighting cross-border crime, terrorism and cyber security threats.

Build up Europol's capabilities. Europol's independent operative capabilities should be strengthened gradually. First, building up cyber security capabilities must be a priority; Member States should channel their resources into common European cyber security capabilities instead of building up national cyber security agencies. Capabilities should also be developed to support each Member State's fight against cross-border crime and terrorism. This would be the basis for an independent federal-level operative capability.

Strengthen European parliamentary oversight. As Europol's competencies and

capabilities are expanded, its democratic accountability must be strengthened.

There should be a committee to account for Europol's operations, as well as a Commissioner in charge of Europol.

Interior ministers of the Member States should be involved in this process as well, especially with regard to cooperation between national police services.

Establish a European corps to close the gap in the internal security architecture.

New threats like military-style terrorism or large scale natural disasters are borderless and bring our current security authorities to their limits in manpower and competencies. In order to cope with these challenges, we need a new security agency, a European corps, which will support national and local forces by performing civilian, police and partly military tasks. This corps will consist of reservists and can be requested by any Member State for assisting local security forces, including stepping in after terrorist attacks to ensure public order and protect strategically important and representative facilities and places. It will also help in the event of natural disasters, such as floods, earthquakes, forest fires, or epidemics with equipment, coordination, and manpower. Furthermore, this European corps can fulfil representative tasks like giving honour at State visits on a European level. National equivalents, such as the newly-formed

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French National Guard, should be merged in this European corps.

D. Migration and refugee policy

Volt believes that we need a common EU Migration and Refugee Policy to define a unified approach to manage inward migration and refugee flows. Member States need to take major steps towards a common system to handle applications and appeals, resettle migrants among Member States, and return rejected applicants to their countries of origin. But there is more scope for the EU to use its leverage to sign readmission agreements with countries of origin or to support Member States in brokering readmission agreements. The EU can also deploy a wide range of incentives to secure readmission agreements, from visa policies to bilateral aid.

This common policy approach should operate as part of a larger framework for international cooperation on the prevention and mitigation of refugee crises. This is why the Dublin system needs to be reformed and a new settlement system defined, for instance, based on population, population density, wealth, age, and growth. The amended system should provide for penalties for contravening countries.

1. Abiding by the UN Refugee Convention

A common EU asylum agreement must include binding mechanisms to ensure that all EU Member States follow the provisions of the [UN Refugee Convention](#) {602}. This includes {603}:

Work together with the developing world, which is hosting more than 80% of the world's refugees {604}, to reform the international refugee system.

Anticipate future refugee movements. It is necessary for the EU to not simply respond to, but also plan for refugee movements.

- Put aside a budget for refugee protection every year, even when there is no refugee movement. In the long term, it will definitely be necessary to have this, because, for example, of the rising number of climate refugees the EU will have to process.
- Identify, catalog, and register possible accommodation for future refugee flows. The EU should have an accessible database of housing where refugees can stay for five to seven years to ensure continuous protection.

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- Create burden-sharing allocations in advance of refugee movements. Volt advocates quotas for Member States to allocate refugees.

Strengthen cooperation with UNHCR.

The EU must increase its support for UNHCR and create increased synergies between its own refugee management frameworks and the work of UNHCR.

2. Principle of country of first arrival

Immediately abolish the ‘Dublin principle’ that refugees must apply for asylum in their first EU country of arrival. A burden-sharing settlement system must come in its stead.

3. Other provisions

Empower the European Asylum Support Office to be the primary centre for decision-making on asylum issues across the EU and achieve EASO’s transformation into a full-fledged Agency for Asylum, as proposed in 2016 by the European Commission. Additionally, the EASO should offer more training for asylum officers to ensure more humane treatment of refugees [{605}](#).

Ensure that asylum seekers’ and refugees’ rights are respected and that countries uphold their obligations arising out of international treaties.

- Put an end to the practice of detaining asylum seekers and refugees (on Greek islands, in Hungary, etc.) and work on an alternative solution [{606.1,606.2}](#).

Continue the practice of protecting refugees for the duration of the risk [{607}](#). However, offer permanent residence to refugees after a certain period if they are still at risk (five to seven years) when certain criteria are met (for example: clean track record, language skills, and knowledge of key elements of the country). However, refugees should always be encouraged and supported to return to their home countries, if they are safe, to be part of the rebuilding efforts. Immediate permanent integration, however, is required for certain types of refugees, such as unaccompanied minors or refugees with severe trauma from, for example, a conflict situation.

Strengthen legal channels for migration.

The EU needs to strengthen its legal channels for migration through visa programmes, scholarships, and work permits to avoid readmission agreements, which will in any case only be struck if the EU provides additional development

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funding to source countries. EU aid could be paid in instalments, and returns could be limited to future arrivals only so that States would not have to worry about a sudden spike in returns when people that are already in Europe are sent back to their country of origin.

Establish a long-term strategy. The EU needs a long-term strategy to reduce incentives to migrate. In the long run, migration can only be reduced by ensuring security and economic opportunities in countries of origin. But the number of people attempting to reach Europe will continue to increase until the potential prospects of a better future in Europe due, for instance, to income differences between sub-Saharan Africa and EU Member States, will not be addressed.

V. Foreign & Neighbourhood Policy Reform

A. Vision

Volt believes that European integration is one of the biggest achievements of international politics in the 20th century. However, the ongoing destabilisation of the global order calls for a far more proactive and coherent EU foreign policy. Our vision is that of an outward-looking Europe that plays a constructive and stabilising role in the world and does not

shirk responsibility but uses its political and economic weight to stand up for multilateralism, peaceful conflict resolution, and coordinated response to global challenges such as nuclear proliferation, climate change, or economic imbalances. The EU should tell its success story of integration and achieving peace and prosperity after centuries of conflict to promote integration and diffuse tensions in other parts of the world. Europe must be an example of how former enemies can become friends and partners in a common project, and of how democracy can be organised beyond the nation-state for the benefit of citizens. The EU should encourage the replication of its success elsewhere through the promotion of regional integration across the world and support to multilateral institutions, most notably the United Nations. At the same time, the EU must recognise that some challenges, including in its own neighbourhood, cannot be solved in the short term or by the EU alone. Volt thus supports the adoption of a two-pronged approach to increase its capacity to withstand crises it cannot solve in the foreseeable future while working within multilateral institutions and with key partners towards a solution of these crises in the longer term.

Apart from supporting multilateral institutions, the EU should also seek to engage bilaterally with key partners

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around the globe. For this, the European External Action Service (EEAS) should be strengthened and EU representations around the world should be transformed into EU embassies. The EU also needs to step up its efforts to stabilise and integrate its immediate neighbourhood.

