

Volt's Mapping of Policies

Edition 9.0

Challenge 5+1 - EU Reform

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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 Union is still waiting for its completion. We have seen how crises continue to strain our common project due to a failure to address the underlying issues, whether they are **economic, immigration, energy, or security-related**.

In an era where autocratic actors use European reluctance to expand their power and erode democracy around the world, **timid steps toward integration are no longer sufficient**.

Europeans have **missed out on** opportunities for **sustainable economic growth**. We could have recovered faster from the financial crisis, but EU countries stuck to their austerity plans and structural deficiencies, which were built on a lack of solidarity. We were unable to act decisively and quickly enough during the pandemic and Russia's attack on Ukraine. We appear incapable of overcoming **our reliance on energy from autocratic regimes**, and we would be unable to defend ourselves without **NATO**, which has an uncertain future. Every year, thousands of immigrants die at our borders.

We hold politicians accountable for these collective failures because they prioritise their national interests over the interests of all Europeans. We are convinced that the EU requires a new foundation that allows **European citizens, rather than national politicians**, to make decisions based on their convictions.

In many regions, we have inefficient and opaque public administrations that are rife with corruption, resulting in **high unemployment**, impeding investment and the growth of small businesses. Larger corporations have benefited from easier market access and lower labour costs, but workers have not received **harmonised social protections**. Wealthy individuals and corporations continue to take advantage of legal differences between countries in order to **avoid paying their fair share**, leaving everyone else to foot the bill. In general, people **do not feel represented** in the Union and see decisions as being imposed from above.

Volt arose from a crisis of European integration during a period of mistrust for joint endeavours. We came together to affirm the strength of the European project, our commitment to joint efforts, and our belief in our shared future. Our message is one

of hope, audacity, and of solidarity. A message to all that the sirens of division will not demolish what we have patiently constructed. Volt was founded to serve as a pillar of the European project and to revitalise its construction. Volt offers European citizens a new vision of Europe, one that **embraces our common aspirations** while correcting our shortcomings.

We believe in a Europe that balances the freedoms of its single market with **strengthened social protections and inclusion**, where companies and labour can move around freely and this flexibility is not detrimental to workers anywhere. As a result, our vision is that of a **social Europe**, which successive leaders have frequently mentioned but never implemented. We support a Europe in which citizens across the Union can come together to defend their common interests, where solidarity means supporting one another 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 where citizens across the Union can come together to defend their common interests.

II. Institutional Reform and Governance

The 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, partly economically unified and sometimes 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.

As true believers 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. Living and delivering this very democracy, at all levels, is the key to restoring the trust of European citizens in their institutions and to finding common solutions to common problems. As we can already see in our national systems, democracy was never about agreeing—this is impossible—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, others will require treaty changes. Volt is fully aware of the difficulty of reforming EU institutions, but we will not be deterred 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](#).

A. General principles

First and foremost, in the establishment of good governance and a good government, there are six guiding principles in the Volt-Philosophy, which all institutions and organisational decisions must aim to embed in their foundation.

- **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 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 effectively, we must avoid the creation and continuation of institutions that are 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 set-up, Volt supports institutions and procedures that citizens can understand and make their own.
- **Ease of citizen involvement.**¹ Volt supports a system which is, from elections to popular contributions, designed to simplify and encourage citizens' involvement. Our policy proposals below rest upon these principles.
- **Future Fit (Ready):** Volt reflects their decision-making with regards to the needs of present and future generations.

B. The legislative branch

The legislative branch is the most important institution in the democratic system. It expresses the voice of the people through their representatives. It must be elected democratically and be as close to the people as possible. It must be empowered to draft, discuss, and adopt our legislation. Despite national differences, this is a democratic requirement to which all European countries have long adhered, and enshrining democracy at the European level requires a similar arrangement.

The current state of the European legislature is limited in many ways. The European Parliament is elected directly, 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 still lacks the basic power to propose 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 trumps the legislative power of Parliament. Finally, the European Council, an executive body whose role is limited to strategic

¹ For more details, see [Citizen Empowerment, Strengthen citizens' ability to influence politics](#), [Strengthen ability of citizens to influence politics beyond elections](#), [Empower citizens and government to take concrete action](#).

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 a first step towards a more democratic law-making process, Volt supports allowing the European Parliament to initiate laws by granting it the right to legislative initiative. With this, the European Parliament will finally be able to propose and discuss legislative proposals stemming directly from the representatives of the people, and not on 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 approval before it can become law. In the event 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 of roughly equal population; 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.
 - 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 to 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 voting.

➤ **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 the 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 the current system, every country leads the Council for six months. This system prevents any long-term work and keeps important policy 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 up 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 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 countries. 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 the 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 regard for gender representation but no considerations for national citizenship.
- **Strengthen the leading candidate.** Following the introduction of the leading candidate 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 a 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 hold a vote of no 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 other things, 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 to include a review of the compatibility of national and EU law with EU treaties; 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 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 strengthening the link between European citizens and their European-level representatives and avoiding 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, as long as they are residents for at least six months in that district.² Similarly, as long as nation states remain central to the EU's political structure, Volt believes that candidates for the reformed Council should be citizens of the state for which they seek election, 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 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 on 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. In order to limit the influence of money in politics, campaigns will be limited in their 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 that individuals who have been convicted of certain crimes, such as corruption, embezzlement, or wilful misuse of public funds, are ineligible for elective office. 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.