B. EU Institutional Capacity - Reform of the EEAS

Adopt a common foreign policy through a bolstered EEAS. In the longer term, Volt calls for foreign policy – as trade policy before it – to become an exclusive EU competence. This new EU competence will be managed by a strengthened External Action Service (EEAS). EU delegations must become EU embassies, be extended wherever necessary, and replace Member States' embassies. However, Member States may retain representation to further their interests. The guiding principles of this new EEAS' work will be to uphold and promote the above-mentioned European values and interests and support the global implementation of development agendas, including the global Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals. Consequently, EU representation will replace member-State representations in all international fora, including through a single UN ambassador.

Strengthen the role of the European Parliament in matters of EU foreign policy. Volt calls on the European Parliament to decide on all cases of political and economic sanctions, including trade embargoes, imposed by the EU on third countries or individuals. This would help make the EU's foreign policy more democratic, making it easier for Member States to transfer powers in this area to the European level and to make Parliament the forum for debates on Europe's role in the world, thus raising its visibility and profile.

C. EU relationships with the United Nations and other multilateral institutions

Highly connected to the rest of the world, Europe is also highly exposed to its lingering problems; Europe, therefore, stands to directly benefit from multilateral action in favour of increased development and greater respect for human rights, in particular in the Least Developed Countries.

The United Nations, through its work on the peaceful resolution of disputes, humanitarian aid, development and global health, is the cornerstone of the

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international system. Volt shares and supports its values of peace, justice, human rights, and shared prosperity. With its near-universal membership, it is by far the most legitimate actor for global action. Yet, we are not blind to its shortcomings and the limitations triggered by its organisational setup and financing mechanism. Volt, therefore, supports reform efforts that better enable the United Nations to fulfil its ambitious mandate and give it the tools to act more decisively and more efficiently. As supporters of democracy, Volt also believes that no transfer of power should take place without ensuring democratic control of those powers. Volt, therefore, supports increased democratic control of the UN by its Member States.

Likewise, Volt supports cooperation and multilateral action in other fora, from development and economic governance with the various “G” formats, the OECD, regional organisations, and international financial institutions, to security cooperation with the OSCE, NATO and other ad-hoc fora with like-minded countries.

1. Relationship with the United Nations

Honour and strengthen commitments to the United Nations. As a trustworthy and

rule-bound global player, the EU must uphold its financial commitments to the UN regular budget and support efforts to increase this budget. Volt calls for an increase in voluntary contributions to the UN and its agencies, funds, and programmes, with particular attention given to increasing the share of its non-earmarked contributions. Volt encourages all UN Member States to act likewise. Volt also supports increases in in-kind contributions, as well as support for peacekeeping missions through funding, training, and contributions in civilian and military personnel.

Take pragmatic steps for an improved Security Council in the short term. As long as fundamental reforms of the UNSC have not been implemented, pragmatic reforms must be pursued to make the Security Council more effective in the short term. For instance, as other countries have already proposed, Volt supports suspending the right of veto in cases of human rights violations and humanitarian emergencies. Moreover, for more transparency and accountability, Volt proposes that, whenever permanent members vote down a resolution, they be required to publicly state their reasons for doing so, underlining how their decision aligns with the purposes and principles of the Charter, in accordance with which the Security Council and its members are bound to act [{609}](#). In cases where the

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Council fails to uphold international peace and security, Volt supports the General Assembly stepping in, according to its “Uniting for Peace” Resolution {610}, and ensuring that remedial action is taken. Finally, Volt calls for Security Council meetings to be more open to non-members, who should be provided an opportunity to speak on issues relevant to them, including Troop-Contributing Countries and non-governmental organisations.

Increase democratic representation through a Parliamentary Assembly. The current General Assembly comprises government appointees representing the interests of Member States. In addition, Volt calls for the creation of a democratically-elected Parliamentary Assembly (UNPA), composed of directly-elected representatives of citizens around the world. The UNPA’s competence, rooted in the principles of subsidiarity and democracy everywhere, will be expanded over time as its democratic legitimacy increases. In the long run, Volt wishes to see the UNPA as a world parliament, adopting universally binding regulations. Volt therefore strongly supports the “Campaign for a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly” {611}.

Fundamentally reform the UN Security Council. The Security Council’s structure is

outdated and no longer suited to the UN’s mission of maintaining international peace and security. Volt calls for strengthening the effectiveness and democratic legitimacy of the Security Council. In particular, Volt supports abolishing the status of permanent membership, together with the right of veto, which runs against the principles of equality and democracy. Conversely, Volt opposes the addition of new countries as permanent Council members, as this would only make deadlock more likely. Volt calls on EU Member States themselves to refrain from pursuing permanent membership on the UN Security Council. Instead, with the UK’s departure from the EU and as long as the status of permanent membership of the Security Council has not been abandoned, Volt calls on France to cede its permanent seat in the Security Council to the European Union, along with the creation of a single EU ambassador to the UN. These reforms are crucial to revitalising the UN and doing away with gridlock and inaction; they are also essential in strengthening legitimacy and regaining popular support for the organisation. However, UNSC Resolutions legitimising military action should be carried out with broad support; Volt, therefore, supports the introduction of a qualified majority for such a resolution, following the abolition of the veto right. Members of the UN Security Council must have equal voting rights. In order to boost democratic legitimacy and

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accountability, Volt supports, in the short term, the election of Council members for a renewable term by the General Assembly, and, in the long term, by a UN Parliamentary Assembly. A reformed quota system will ensure regional representation in the Council.

2. Relationship with other multilateral institutions

Increase support for regional and global multilateral institutions. In line with our commitment to multilateralism, Volt encourages the Commission, through EEAS, to step up its engagement with other regional blocs, including the African Union and ASEAN, and support their strengthening. This should concern political, social, economic, security, and environmental cooperation. In order to strengthen multilateralism, Volt also calls for increased support to international institutions – including the World Trade Organisation, the International Criminal Court, and UN entities - and civil society. The European Investment Bank must scale up its activities abroad in support of the EU's external policy objectives, including to support international security, promote international cooperation, and develop and consolidate democracy, the rule of law, and human rights globally. These increased investments are a way to strengthen the EU's soft power and therefore our ability to

spread our values. Taken together, these measures aim at strengthening multilateral institutions and promoting democracy at all levels, in accordance with our core values and the principles of the UN Charter.

Support global non-proliferation and disarmament efforts. The massive presence and availability of both weapons of mass destruction and small arms and light weapons fuel conflicts worldwide, in particular in the world's poorest regions. Volt calls on the EU to step up its support to the Arms Trade Treaty and other disarmament treaties and actively contribute to their strengthening, through measures including, but not limited to, tighter controls and monitoring of production, trade, and possession. Volt also fully supports efforts for both the non-proliferation and active disarmament of weapons of mass destruction via the strengthening of international treaties and conventions – including, but not limited to, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological Weapons Convention, and Nuclear-Free Zones – and relevant UN Resolutions. In particular, Volt underlines that non-proliferation is not an alternative to disarmament and that nuclear States, under the NPT, have already committed to disarming. Disrupting decades of passive practice and understanding the cost and unacceptable danger of nuclear weapons, Volt calls on EU Member States themselves

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to lead the fulfilment of these commitments.

Invest in cross-border exchanges of youth, work placements, academics, and science with third countries. Volt supports significant increases to EU exchange programmes and links around the world to strengthen global cooperation and mutual understanding and promote a people-centred approach to globalisation. Youth programmes, such as Erasmus+, and collaboration with third country organisations and individuals under the completion of the Horizon 2020 research framework programme must be continued, simplified and scaled up to include more participants from third countries.

Act as one on the international scene. In line with our call for foreign policy to become competence of the Commission and our proposal to have one EU ambassador to the United Nations, Volt calls on the EU to act as one – and, therefore, to seat as one – in all international fora. This includes economic, development, and cooperation institutions – the G7, G20, OECD, international financial institutions, etc. – as well as security organisations – including the OSCE and NATO. Furthermore, Volt supports the extension of the network of EU delegations to all countries the EU

entertains diplomatic relationships with, as well as their strengthening, as an incentive for EU Member States to pool their resources in one location. Over time, Volt supports the transformation of EU delegations into EU embassies, which would replace most Member State embassies throughout the world.

D. Smart Power

We want to launch the concept of ‘smart power’. Essentially, it is about the balancing of hard and soft power. Certainly, the EU’s biggest contribution to the world scene so far has been its soft power, but its main weakness remains its lack of hard power. To avoid the historic mistakes of other superpowers, it is important that we strike a balance between hard and soft approaches to international relations. We must be vocal in supporting what is right, we must not yield to international bullying, and certainly, we must never be warmongers or gung-ho interventionists. Peace and stability is a priority, as is the minimising of international suffering. With that in mind, we strive to retain the soft power profile that has become the EU’s trademark, while consciously and strategically developing the EU’s hard power capabilities.

It should also be highlighted that the EU’s famed soft power is insufficient in itself as

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well. The EU must distil and crystallise its ability to be one foreign policy actor, with all necessary tools provided to it.

E. EU neighbourhood policy

Volt supports the principle of “more-for-more conditionality”. According to this concept, Volt encourages closer ties with its neighbourhood, but conditions these ties to concrete reforms in line with the EU’s standards and values: more proximity for more reforms. Volt encourages independent governance and democratisation reforms in the EU’s neighbourhood, including through reduced dependence on foreign powers. In particular, Volt outlines five core elements: the **promotion of our values** (human rights, democracy, and the rule of law), **energy security, trade and economic growth, migration, and crisis and conflict management**.

As it does more broadly through its foreign policy, Volt calls on the EU to **promote its values** in neighbouring States and encourage them to pursue the democratic reforms necessary for accession to the Union. Beyond the issue of values, it is also in the EU’s own interests to be surrounded by stable democracies governed by the rule of law. Human rights violations must be strongly condemned and be considered a red line for accession to the EU.

Volt seeks to **reduce the EU’s dependence on non-renewable energy, in particular, foreign oil and gas**; this is particularly important in relation to energy reliance towards Russia so as to protect our independence and that of our immediate neighbourhood. A core objective is the successful implementation of the European Parliament’s 2008 “20/20/20” plan, which focuses on an energy transition from fossil fuels to renewables and on the creation of a single energy market – the Energy Union. This measure would prevent foreign energy providers from pitting Member States against each other for cheap prices (The New Geopolitics of Natural Gas, pg 150-151, Agnia Grigas). Similarly, Volt supports neighbouring countries in reducing their dependence on foreign energy suppliers and accompanies energy transition in potential future Member States and other neighbouring countries.

Trade and economic integration should be further encouraged in the neighbourhood. Volt aims at extending Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTAs) to other parts of the Neighbourhood, as a means to bring those countries closer to the EU’s standards in terms of food quality, economic diversification, and the rule of law.

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Migration is a key factor to consider. In the Southern Neighbourhood, this mainly takes the form of migration across the Mediterranean through human trafficking; in the Eastern Partnership and Western Balkan, the main subject of interest here is visa liberalisation. As proposed in more detail later, Volt supports using visa liberalisation as a soft power instrument in their Neighbourhood Policy.

The many **crises and conflicts in Europe's neighbourhood** need to be treated purposefully and individually. The EU should try to act as an intermediary in conflict resolution if requested by neighbourhood countries, and, in that case, support mediation efforts between all parties involved and foster dialogue between them.

1. Western Balkans integration

Continue the EU accession negotiations that were already launched. Volt supports continuing the existing efforts for access of Western Balkan countries; new candidates should be admitted as soon as appropriate. Accession should remain conditional on meeting the rule of law and democratic standards. However, Volt calls for negotiations to start with the necessary judicial reforms, rather than postponing them to the end of the accession process

as was the case in former negotiations [{613}](#).

Implement measures to combat corruption. In line with our strong stance on the rule of law and transparency, Volt supports strong penalties for corruption or soliciting bribes, as well as the introduction of digital tools for certain services to limit the possibility of bribery and corruption. Such measures must be a prerequisite for accession to the Union in order to ensure transparent and accountable governance. The Western Balkan States need to be encouraged to tackle the problems of corruption and organised crime, especially in relation to drugs and weapons trafficking [{614.1,614.2,614.3}](#). Volt also supports increased contacts and working partnerships between Western Balkan law enforcement agencies and Member States, in order to intercept illegal traffic flows and strengthen the rule of law.

Support the resolution of ongoing border disputes. Border disputes mainly occur between the Western Balkan states themselves, while only some of them involve EU Member States, such as disputes between Croatia and Montenegro over the Prevlaka peninsula and between Croatia and Serbia overland on the Danube [{615.1,615.2}](#). Volt encourages the use of mediation or arbitration mechanisms,

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either through EU institutions or through the Permanent Court of Arbitration.

Encourage reconciliation between ethnic groups. Ethnic tensions remain a serious issue in the Balkans and must be resolved. Whenever possible, Volt calls for the EU to act as an intermediary to permanently diffuse tensions. Certain countries, in particular Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, continue to experience worrying tensions. These should be monitored by the EU during the accession negotiations and their peaceful solution needs to be a hard requirement for accession.