² 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.

F. Other provisions for good governance

Following these main measures for improving 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 the 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 the creation of a new Committee of European Cities. Both of which fulfil a valuable role 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" at the European level, which consults and audits decision-makers with advice and support towards the needs of present and future generations.
- **Facilitate more effective communication.** 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 of how to conclude 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.³**
 - 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

³ In this policy, Volt considers "region" any given determined area within a Member State, whether it formally holds the title of region or not.

- for open and inclusive dialogue between local, national and European levels and for proper subsidiarity and decentralisation.⁴
- Should a genuine effort at dialogue fail, if necessary with the intervention of a mediator, Volt recognises the right of a people to self-determinate 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.⁵ Unless under exceptional circumstances, including clear and large-scale violations of human rights,⁶ 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 recommends the intervention of a European mediator – for instance, the proposed President of the EU⁷ – to ensure the process moves forward.⁸
 - Should the self-determining region choose to leave the European Union nevertheless,⁹ a negotiated process will take place with the Union. If a self-determining and seceding region wishes to remain within 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.¹⁰ A territory would continue to be subject

⁴ "A rational discourse about regional identities and economic, social and cultural interests could be a source of strength, draining away much of the peril from the current fractious secession conflicts." Social Europe, Learning From Catalonia: To Secede Or Not To Secede?, available at <https://www.socialeurope.eu/learning-catalonia-secede-not-secede>

⁵ "The constitutionalization of a right to secede emerges as a means to soothe secessionist tendencies (as with Quebec and Scotland) or prevent political escalation into a potential armed conflict (as with New Caledonia and Montenegro)." Max Planck Encyclopedia of Comparative Constitutional Law, Secession, available at <http://oxcon.ouplaw.com/view/10.1093/law-mpeccol/law-mpeccol-e459>

⁶ "Any attempt to claim legal secession [...] must at least show that: [...] the state from which they are seceding seriously violates their human rights; and there are no other effective remedies", American Society of International Law, Kosovo's Declaration of Independence: Self-Determination, Secession and Recognition, available at <https://www.asil.org/insights/volume/12/issue/2/kosovo-s-declaration-independence-self-determination-secession-and>

⁷ In the absence of a President of the EU, a mediator can be agreed by the parties or proposed by the European Parliament.

⁸ Newsweek, Europe Must Step In and Resolve the Moves Toward Catalonia Secession, available at <http://www.newsweek.com/europe-must-step-and-resolve-moves-toward-catalonia-secession-693826>

⁹ In case of referendum for self-determination, voters should be provided the opportunity to express whether they wish to remain in or leave the Union.

¹⁰ Max Planck Encyclopedia of Comparative Constitutional Law, Overseas Territories, Australia, France, Netherlands, New Zealand, United Kingdom, United States of America, available at <http://opil.ouplaw.com/view/10.1093/law:epil/9780199231690/law-9780199231690-e1076?prd=EPIL>

to EU legislation and would be required to fulfil all of a member state's obligations. It will retain benefits such as full access to the single market and free movement. However, it will not benefit from new EU funding or investments and will only have non-voting representation in the European Parliament and no representation in the Council.¹¹ The decision to admit a territory as a member of the Union would be similar to the regular accession procedure for 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 competences. 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 move ahead to be uniformly forged 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 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 all 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".

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

¹¹ In either councils, in the current structure of the EU; in the only remaining Council, in Volt's proposed structure.

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, are the sovereigns 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 competences and are endowed with rights as prescribed in the constitution. While initially based on the EU's Member States and expected to remain largely stable, state boundaries may evolve following a constitutional process involving citizens.
- **Principle of subsidiarity.** As far as possible, competences shall be distributed to the level at which they are best carried out. While cooperation between the federal and state levels is encouraged, the constitution delegates relevant responsibilities and accountability to each level. Where appropriate, we further encourage devolving competences 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 should have primacy over state law. In the event of a dispute, the federal judiciary shall decide on the interpretation of competences 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 a qualified majority 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, as provided for by law and where the principle of proportionality is met. Individuals who find their rights compromised will have access to redress through the courts, which must provide fair, effective, and timely access to justice for all.

3. Institutions

➤ **Legislature**

- The European Parliament should be the lower house of the legislature. It shall be directly elected according to "Volt's 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 the 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 shall 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 the event 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 European Union's President 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 about 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 in 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 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 should be based on the values of independence and accountability. In particular, judges should be protected from undue political interference.
- In line with international standards,¹² 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 should 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.

¹² 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.

4. Competences

A European Constitution should address the distribution of competences, including at least the following competences.

- **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 competences, the Federal level shall have the power to decide on the distribution of competences.
- **Exclusive Federal competences.** Some responsibilities will be delegated to the federal level. For example, the Federal government shall have sole authority over foreign, defence, and monetary policy. The European armed forces shall be under the responsibility of a European Minister of Defence and under parliamentary control.
- **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 as 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, Article 7 TEU needs to be amended. The procedures of Article 7 TEU must no longer require complete unanimity. Instead, it should require a two-thirds majority vote at all levels and in all bodies of the EU. As a nuclear option, paragraphs must be added to Article 7 TEU, enabling the possibility of suspension and exclusion of a member state from the EU. Even after the suspension or exclusion of a state, groups and activists supporting the furthering of rule of law principles will receive continuing financial support.
- **Rule of law mechanism.** Volt pushes for the European Treaties to be adapted in such a way that a future, tightened rule of law mechanism will make cuts in EU funds to specific Member States possible when the values and agreements of the European Union are not followed. This is to be done regardless of the use of EU funds and the type of EU funding, following the example of the EU

recovery funds set up in 2020.¹³ 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 on other matters. Volt encourages nation states to implement financial projects such as the Recovery Fund outside the Council, which, as an 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.

¹³ European Commision, Recovery Plan for Europe, available at:
https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/recovery-plan-europe_en

III. Economic and financial reform

A. Vision

Volt envisions a European economic and financial system that benefits all European citizens and the entire European society. This means that the economic system should allow citizens to pursue their personal goals while also fully participating in European society.

Volt believes that we can only thrive as individuals if we respect and contribute to a community founded on universal values. These values and principles, which include solidarity, sustainability, equal opportunity, liberty, justice, and human dignity, form the foundation of our community and must also apply to our economic and financial systems.

Volt believes that a strong Europe requires fiscal and monetary institutions that are (1) democratically legitimised, (2) operate in accordance with our shared norms, and (3) act in the best interests of the Union as a whole. As a result, we envision the Eurozone's institutional completion, resulting in a better Union for all residents. This includes the establishment of a European finance ministry, the right of the European Union to levy taxes, and an increase in the European Union budget to meet the European Union's new responsibility for European fiscal stabilisation.

It is critical that we empower the European Union and its institutions to address the fiscal imbalances that we are currently witnessing. To that end, we must fight high legacy debt and complete the banking union. To that end, we propose a proportional transfer of debt across member states onto the European Union balance sheet, as well as a restart of binding fiscal rules, allowing flexibility to spend countercyclically in recessions.

In terms of its fiscal architecture, we believe in a European Union that remains true to its identity as a union of solidarity, with each country feeling responsible for the Union's fate. In this sense, we must recognize that the fiscal policy of each member state has implications beyond its own borders. Our philosophy is that we want to reach a point where member countries can orderly restructure their debt in a partial default without a collapse of social standards for their citizens. To that end, European automatic stabilisers should be able to alleviate hardship during times of crisis, and the European Union should be able to act as an emergency insurer to guarantee basic functions, such as unemployment benefits and civil servant payment, if a state loses its ability to do so. Because monetary policy and interest rates cannot be tailored to individual economic conditions in a currency union, the economic setup should smooth the accumulation of asymmetric shocks.

To summarise, while European fiscal governance should always strive to serve all of its citizens, there must be a social safety net in place to protect the most vulnerable groups and ensure a minimum living standard.

B. Euro Summit & Eurogroup

With the creation of the European Monetary Union (EMU), the responsibility for monetary policy was transferred to a new European supranational institution, the European Central Bank, as a single monetary authority. However, decisions related to economic policy-making remained in the hands of 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 has played a decisive role in managing the Euro crisis. The Euro Summit is an informal platform for meetings 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 proposes an economic and financial policy decided by the European Parliament, with the Council fulfilling the role of 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 that lead to EU-wide decisions, in particular meetings of heads of EU governments, do not align with Volt's vision of a transparent and democratic European Union. Volt proposes the immediate abolishment of such meetings and a clear division of powers between the legislative and executive branches to ensure the realisation of the principles of democracy and accountability.

C. European Central Bank

The European Central Bank's (ECB) primary objective is to maintain price stability. We want to give the ECB more leeway in interpreting its mandate in the form of a dual mandate, which adds the target of full employment to the existing target of price stability. With the introduction of unconventional monetary and targeted bond-purchasing programs, the ECB's mandate has been dangerously legally stretched, approaching what could be considered direct state financing. We agree

that these measures were most likely necessary to keep the Euro as a currency, but we believe that, in a healthy European architecture, the ECB mandate should never have been stretched so far.

- **No government financing.** We aim to establish a healthy EU fiscal environment by reducing high levels of government debt and establishing the possibility of orderly member state government bankruptcy and debt restructuring without massive social and humanitarian costs.
- **Monetary Policy should target employment too.** For improved monetary governance, we envision a firmly independent ECB that is empowered with a dual mandate, that adds targets of full employment, as well as moderate long-term interest rates to the long-established target of price stability, similar to the mandate of the US Federal Reserve.¹⁴ This would require a change of the European Treaty and is thus a long-term project.