2. Eastern Partnership

Actively apply more-for-more conditionality. Volt encourages increased cooperation for countries seeking to implement reforms in line with EU values, such as Moldova and Georgia. Accordingly, each reform bringing a positive impact should be met with more openness and support from the EU.

Resort to less-for-less conditionality. Conversely, Volt supports limiting cooperation for countries sliding to more authoritarian rule, such as Azerbaijan or Belarus. Reforms moving away from democracy and the rule of law should be met with less openness and support from

the EU. Meanwhile, Volt calls for continued support to civil society groups calling for democratisation.

Encourage Eastern Partnership countries to invest in renewable sources of energy. Volt promotes the expansion of renewable energy sources and the diversification of providers of oil and gas, in line with the EU's environmental policy and the aim of energy independence. Building on the EU's own success in promoting renewable energy at home, Volt supports infrastructure projects for renewable energy as a part of more-for-more conditionality and a global renewable energy transition.

Continue the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTA). Volt supports DCFTAs with [Moldova](#) {616}, [Georgia](#) {617}, and [Ukraine](#) {618}, and their deepening whenever possible. Volt also calls for pursuing Association Agreements and trade integration with Belarus, Azerbaijan, and Armenia, should these countries be interested and meet existing requirements.

Use visa liberalisation in limited cases. In line with the "more for more" approach, Volt supports the use of a visa liberalisation agreement as a reward for democratisation reforms {619}.

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3. Southern Neighbourhood

Support preparations for DCFTAs with Southern Neighbourhood countries. Volt supports DCFTAs with the EU's Southern Neighbourhood, should these countries first fulfil the requirements to strike an Association Agreement. In particular, Tunisia is the closest to fulfilling the requirements; as such, after continued reforms and should Tunisia so desire, Volt supports the creation of a DCFTA with this country, which could be a model for future agreements.

Continue and deepen mobility partnerships. Likewise, Volt supports an increased mobility partnership with Tunisia, on the basis of more-for-more conditionality. Mobility partnerships with Morocco and Jordan should be viewed from the same principle [{620}](#).

Encourage local multilateralism. Volt encourages continued cooperation through multilateral approaches and calls for an increased role for the Union for the Mediterranean and the Southern Mediterranean Civil Society Forum.

4. Bilateral relations with Turkey

Continue the strong partnership. Volt supports the partnership between the EU

and Turkey, building on already high economic integration and strengthened political and civil society links.

Clearly voice concerns. In line with its principles, Volt raises concerns about the human rights and political situation in Turkey, and actively supports those who stand for the rule of law, democracy, and human rights.

A. EU China policy

1. Human Rights

Volt acknowledges that human rights are universal and inalienable, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. They are universal because everyone is born with and possesses the same rights, regardless of where they live, their gender or race, or their religious, cultural or ethnic background [{621}](#). Volt refutes the alleged contradiction between economic and political rights and rejects the argument that governments can limit human rights based on national sovereignty.

Therefore, Europe should:

Consider the safety and the rights of its citizens abroad as a top priority and, if necessary, use diplomatic as well as economic pressure to force foreign

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governments to respect the legal protection EU nationals enjoy under international law (Diplomatic pressure includes but is not limited to the expulsion of diplomats and the suspension of collaboration and/or dialogue. Economic pressure includes targeted sanctions and restricting state-owned enterprises of the respective government access to the EU market).

Set up a targeted sanctions regime with which it can sanction human rights offenders, freeze their assets and ban them and their relations who benefit from said human rights violations from entering the EU [{623}](#).

Collaborate with the Chinese government to promote human rights that the CCP considers less controversial, including gender rights and economic rights.

Provide a platform to victims of human rights abuses to speak out and support them in their pursuit of justice.

In response to the situation in Hong Kong:

- **Impose restrictive measures on persons and organisations** that endanger the liberties of the people of Hong Kong,

- **Work with the United Kingdom** in seeking legal redress against the PRC government,
- **Refrain from extraditing individuals to Hong Kong** when the request might be politically motivated or when extradition might lead to a violation of the suspect's human rights,
- **Offer Hong Kong citizens easy ways to settle down in Europe.**

Use its diplomatic and economic leverage to push back against any attempts by the PRC or other states to undermine the universality of human rights.

2. Climate

In order to fight climate change more effectively, Volt calls on the Chinese government to peak its emissions before 2030 and achieve net climate neutrality by 2050, in line with the EU's ambition. Both sides should cooperate in these issues.

Volt calls on the EU to apply a carbon tax on products imported from China and other non-EU countries.

Volt supports continued and expanded cooperation with China on climate change, renewable energy, the circular

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economy, sustainable mobility and environmental technology.

Volt calls on Europe to support environmental NGOs and activists to promote awareness and knowledge of climate change among Chinese citizens.

3. Europe

Europe should:

Demand Chinese internet platforms to guarantee their European users' freedom of expression and right to privacy. Failing to do so should result in the withdrawal of the business license. (This implies (1) that message content cannot be censored when doing so conflicts with the right to freedom of expression, (2) that user information cannot be shared with foreign governments when this conflicts with the right to privacy and the GDPR, and (3) that this applies to both European citizens as well as residents, both within and outside of the borders of the EU. Inability to adhere to these requirements results in revocation of operating licenses. Right to freedom of expression can legally be limited under international law, but such limitations are conditional on a number of legal checks and balances)

Make operation permissions of Chinese media corporations, cultural institutions

and other United Front organizations conditional on reciprocity, meaning that European organisations, including government agencies, media and NGOs must enjoy the same operating space in China, including freedom of expression, like their Chinese counterparts in Europe (With respect for the freedom of expression as guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights).

To counter Chinese influence operations {626}:

- Recognise and understand the problem by carrying out studies and developing analytical capacity in the government and private sector;
- Develop high-level guidance and policy on countering foreign interference, issuing statements, policy documents and funding to establish it as a priority across relevant parts of the bureaucracy;
- Raise awareness of united front work and foreign interference;
- Create an environment supportive of transparency and willingness to prosecute agents of interference;
- Protect those exposing interference;

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- Engage with universities to develop responses to related issues, such as monitoring and mobilisation by Chinese government-backed student associations, technology transfer, economic coercion, censorship and acts of espionage;
- Support and engage Chinese diaspora communities;
- Build expertise on China, Chinese people, the CCP and foreign interference;
- Deny visas for or expel Chinese agents of foreign interference that undermine European democracy.

Grant the European External Action Service a wider mandate to maintain value-based relations with the PRC and counteract PRC attempts to undermine EU unity, including in bilateral relations and international platforms.

Facilitate and finance personal and cultural exchange with China on all levels, from citizens to governments, from schools to organizations (With the exception of exchange of security personnel, such as the police and military forces). In initiating and framing such a variety of contacts the EU shall ensure full representation of the whole of society in

all encounters and processes. Relaxing visa restrictions will enable such exchanges.

Volt representatives in the EU and national parliaments are encouraged to propose policy recommendations of this document with fellow parliamentarians.

4. Development Cooperation

Volt stands behind the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and believes that the SDGs should be achieved while respecting the environment, peace, justice, and gender equality.

Therefore, Volt urges Europe to:

Encourage China to respect OECD-DAC rules and standards on good governance, environmental protection, and individual rights, including through trilateral cooperation on development cooperation projects;

Use the membership of EU member states in the AIIB to promote respect for said rules and standards in AIIB projects (With Germany being AIIB's fourth-biggest shareholder);

Initiate and participate in sustainable development projects connecting Europe

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and Asia, such as the Partnership on Sustainable Connectivity and Quality;

Refrain from supporting the BRI as long as its projects fail to meet minimum sustainability standards on economic viability and the environment;

Strengthen the European narrative and adopt a more effective approach to European diplomatic engagement in Africa and other developing partner countries, bearing the broad relationship in mind;

Leverage Europe's status as the biggest source of development cooperation finance to increase international support for democratic principles.

5. Supply Chains, Trade Inequality, Technology & 5G

Volt urges Europe to:

Realise a comprehensive agreement on investment with China to achieve equal market access for European businesses in China.

Swiften the implementation of the international procurement instrument to prevent companies that receive foreign state subsidies from bidding on European tenders.

Require all Chinese firms operating in Europe to adhere to transparency standards and accept open governance of their company and subsidiaries in Europe.

As soon as possible achieve strategic autonomy from China, particularly with respect to essential goods such as medical supplies and rare earths.

Diversify supply chains by creating incentives for companies to invest in markets outside of the PRC, including by exploring opportunities to conclude value-based FTAs with ASEAN, India, Taiwan and other countries;

Carefully monitor the activity of Chinese internet companies and ensure their respect for the rights and freedoms of Europeans, including the right to privacy.

Discourage the Chinese government and companies from engaging in corporate espionage, including through naming and shaming of identified cybercriminals.

Prevent the export of any knowledge products to China when these could also be applied militarily.

Ensure the independence of European technological infrastructure by premiering European tech and service

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providers over competition from China and other autocratic regimes, specifically with respect to 5G development.

6. South China Sea

Volt aligns its position on the PRC's maritime claims in the SCS with the Tribunal's decision. Specifically:

The PRC cannot lawfully assert a maritime claim – including any Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) claims derived from Scarborough Reef and the Spratly Islands – vis-a-vis the Philippines in areas that the Tribunal found to be in the Philippines' EEZ or on its continental shelf;

As Beijing has failed to put forth a lawful, coherent maritime claim in the South China Sea, Volt rejects any PRC claim to waters beyond a 12-nautical mile territorial sea derived from islands it claims in the Spratly Islands (without prejudice to other states' sovereignty claims over such islands);

The PRC has no lawful territorial or maritime claim to (or derived from) James Shoal, an entirely submerged feature only 50 nautical miles from Malaysia and some 1,000 nautical miles from China's coast;

Volt calls on Europe to support Southeast Asian states in protecting their sovereign rights to offshore resources, consistent with their rights and obligations under international law. We stand with the international community in defence of freedom of the seas and respect for sovereignty and reject any push to impose "might makes right" in the South China Sea or the wider region;

Europe shall demonstrate its respect for international law by conducting Freedom of Navigation Operations in the South China Sea, as much as possible with like-minded countries.

7. Taiwan

Volt recognizes the achievement of the people of Taiwan in developing and maintaining their democracy and recognises the positive impact Taiwan has on democracy in its region. Therefore, Volt:

Calls on all governments involved to settle cross-Strait challenges peacefully and refrain from using force, as prohibited by the UN Charter (UN Charter Article 2(4));

Recognises the sovereignty of the people of Taiwan and China over, respectfully, the ROC-controlled territories and the PRC-controlled

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territories (The future status of Tibet should be determined peacefully without coercion from the PRC government);

Calls on Europe to engage in diplomatic relations with both the PRC and Taiwan governments (The term 'ROC-controlled territories' includes Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen, Matsu and other islands currently controlled by the Taiwanese government, in accordance with international law. A tribunal at the Permanent Court of Arbitration in a case between the PRC and the Philippines about the South China Sea questioned Taiwan's claim over Itu Aba / Taiping Island due to it not being classified as an island under international law. 'China' includes mainland China, Hong Kong and Macao. The PRC government cannot afford to break diplomatic relations with Europe, as it is its largest trading partner and Sino-American relations remain fraught. There is precedent for maintaining diplomatic relations with governments that have overlapping territorial claims, including North/South Korea, West/East Germany, and North/South Vietnam);

Supports Taiwan's participation in international organisations, including UN organisations;

Calls on Europe to facilitate and finance personal and cultural exchange with Taiwan on all levels, from citizens to

governments, from schools to organizations.

8. The future of China

The democratisation of China would be not only a historical achievement for the country itself but also immensely beneficial for the world. An international community where three great powers (Europe, China and the USA) collaborate value-based to develop international justice and prosperity would mark the start of an era of peace and stability.

Therefore, Volt urges Europe to:

Stimulate the Chinese government to implement domestic democratic reforms, ratify and comply with international human rights treaties;

Collaborate with and support progressive movements in the PRC (Eight minor political parties apart from the CCP are legally permitted. But they lack any independent role, as they are forced into the "United Front" (统一战线; 統一戰線), which is controlled by the Communist Party and used to advance its interests);

Support the establishment of a league of democratic nations to design democratic

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solutions to global challenges, including in relation to China {633};

Volt representatives in the EU and national parliaments are encouraged to join the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China, which is an international cross-party group of legislators working towards reform on how democratic countries approach China {634};

Volt members, particularly those with knowledge and experience of China, should continue their dialogue about China to enable Volt to suggest viable and effective European policy responses.

VI. Security & Defence policy Reform

Security is a prerequisite of a well-functioning society. Security provides the basis for all other matters of governance and society and sets the conditions for further development in all fields. It is a resource that the EU requires in order to guarantee safety, peace, democracy and prosperity for all Europeans. For the past seventy years, citizens of Europe have lived in peace. EU Member States have known safety and security and have been able to develop in peace.