D. Fiscal policy in the European Union

We support and welcome EU countries to adopt the Euro as currency as soon as possible, to raise its standing as a potential world reserve currency. We find country-specific opt-outs from the Euro to be undesirable and welcome those member states that are not yet using the Euro with open arms. It is a substantial problem of the European economic architecture that countries interact in the common market, and share the same currency, but are not coordinating their fiscal policies. To alleviate this problem, we propose that the EU take a much larger role in economic cyclical stabilisation and that it receives the budgetary power to do so and taxation power to back such a budget.

- **Increase the EU Budget.** A larger budget needs to be financed out of newly introduced discretionary EU taxes. We propose to triple the size of the EU budget, implying a yearly budget of approximately 1 trillion Euro. This budget shall have three major uses: (1) it will be used for financial support programs that are both targeted and countercyclical; (2) it will allow for common European public goods (such as defence, climate and transnational energy and digital infrastructure) to be financed at the European level; (3) lastly, it will serve funding source for automatic stabilisation in times of crises: we propose to 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.

¹⁴ Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, The Federal Reserve's Dual Mandate, available at <https://www.chicagofed.org/research/dual-mandate/dual-mandate>

E. European Stability Mechanism

The European Stability Mechanism (ESM) is the Eurozone's bailout fund and a key mechanism for its stability. It is currently run by national governments and thus works as an intergovernmental mechanism. Volt supports the ESM becoming an institution under EU law accountable to the European Parliament. The transformation of the ESM should respect the following three key aspects:

- **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 the EU Finance Minister, who will be accountable to the European Parliament.
- **The ESM shall develop transparent rules for national government insolvency and support programs.** This will allow states to go into bankruptcy, enter negotiations with their creditors, and begin restructuring their debt before conditional financial assistance is granted.

F. Creation of an EU Finance Ministry

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. Instead of this plethora of competencies, we propose the creation of a European Economic and Finance Ministry, with the clear role of leading fiscal and economic policy in Europe.

- **Create a European Finance Ministry.** As the first step of economic governance reform, Volt supports the Commission's proposal to create the role of a European Minister of Finance. This role will strongly enhance accountability and transparency in European financial governance. In the short term, with our current institutional architecture, this Minister would be both a European commissioner and chair monthly meetings of eurozone finance ministers – the so-called Eurogroup. The Minister will have to report to the European Parliament and represent Europe on the international economy stage, e.g.

within the International Monetary Fund. Crucially, the ministerial role would be of pan-European competence, rather than a Eurozone-only one - a symbol of our economic unity. The inclusion of non-Euro countries under the representation of the Minister will have to be subject to their compliance with proposed fiscal policy reform. In the long term and with the abolishment of the Eurogroup, the position of the 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 branch.

G. Complete the European Banking Union

Financing conditions in the European Union differ widely between states. We want to ensure that an entrepreneur with an innovative idea can access funding under the same conditions anywhere in Europe. Thus, we deem it necessary that the long-promised "banking union" is finalised at last. This will involve solving the problem states and their banking sector being intimately linked through banks holding significant portions of their own government's debt, creating a situation where the failure of either of the two parties can easily lead to the failure of the other. This vicious dependency of banks and States is often called the "sovereign-bank nexus". We support the established pillars of the banking union, including the single supervisory mechanism (SSM) with the ECB as the central prudential supervisor of credit institutions in the euro area and in non-euro EU countries that choose to join the SSM. However, the banking Union must be extended further through European portfolio insurance, empowering the European banking supervision, and the introduction of a European safe asset to break the "sovereign-bank nexus".

- **Create a fully European banking supervision system.** Europe has made significant progress 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. We strongly support further Europeanisation of our Banking Supervision, as it creates a level playing field for European banks and increases financial stability through harmonised rules and increased transparency.

- **Break the sovereign-bank nexus.** If a sovereign restructuring regime is to be credible, then the sovereign-bank nexus must be broken for good. Our primary proposal to break the dependence of banks on their national sovereign assets is the creation of European safe assets, which are government debt issued by the European Union. As this safe asset is backed by one of the biggest and most productive economic areas in the world, it will be considered as very safe debt. Crucially, it will be less sensitive to any individual member state's fiscal situation. Our proposed means of creating a sufficient amount of these assets

is for the European Union to issue debt to proportionally take over a share of debt of the member states, as described below.

- **Concentration charges for holding national assets.** In the absence of a safe asset we propose the introduction of concentration risk charges for sovereign exposures to reduce contagion from States to banks. Banks would be incentivised to diversify their sovereign bond portfolios. Introducing capital charges for concentrations to sovereigns will incentivise a diversification of banks' sovereign portfolios across the Eurozone Member States. This allows for risk-sharing and orderly default, if necessary.
- **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. Regulatory measures shall ensure that additional deposit insurance does not lead to increased risk taking by banks.

H. Fighting Excessive Debt with European Fiscal Rules

High government debt levels in some countries have proven one of the most prevalent roadblocks to European integration, and the problem is very unlikely to disappear on its own. Our proposal is for the European Union to issue its own debt, and take over a portion of its member states' debt to achieve a manageable debt level once again. In return, new and binding fiscal rules shall be agreed upon and states adhering to such rules shall see further debt relief.

- **Debt Transfer.** We propose that the EU issues debt and uses it to purchase and retire proportionally debt of all EU member states. In return, member states pass laws of constitutional status to adhere to new and binding fiscal rules that will prevent debt levels of this magnitude from arising ever again. Such a debt transfer does not make the debt disappear, but it is now backed by a much larger and more credible creditor who can issue debt itself to finance the purchase, which will serve as an asset of safe status for the world economy. The EU can sustain much higher debt levels than individual countries that might easily fall into financial distress and thus can work productively to decrease European legacy debt back towards a reasonable level. As states credibly put themselves on a path towards more sustainable debt levels, there shall be an

incentive scheme of further debt relief through the EU.

- **New Fiscal Rules for the Eurozone.** 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, 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. We propose transparent fiscal rules that incentivise prudent fiscal policies and the reduction of unsustainable debt levels but allow for flexibility in counteracting macroeconomic shocks. In a crisis, deficits may be much higher (we have seen necessary and temporary deficit spending during the Covid crisis of around 10% of GDP), but any large deficit above must be balanced by a corresponding net surplus after the crisis has passed. Generally, as the EU should assume a larger role in fiscal stabilisation, high national deficits beyond the working of automatic stabilisers in the budget may not even be necessary during a recession.
- **No bailouts.** Through the aforementioned mechanisms (European Debt, ESM, fiscal rules, currency stability), we are assured not to find ourselves in a situation again in which member states have to bail each other out, as even in distressed member states countercyclical spending and social services will be guaranteed. There will be no bailouts, but orderly procedures on how to steer distressed member states back to a functioning fiscal environment.

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 are able to move and reside freely. This is one of the four pillars on which European integration rests, and it 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 Rights. These principles are the bedrock of the political community: both aspiring and current Member States need to fully respect them, and if they 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.

A functional 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 the 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 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 thing 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 core 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 get 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 into 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 entry points (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 should develop into the EU's federal-level police department.

- **Extend Europol's competences.** 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 run, Europol should be given exclusive authority to combat cross-border crime, terrorism, and cyber security threats.
- **Build up Europol's capabilities.** Europol's independent operative capabilities should be strengthened gradually. First and foremost, developing cyber security capabilities must be prioritised; Member States' resources should be directed toward developing common European cyber security capabilities rather than 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 competences 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 Guard** 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 competence. In order to cope with these challenges, we need a new security agency, a European Guard, which will support national and local forces by performing civilian, police, and partly military tasks. This guard will consist of reservists and can be requested by any Member State to assist

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 Guard can carry out representative tasks such as honouring state visits on a European scale. National equivalents, such as the newly-formed French National Guard, should be merged into this European Guard.

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.¹⁵ This includes:¹⁶

- **Work together with the developing world**, which is hosting more than 80% of the world's refugees,¹⁷ 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

¹⁵ UNHCR, Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, available at <http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10>

¹⁶ Open Global Rights, A global solution to a global refugee crisis, available at <https://www.openglobalrights.org/global-solution-to-global-refugee-crisis/>

¹⁷ UNHCR, Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2016, available at <http://www.unhcr.org/5943e8a34>

have this because, for example, of the rising number of climate refugees the EU will have to process.

- Identify, invent, 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.
- 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" which says** refugees must apply for asylum in their first EU country of arrival. A burden-sharing settlement system must replace it.

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 a more humane treatment of refugees.¹⁸

- **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.¹⁹

- **Continue the practice of protecting refugees for the duration of the risk.**²⁰ 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.²¹ 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

¹⁸ The continuing failure of the Common European Asylum System, available at <http://thomasspijkerboer.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/den-heijer-rijpma-spijkerboer-CMLR-def.pdf>

¹⁹ Asylum in Europe, Boundaries of liberty: Asylum and de facto detention in Europe, available at <http://www.asylumineurope.org/sites/default/files/shadow-reports/boundariesliberty.pdf>; Human Rights Watch, Greece: 13,000 Still Trapped on Islands, available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/03/06/greece-13000-still-trapped-islands>

²⁰ See more details at [Migration](#)

²¹ For example: clean track record, language skills, and knowledge of key elements of the country.

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 be struck only if the EU provides additional development 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 the countries of origin. But the number of people attempting to reach Europe will continue to increase as long as Europe has an image as a safer and wealthier region than the countries from which migration is originating.

V. Foreign and Neighbourhood Policy Reform

A. Vision

Volt believes that European integration is one of the biggest achievements in 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 a 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 for multilateral institutions, most notably the United Nations. At the same time, the EU must recognise that some challenges, including those 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 to these crises in the longer term.