Unfortunately, since the end of the Cold War, the European neighbourhood has known strife. The Yugoslav war raged in the Balkans during the nineties. We have known social instability in the Maghreb, terrorism in the Levant and the Sahel, a war between Russia and Georgia, and, most recently, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine and the ongoing occupation of Crimea. Adding to this, cyber threats are on the rise, with State-sponsored attacks from Russia, China and North Korea. Instability and threats to European security, once thought long gone, have resurfaced and the EU has not been able to respond to them, let alone resolve them.

Further afield, other sources of tensions or conflicts can also impact our way of life. About 18 percent of our natural gas and 21 percent of our crude oil pass through an unstable Middle-East, other resources cross the vulnerable straits of Hormuz and Malacca, and commercial traffic faces piracy threats in the Gulf of Guinea and around the Horn of Africa.

NATO and the United Nations have tried to face these challenges, but have only done so with limited success. Our future will be home to even more complex threats, and both organisations are unable to develop and adapt fast enough to new types of warfare or conflict. Neither can we keep counting on our American allies. Recent

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developments have shown that the once-considered mainstay has become uncertain.

In this challenging geopolitical environment, only one conclusion remains: the EU must be able to develop and maintain its own security and defence policy and capabilities. Other actors and organisations can be partnered with but cannot be expected to keep warranting European safety. Our security is European and requires European patronage.

Vision

A strong Europe must stand up for its citizens. The protection of our citizens, territory and values is one of the core tasks of the EU, and one we can only accomplish by coming together. The universally acclaimed values recognised by the UN and the international community must be defended.

In this complex geopolitical environment, it is up to our political leaders to tackle the challenges we face and ensure peace and security. These challenges do not end at national borders and therefore cannot be appropriately and fully dealt with at the national level or by national institutions. Our respective security is the security of all Europeans, and the defence of the continent is the defence of all Europeans.

As such, the only level where these challenges can be adequately dealt with is at the continental level. In the short term, the EU's policy and cooperation on security and defence must be strengthened; in the medium term, the EU must achieve the integration of all its security and defence components.

Future EU defence policy must aim at protecting the EU, and its citizens, by building a common defence system that deals effectively with threats, be they near or distant. The pooling by the Member States of their financial, human, logistical, and intelligence resources will be far more efficient and greatly improve safety across the EU.

Overall, we must not lose focus of the ultimate goal of security and defence, be it local, national or continental: to ensure our society and our citizens are free to strive and prosper. Currently, national security policies, including military deployments and procurement strategies, focus too often on individual national interests and domestic political aims. Meanwhile, 75 percent of Europeans favour close cooperation between European armies, and 41 percent of them do not even see the need for the independent deployment of national armies [{635}](#). We believe that the security of European citizens takes precedence over individual nations' or

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governments' domestic political or economic agendas.

In the end, only a united European security and defence policy can ensure permanent security while operating on the most efficient, innovative and impactful basis.

Our vision for European security and defence has three building blocks:

Democratic decision-making. European capabilities go hand-in-hand with European decision-making. Matters of European security and defence must be decided at the European level, as part of the democratic and parliamentary process: no backroom deals between national governments will be allowed when it comes to the security of European citizens. European military capabilities must be directed by a European Central Command – eventually under the responsibility of a European Ministry of Defence and under parliamentary control – following a common plan and a common military doctrine.

A fully integrated defence force. Under this unique civilian command must be one European military force, for the assurance that Europe can independently respond to conventional and non-conventional threats to its territory and population. This must include expeditionary forces that will

whenever necessary, act autonomously, as part of a comprehensive security approach and across the spectrum of war. This approach also includes peaceful instruments of conflict resolution (e.g. humanitarian operations, military assistance, peace enforcement, peacebuilding, disarmament, and statebuilding). While command structures will be unified, integrated European military forces will be disseminated across the continent and European citizens will be able to enlist irrespective of their country of origin.

Create a common security culture. Events in recent years have shown cracks in classical security theories. On the one hand, 9/11 reminded us that we do not only face governmental actors. On the other hand, Russian actions in Georgia and Ukraine or the emergence of China as a major military power show that geopolitical conflicts between States have not ended and that the world is increasingly multipolar and fragmented. Collective defence scenarios have resurfaced. We cannot prepare for a single type of military engagement, but must be ready for all types of military actions at the same time – be it to ensure our own defence, act under UN mandate, or implement the Responsibility to Protect principle {636}. Armed forces have to simultaneously prepare for expeditionary counter-insurgent interventions (such as in

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Afghanistan and Mali), military assistance (as in Niger and the Democratic Republic of the Congo), conventional wars, and large-scale cyber attacks against civilian and military targets. Rapid changes – including the withdrawal of the US from collective security and the emergence of new powers – must be closely followed. These challenges require a flexible and forward-looking European security and defence doctrine to replace the current mosaic of national policies. We require real security, not a false sense of security. In practice, security measures often make us feel safer, but limit our rights and freedom without increasing our actual safety. Volt calls for the development of a common European security policy: a system that provides a workable framework for European Defence. This includes a system of checks and balances to limit the scope of security policy in European society, while allowing to build European capacities to participate swiftly and impactful in global assignments, with the explicit goal of acting within existing global conventions and principles, respectfully of the rule of law and humanitarian law, and, whenever possible, as part of UN-mandated missions.

Volt supports the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and supports the global disarmament of nuclear weapons and other Weapons of Mass Destruction. While pursuing disarmament to the fullest extent possible

through these means, Volt supports research and development in the field of defensive systems against cutting edge delivery nuclear warhead delivery systems.

As for the current European arsenal of nuclear warheads being owned by France, in the long term Volt naturally supports the Europeanisation of this arsenal once European security forces are united under a single chain of command overseen by a functioning European democracy. Until this point, France shall maintain its nuclear arsenal. Given growing concerns about the US's long term commitment to European security, the European Union must seek adequate methods of deterrence, offensive and defensive, to provide for its own security going forward.

1. Democratic Decision-Making

Military actors may only act in the name of the political, civilian, institutions to which they owe their loyalty. In return, these political institutions provide military institutions with the required means to perform their tasks and provide them with a place in society. Military and civilian institutions should always be interlinked.

Transform parliamentary oversight. Volt wants to achieve parliamentary oversight by requiring a qualified majority in the European Parliament and the Council of

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Ministers for standard deployments of European military forces. In case of emergency, military action by the European executive can be considered – limited in scope and time – under ex post parliamentary control, instead of prior approval; the conditions for these emergency situations must be clearly defined. In order to ensure this oversight, a full-fledged Committee on Security and Defence should be created in Parliament – building on the existing sub-committee – to ensure that the EU Parliament holds the European Defence Minister(s) accountable. The European Parliament should also decide on military spending: in the short term, a defence component should be included in the Multiannual Financial Framework, which would develop into a defence budget in the long term.