Apart from supporting multilateral institutions, the EU should also seek to engage bilaterally with key partners 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. Furthermore, the EU 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's work will be to uphold and promote the above-mentioned European values and interests and to 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 a 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 international system. Volt shares and supports its values of peace, justice, human rights, and shared prosperity. It is by far the most legitimate actor for global action, with nearly universal membership. Yet, we are not blind to its shortcomings and the limitations triggered by its organisational set-up 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 of civilian and military personnel.

- **Take pragmatic steps for an improved Security Council in the short-term.** As long as fundamental reforms to 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 are 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.²² In cases where the Council fails to uphold international peace and security, Volt supports the General Assembly stepping in, according to its "Uniting for Peace" Resolution,²³ 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".²⁴
- **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 run against the principles of equality and democracy. Conversely, Volt opposes the addition of new countries as permanent Council members, as

²² UN Charter, Chapter V, Art. 24, para. 2, available at
https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Charter_of_the_United_Nations#Article_24

²³ UN General Assembly Resolution 377, 1950, available at
[http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/377\(V\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/377(V))

²⁴ UNPA Campaign, Giving the World's Citizens a voice, available at <https://en.unpacampaign.org/>

this would only make a deadlock more likely. Volt urges EU member states to forego seeking permanent membership in 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 to 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 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 for international institutions and, therefore, includes 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 for 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 to strengthen international treaties and conventions, including, but not limited to,

the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological Weapons Convention, Nuclear-Free Zones, and relevant UN Resolutions, in order to achieve both non-proliferation and active disarmament of weapons of mass destruction. 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 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 in 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 a 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. Economic, development, and cooperation institutions such as the G7, G20, OECD, international financial institutions, and so on, as well as security organisations such as the OSCE and NATO, are included. Furthermore, Volt supports the extension of the network of EU delegations to all countries the EU has 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 are 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 well. The EU must distil and crystallise its ability to be one foreign policy actor, with all the 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 on 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 urges a rapid reduction of the EU's reliance on non-renewable energy, especially oil and gas. In light of the Russian aggression against Ukraine and the resulting destabilisation of global supply lines, dependence on fossil fuels has become a threat not only to the environment but also to the strategic independence of the EU and its 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.²⁵ Similarly, Volt advocates for the EU to help achieve a reduction in the dependency on foreign energy suppliers in 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 neighborhood as a means to bring those countries

²⁵ The New Geopolitics of Natural Gas, pg 150-151, Agnia Grigas

closer to the EU's standards in terms of food quality, economic diversification, and the rule of law.

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 Balkans, 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 Balkan integration

- **Continue the EU accession negotiations that were already launched.** Volt supports continuing the existing efforts for access by 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 previous negotiations.²⁶
- **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 drug and weapons trafficking.²⁷ 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.

²⁶ International Monetary Fund, Reforming the Judiciary: Learning from the Experience of Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe, available at <https://www.imf.org/~/media/Files/Publications/REO/EUR/2017/November/eur-reo-chapter-2.ashx?la=en> The IMF uses the example of Romania, where emphasis was made on facilitating foreign investment and attempts to reform the judiciary were resisted. Serbia's approach to judicial reform is also considered flawed and incomplete.

²⁷ Transparency International, Corruption Perceptions Index 2017, available at https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2017. CIA, World Factbook: Albania and Serbia, available at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/al.html> and <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ri.html>

- **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 over land along the Danube.²⁸ Volt encourages the use of mediation or arbitration mechanisms, 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 North Macedonia, continue to experience worrying tensions. This 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.** Volt, on the other hand, advocates limiting cooperation with countries that are moving toward authoritarian rule, such as Azerbaijan and 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 for 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.

²⁸ European Western Balkans, Serbia-BiH border demarcation: A contentious matter?, available at <https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2017/11/03-serbia-bosnia-border-demarcation-contentious-matter/>;

Balkan Insight, Border Disputes Still Bedevil Ex-Yugoslav States, available at <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/border-disputes-still-bedevil-most-ex-yugoslav-states-07-01-2017-1>

- **Continue the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTA).** Volt supports DCFTAs with Moldova,²⁹ Georgia,³⁰ and Ukraine³¹ and their deepening whenever possible. Volt also calls for pursuing Association Agreements and trade integration with 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.³²

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 on the same principle.³³
- **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 Türkiye (Turkey)

- **Continue the strong partnership.** Volt supports the partnership between the EU and Turkey, building on their already high economic integration and strengthening political and civil society links.

²⁹ Official Journal of the European Union, Association Agreement with the Republic of Moldova, available at

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22014A0830%2801%29&from=EN>

³⁰ Official Journal of the European Union, Association Agreement with Georgia, available at

[http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22014A0830\(02\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22014A0830(02)&from=EN)

³¹ Official Journal of the European Union, Association Agreement with Ukraine, available at

http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2016/november/tradoc_155103.pdf

³² Cambridge Review of International Affairs, 29:4 (2016), pp.1259-1278, Visa liberalization processes in the EU’s Eastern neighbourhood: understanding policy outcomes, available at

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2016.1233936>

³³ The Economist Intelligence Unit classified Morocco as a “hybrid regime”, Jordan as an “authoritarian regime” and Tunisia as a “flawed democracy.” See The Economist, Democracy Index 2017, available at

http://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/Democracy_Index_2017.pdf.

- **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.

F. EU China Policy

1. Human Rights

Volt acknowledges that human rights are universal and inalienable, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. 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.³⁴ 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 governments to respect the legal protection EU nationals enjoy under international law.³⁵
- **Set up a targeted sanctions regime** with which it can sanction human rights offenders by freezing their assets and banning said offenders and their associates that benefit from these human rights violations from entering the EU.³⁶
- **Collaborate with the Chinese government to promote human rights** that the CCP considers less controversial, including gender rights and economic rights.
- **Provide a platform where victims of human rights abuses can speak out** and find support for their pursuit of justice.

³⁴ <https://www.unfpa.org/resources/human-rights-principles>

³⁵ 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.

³⁶ Targets of sanctions may include individuals, businesses and governmental organisations. Inspiration can be drawn from the US Magnitsky Act, <https://www.state.gov/global-magnitsky-act/>

- **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 on 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 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's licence.³⁷

➤ **Make operation permissions of Chinese media corporations, cultural institutions, and other United Front organisations conditional on reciprocity**, meaning that European organisations, including government agencies, media and NGOs must enjoy the same operating space in China as their Chinese counterparts in Europe, including freedom of expression.³⁸

➤ **To counter Chinese influence operations:**³⁹

- Recognise and understand the problem by carrying out studies and developing analytical capacity in government and private sectors;
- Develop high-level guidance and policy on countering foreign interference, issue 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 a willingness to prosecute agents of interference;
- Protect those exposing interference;
- Engage with universities to develop responses to related issues, such as monitoring and mobilisation by Chinese government-backed student associations; technology transfers; 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 to 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

³⁷ 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 licences. 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.

³⁸ With respect for the freedom of expression as guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights.

³⁹ From report 'The Party Speaks For You', <https://www.aspi.org.au/report/party-speaks-you>

levels, from citizens to governments, from schools to organisations.⁴⁰ In initiating and framing such a variety of contacts, the EU should ensure full representation of the whole of society in all encounters and processes. Relaxing visa restrictions will enable such exchanges.

4. Development Cooperation

Volt supports the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 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.⁴¹
- **Initiate and participate in sustainable development projects connecting Europe 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.

⁴⁰ With the exception of exchange of security personnel, such as the police and military forces.

⁴¹ With Germany being AIIB's fourth biggest shareholder.

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.
- **Speed up 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 companies 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 or regions.
- **Carefully monitor the activities of Chinese internet companies** and ensure they respect 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 cyber criminals.
- **Continue to prevent the export of any knowledge products to China** when these could also be used for military or surveillance purposes.
- **Ensure the independence of European technological infrastructure** by prioritising European tech and service 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 the use of force**, as prohibited by the UN

Charter.⁴²

- **Recognises the sovereignty of the people of Taiwan and China over, respectfully, the ROC-controlled territories and the PRC-controlled territories.**⁴³
- **Calls on Europe to engage in diplomatic relations** with both the PRC and Taiwan governments.⁴⁴
- **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 organisations.

8. The future of China

The democratisation of China would not only be 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 based on shared values 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, and ratify and comply with international human rights treaties.
- **Collaborate with and support progressive movements in the PRC.**⁴⁵

⁴² UN Charter article 2(4).

⁴³ The future status of Tibet should be determined peacefully without coercion from the PRC government.

⁴⁴ 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.

⁴⁵ 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 solutions to global challenges, including in relation to China.⁴⁶

Volt representatives in the European Union and national legislatures are encouraged to join the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China, an international cross-party group of legislators working to reform how democratic countries approach China.⁴⁷

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.

⁴⁶ <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/06/10/g7-d10-democracy-trump-europe/>

⁴⁷ <https://www.ipac.global/>

VI. Security and Defence Policy Reform

Security is a prerequisite for 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 1990s. We have known social instability in the Maghreb, terrorism in the Levant and the Sahel, a war between Russia and Georgia, the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia and, most recently, an open, full-scale war of aggression by Russia against Ukraine. The latter of which destroyed the existing European Security Network, as it existed until February 2022. 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 tension 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. The Trump administration has shown that this 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 they cannot be expected to keep warranting European safety. Our security is European and requires European patronage.

A. 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 to protect the EU and its citizens by constructing a common defence system capable of dealing effectively with threats both near and far. The pooling by 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 on 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.⁴⁸ We believe that the security of European citizens takes precedence over individual nations' or 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:

(1) 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.

(2) A fully integrated defence force. Under this unique civilian command, there must be one European military force for the assurance that Europe can independently

⁴⁸ Based on a YouGov poll conducted for the Munich Security Conference. Published in the 2017 Munich Security Conference Report "More European, More Connected and More Capable", available at <http://www.eventanizer.com/MSR/european-defense/>

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, peace building, 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.