Create a European Ministry of Defence with integrated civilian command. A true and efficient European Defence Force requires a proper command structure. Volt's vision for an integrated civilian command structure is that of a clear hierarchy from the smallest military unit all the way up to a European Ministry of Defence, replacing the current national defence ministers.

2. Integrated European Defence Forces

Establish a European Defence Force. The long-term goal is to have one unified European Defence Force. Currently, the EU only has incomplete headquarters, a Border Control (FRONTEX), and temporary task forces at its disposal. If the EU needs to be able to act in a multipolar world, it needs an appropriate European Defence Force that can act quickly and independently from other security actors.

Volt supports moving from existing multilateral cooperation across the EU Member States to the full integration of a European Defence Force that will make European security and defence (1) more effective, by adding a credible military component to the EU's comprehensive security approach, (2) more efficient, by removing duplication in command structures and equipment, and (3) less costly, by benefiting from economies of scale in military procurement and logistics. Volt calls on willing EU Member States to move ahead with permanent structured cooperation, as set out in the Lisbon Treaty, with other Member States able to join at a later point [{637}](#). Long-standing regional partners like the Benelux and the Baltic States can already start the unification of their military capabilities. These regional unifications will be able to

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showcase the benefits of a common defence infrastructure and policy, which will encourage additional EU Member States to join them. Ultimately, there will be permanent forces under a unified EU military command with permanent military headquarters.

The already existing Eurocorps, different EU Operations and Long-standing regional military cooperation like for example, those between the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and the Baltic States and the Visegrad Group Defence Cooperation show that the European Union has established basic operational readiness of a European Defence Force. Most Member States of the EU are already NATO Members, so their military Forces “speak” the same military language over all branches. In fact, there is already a very good foundation for a European Defence Force, made up of already well-cooperating EU forces that can be deployed where necessary. Just as NATO also operates with forces of ever-different members. All this needs “only” to be politically supported, enforced and deepened.

Establish permanent Operational

Headquarters. The EU is currently carrying out different operations and has already run other operations, none of these were run by permanent headquarters. To enable faster and more Coordinated Reactions,

the EU needs permanent Headquarters and Command Structures. Each time, a tailored headquarter is created. Not only does the repeated establishment and termination of headquarters result in unnecessary expenditure, but it also means a damaging loss of operational experience. It will allow for the creation of standing operational orders, instead of relying on NATO-doctrine only. It will permit the continuous collection of lessons learned and allow long-term planning. Volt embraces the idea of using already working command structures and permanent operational headquarters (OHQs). For the naval forces we propose to use the former MARCOM in Naples (where there is still a NATO command post) and for land and air forces SHAPE and SACEUR in Belgium. The staff of the EDF will then sit in a room next to that of the NATO staff and, where appropriate, cooperate with that staff. In addition, the EDF can operate independently from NATO. This organizational construction is subject to evaluation. This is all the more true if there should be no more cooperation with NATO at all. This construction can be improved or changed over time if necessary.

Permanent operational headquarters (OHQ's) should be under the oversight of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and an elected representative of the EU

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Parliament. (similar to the North Atlantic Council).

In case of a military emergency, the OHQ must act to stop this emergency. The mandate for this is limited by the duration of the emergency and until the EU Parliament or the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy intervenes.

Finally, permanent OHQ's can serve as a link to various organizations and/or countries.

Transform the EDA into a Procurement Department. The current work of the European Defence Agency needs to be upgraded into a Procurement Department within the European Defence Ministry. This means moving from coordination of national procurement to central procurement by the EU and from loose working groups to permanent EU staff drawn from experts currently working within Member States.

Promote common procurement across Member States with minimal exceptions. Armed forces are driven for a large part by logistics. International common purchases of material enables cooperation, allows synergy on both a joint and international level, and allows streamlining of Combat Service Support during operations and

exercises. Additionally, when different Member States procure new material together, be it an assault rifle or a transport airplane, one single version should be bought instead of a different version for each Member State. Exceptions to this rule must be limited to a minimum, otherwise, different Member States buy the same material in name, but will still not be able to efficiently support each other when deployed.

European national armies currently have 37 different types of armoured personnel carriers, 19 sorts of combat aircraft, and 12 different types of tanker aircraft. By sharing infantry vehicles, for instance, EU countries could save an estimated €600 million per year. Likewise, a shared ammunition certification system would annually save an estimated €500 million. Greater integration of European defence industries – with due regards to their potential influence on the political process, as well as the need to avoid an arms race – can also contribute to a rationalisation of costs and military expenses.

We can already start rationalising procurement of new systems. Once a European Army has been established, the EDA would function as the EU procurement agency. Exceptions must be determined at the European level only and different versions of a weapons system should only

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be determined by their environment of use (sea, arctic, desert, mountain, etc.) and not regional or national preferences.

Establish a Cyber Security Department.

The essential Infrastructures within Europe, such as electricity, medical, water and communications etc. , need special protection from any kind of cyber-related attacks. We believe that an EU defence policy must also incorporate non-military assets and non-military/unconventional warfare. Cyber warfare is becoming increasingly effective and dangerous, as we rely more and more on digital infrastructure. Furthermore, disinformation and misinformation (particularly by Russia) has been used to sow discord and sectarianism in societies by both foreign and domestic actors. This must also be addressed in an European-wide defence force, with the ability to share best-practices between nations. Work according to the [External Action Service of European Union. \(CSDP\)](#).

A Cyber Security Department within the European Defense Ministry will pool Europe's external Cyber security efforts. It would function as the external Corner Stone of Europe's Cyber security, working closely with internal Cyber security institutions of the police.

The legislation in the Member States needs an addition, in case of an external attack,

to draft cyber security specialists to reinforce the already existing forces.

3. Common security culture

Develop a European Military Culture and Identity.

The most successful military forces were always intrinsically linked to the society they defended. Soldiers made the greatest sacrifice in order to defend the values and morals of their country. In a world of growing unilateral action and nationalism, the EU stands for universal values of multilateralism, justice, freedom, democracy and equality. As European integration proceeds, a European Military Culture and Identity must defend these enlightened ideals. The European soldier must be rooted in a European esprit de corps – values adhered to by every soldier, regardless of rank. Wisdom, courage, discipline, a mastering of the self and a sense of justice are the values that the European soldier must promote.

Create proper European Security & Defence Academies.