(3) 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, the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and the emergence of China as a major military power that seems willing to use its military to assert illegal territorial claims show that geopolitical conflicts between states have not ended and that the world has become 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 a UN mandate, or implement the Responsibility to Protect principle.⁴⁹ Armed forces have to simultaneously prepare for expeditionary counter-insurgent interventions (such as in 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 us to build European capacities to participate swiftly and impactfully 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.

⁴⁹ The Responsibility to Protect is a global political commitment which was endorsed by all Member States of the United Nations at the 2005 World Summit in order to address its four key concerns to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. The Responsibility to Protect is based upon the premise that sovereignty entails a responsibility to protect all populations from mass atrocity crimes and human rights violations. The principle is based on a respect for the norms and principles of international law, especially the underlying principles of law relating to sovereignty, peace and security, human rights, and armed conflict. Mandate of the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, available at <http://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/office-mandate.html#sarp>

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 will 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.

B. Democratic Decision-Making

Military actors may only act in the name of the political institutions to which they owe their loyalty. In return, these political institutions provide the military apparatus 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 Ministers for standard deployments of European military forces. In the event of an 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. To ensure this oversight, a full-fledged Committee on Security and Defence should be established in Parliament, building on the existing subcommittee, to ensure that the European 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 an 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.

C. Integrated European Defence Forces

- **Establish a European Defence Force.** The long-term goal is to have one unified European Defence Force. Currently, the EU has only an unfinished headquarters, a border control (FRONTEX), and temporary task forces. 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.⁵⁰ 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 showcase the benefits of a common defence infrastructure and policy will encourage additional EU Member States to join them. Ultimately, there will be permanent forces under a unified EU military command with a 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 the 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 across all branches. In fact, there is already a very good foundation for a European Defence Force, made up of already well-cooperative EU forces that can be deployed where necessary. Just as NATO also operates with the 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 a 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

⁵⁰ European Parliament, Implementation of the Lisbon Treaty provisions on the Common Security and Defence Policy, available at

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/573285/EPRS_BRI%282016%29573285_E_N.pdf

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 organisational 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 Parliament. (similar to the North Atlantic Council).

In the event 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 organisations 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 in a large part by logistics. International common purchases of material enable cooperation, allow synergy on both a joint and international level, and allow 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 aeroplane, one single version should be bought instead of different versions for each Member State. Exceptions to this rule must be limited to a minimum, otherwise different Member States will 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 regard 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 the procurement of new systems. Once a European Army has been established, the EDA would function as the EU's procurement agency. Exceptions must be determined at the European level only and different versions of a weapons system should only 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 means for 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 a European-wide defence force, with the ability to share best-practices between nations. Work according to [the External Action Service of the 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 to, in case of an external attack, to draft cyber security specialists to reinforce the already existing forces.

D. 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 make 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 and Defence Academies.** In order to develop 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 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. Volt encourages the traditional, military-centric security curriculum to be opened up to insights from 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 communication between national forces and avoid consequential misunderstandings.

- **Military Policy** We emphasise 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). The illegal Russian war against Ukraine has shown that it was wrong to regard an invasion of European territory as unthinkable. We should anticipate that this act of aggression in the pursuit of territorial, political, or economic benefit at the expense of the EU might not remain the only one of its kind. In such an event, the EU should not be forced to rely on the US, which, aside from at times showing wavering support for European security, has made valid remarks regarding the lack of capacity of the EU for self-defence. As such, the EU must be prepared to defend itself by itself. 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 the 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 achieve a stable peace by military means alone. The European Defence Force must be capable of responding to asymmetric and symmetric warfare, as well as stabilisation and defensive operations. Furthermore, will it embrace the CIMIC (Civilian Military Cooperation) idea for UN 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 them. Just like it is crucial that the military feels/has a strong connection to the society it is serving. Only through mutual understanding will the EDF be able to successfully fulfil its role of ensuring Europe's peace and prosperity. 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 make 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 and defence.** On the basis of the EU's Global Strategy (EUGS),⁵¹ 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 an 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.

E. Relationship with other security actors

- **Review the EU-NATO relationship.** Since nearly all EU Member 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 defence 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 defence through NATO but must develop an independent ability to defend itself. By closely coordinating with NATO, the EU would avoid

⁵¹ The EU Global Strategy was presented in June 2016 by HR/VP Federica Mogherini. Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy, available at https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf

duplication and make the Alliance stronger. In the long term, as European Defence 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 organisation. 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 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, which 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, the EDF will need to learn how to coordinate and incorporate all of the forces of the various contributing Member States that have chosen to devolve some 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, mean 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 a permanent dialogue on security-related matters between the EU and its OSCE partners, most notably Russia.

- **Strengthen military cooperation with partners worldwide.** The new European Ministry of Defence will establish multiple new relations with other security actors. These actors can be individual nations or multinational organisations. Partnerships, plans and dialogues will be established with major security actors, amongst which the EU will take a leading role. Organisations 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 organisations 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.