In order to instil a European Military Culture and Identity within cadres, educational institutions play a vital role. Currently, the European Security and Defence College (ESDC) only provides training and education at EU level in the field of the Common Security and Defence Policy. While the aims of the ESDC are excellent and fully receive Volt's

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support, they do not go far enough. Each branch of the European Defence must have its own academy forming its cadres. EU military doctrine and European values must be taught to cadres from the moment they enter the military education system.

Initial and continued formation of all cadres, from the cadet to the highest-ranking EU military personnel and civil servants, on a wide range of security issues. Courses must be based on the latest research and taught by the world's most eminent experts. In particular, Volt encourages the opening of the traditional, military-centric security curriculum to insights from the broader security studies, including, but not limited to, critical security theory, in order to create reflective and responsible security actors.

Beyond the strict level of European educational institutions, national academies must immediately increase the language capacities of all military men and women in their ranks. In particular, it is essential that all European officers be able to speak to and precisely understand each other. In line with existing practice, Volt recommends that all European officers become proficient in English, so as to ensure good communications between national forces and avoid consequential misunderstandings.

Military Policy. We emphasize that Europe should be able to respond to aggression with or without hybrid means. And, as of now, it looks like the EU is not fully prepared to take care of its own defence. ([European Defence: The Challenge of Strategic Autonomy, 2019](#)) Although we do not expect an invasion of European territory, we should anticipate that some powers might try to derive political and economic benefit at the expense of the EU. The EU must be prepared for many contingencies. The EU must behave as if it were a hedgehog (to a statement by Mr Macron): Not aggressive, but able to stand up for itself. We need well-equipped, well-trained flexible dispersed quick reaction units. This has already been partially provided for in the form of Rapid Reaction Forces and EU Battlegroups. In view of the above, the necessary infrastructure should be in place to achieve quick deployment of geographically dispersed EU units to the scene of a potential conflict situation created by an adversary. That is why we support the Military Mobility project part of the EU's Permanent Structured Cooperation (PeSCo). In a world of deteriorating systems and orders it is no longer possible to reach a stable peace by military means alone. The European Defence Force will react in asymmetric warfare as well as in stabilisation or defensive operations. Furthermore, will it embrace the CIMIC (Civilian Military Cooperation) idea for UN

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and other operations? It is important that the people of Europe have a clear understanding of the role of their military forces and a deep connection to it. Just like it is crucial that the military feels/has a strong connection to the society it is serving. Only with this mutual understanding the EDF can successfully fulfill its role of safeguarding peace and prosperity in Europe. To further this understanding all efforts should be made to expand knowledge about the role and mission of the European army in the public as well as making the military more accessible to the average citizen by for example holding open days at military bases. Finally, a unified European Defence Force will make it possible to use diplomacy more effectively, by providing the necessary hard power to support diplomatic measures.

Formulate a White Book on European Security & Defence. On the basis of the EU's Global Strategy ([EUGS {638}](#)), Volt calls for the formulation of a White Book, under the auspices of the EEAS, setting out the EU's shared outlook on the security environment, defining ambitions and establishing a roadmap for further integration. This White Book would also be the opportunity to outline our willingness to limit attempts at a global arms race, develop a position on autonomous lethal weapons, and recall our attachment to internationally-agreed principles and

treaties, including the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, the 2014 Space Preservation Treaty, as well as our non-proliferation and disarmament commitments under the 1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

4. Relationship with other security actors

Review the EU-NATO relationship. Since nearly all EU States are Members of NATO and the cooperation between the EDF and NATO is a given constant we believe that NATO remains a relevant alliance, not just for collective defense but also as an expression of common values that bind members across the Atlantic. At the same time, the EU cannot blindly rely on territorial defense through NATO, but must develop an independent ability to defend itself. By closely coordinating with NATO, the EU would avoid duplication and make the Alliance stronger. In the long term, as a European Defense develops further, the relationship between NATO and a reformed EU needs to be revisited. In particular, the EU must become an equal partner to the US within NATO, both in terms of means and influence within the organization. The handling of any crisis will be faster because the European Union will speak as one. The EU will become one of the dominant geopolitical players, a trustworthy and faithful partner to NATO

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that is able to ensure its own security. The cooperation within NATO will continue. We should neither reinvent tried and true tactics nor establish new procedures and operational rules for their own sake that are both costly and unnecessary. Standard operational procedures such as STANAG can eventually evolve into specific European rules and procedures. We can benefit from the long-standing shared NATO experience without having to reinvent the wheel, so to speak. As was the case with NATO in the beginning, it shall also be necessary for the EDF to learn how to deal with coordinating and incorporating all the forces of the various contributing Member States which have chosen to devolve part of their sovereignty to the EU in the interest of a stronger Europe. At the end of this process, the EU will replace its single member countries in NATO.

Strengthen the EU-UN relationship. The UN is one of the main global security actors and, despite its need for reform and more democracy, the most legitimate. Many EU missions run side-by-side with a UN mission. Additionally, the UN is able to provide frameworks and legitimacy through its General Assembly and Security Council. The noble goals of the UN are in line with the goals of the EU and a tight bond is required between the two. Volt supports increasing the EU's involvement in security matters handled by the UN, as well as strengthening the UN's capacity to

act whenever necessary to limit armed conflicts and violence around the globe.

Whenever possible, the EU must strive to secure a UN mandate for military actions. Dialogue with the Security Council and the General Assembly should always be maintained and general consensus reached.

In line with Volt's proposals for UN reform, permanent seats by any EU Member State on the Security Council must be converted into a single EU seat. Additionally, Volt has defined desired UN reforms as part of its Foreign Affairs policy. This would allow a permanent and coherent European voice, better able to defend the interests and values of the global community.

Strengthen the OSCE as a forum for Europe-wide security. Renewed conflict and tensions with Russia, such as over the annexation of Ukrainian territory, means that the EU needs an effective forum to deal with security issues in its neighbourhood. Volt calls for enhancing the role and capacities of the OSCE, both to deal with ongoing crises, as is currently the case in Ukraine, and to establish permanent dialogue on security-related matters between the EU and its OSCE partners, most notably Russia.

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Strengthen military cooperation with partners worldwide. The new European Ministry of Defense will establish multiple new relations with other security actors. These actors can be individual nations or multinational organizations. Partnerships, plans and dialogues will be established with major security actors, amongst which the EU will take a leading role. Organizations such as the Arab League and the African Union are also valuable partners, Volt understands the dire need for cooperation with our neighbouring continents and organizations as a result of the Comprehensive Approach. All new cooperation and partnerships will be in line with the values and ethical code of conduct of the European Union and the United Nations, as well as with principles of international law.

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