

1 Our priorities for 2025

2 **Boosting competitiveness, fighting illegal migration, and promoting security**

3 As EPP, we have a mandate to lead the EU. On both national and European level, we
4 received strong support. After last year's European election campaign and the
5 establishment of the European working structure, we are ready to deliver on our
6 programme thanks to greater EPP coordination at all levels, and across the three
7 institutions, European Parliament, Commission and Council. The world is in turmoil,
8 marked by Putin's war of aggression in Ukraine, the evolving situation in the Middle East,
9 an ever-more assertive China, widespread geopolitical instability and rapid
10 technological disruption. Tech billionaires are increasingly chiming in on politics and
11 extremists are dividing societies. As the EPP, however, we stand for a strong, self-
12 confident and secure Europe that offers its citizens protection, a good home and a social
13 welfare state that leaves nobody behind. Europe must set the right priorities now. 2025
14 is the year of delivery with bold and ambitious specific policy decisions towards a
15 competitive, secure and strong Europe.

16 **I. Making sure Europe regains its economic strength**

17 The EU is a strong global power. We do not hesitate to use Europe's market power to
18 ensure that Europe's producers and consumers, entrepreneurs, farmers and workers are
19 not exposed to unfair international competition. We are in favour of global trade, but we
20 shall not be naive. At the same time, we have to do our own homework. 2025 will be the
21 year in which Europe regains its competitiveness.

22 1) **We are forcefully tackling excessive bureaucracy:** We will present an action
23 plan to cut existing red tape and to avoid new bureaucratic burdens, strictly apply
24 the "one in – two out" principle and realise a one-stop shop for businesses to
25 dramatically reduce reporting costs. Small cosmetic measures will not help our
26 businesses survive the competition. We need bold, straightforward and
27 immediately implementable EU packages to cut red tape and bureaucracy across
28 all sectors and for all sizes of businesses. Businessmen and women must feel the
29 difference.

30 2) **We are launching a competitive and clean industrial deal:** We stand by the
31 Paris climate agreement and our ambitious climate goals. To succeed
32 economically and ecologically, we have to offer smart solutions, not ideological
33 ones. We need a new European industrial policy that not only focuses on the big
34 strategic priorities but also ensures each of our strategic sectors are competitive.
35 We will strongly support our industrial core made up of the car, steel and
36 chemical industries. To achieve this, we must implement a technologically open
37 approach, including for the automotive sector. We must stimulate research and
38 innovation further by eliminating legal barriers and enhancing freedom of
39 scientific research. Europe has to become the leading hub in leading innovation
40 in the key fields such as AI, tech innovation, circularity, E-Health, biotech. Rather

41 than curtailing it, our regulation and financial support should incentivize Europe's
42 traditional leading industrial sectors to embrace new innovations developed in
43 Europe. Europe has to lead the next innovation wave. Next to capital, services,
44 workers and goods, research must become the fifth freedom of exchange in
45 Europe. Investing in the diversification of supply routes to achieve energy security
46 is also crucial.

47 3) **We are strengthening the single market: the supporting pillar of our economic**
48 **power is the single market.** For this crown jewel to shine, we have to ensure a
49 level playing field and put more trust in our own entrepreneurs and offer them the
50 freedom to do what they do best: be entrepreneurs. We want to achieve this by
51 establishing a roadmap to remove obstacles in services. We will work towards an
52 SME-friendly solution on late payments. Finally, because the single market has to
53 be capable of attracting more capital, we need an action plan for the savings and
54 investments union and a roadmap to advance all three pillars.

55 4) **We are enhancing Europe's role as the leading force in world trade.** As
56 convinced market economists, we embrace economic competition in the world,
57 but this competition must be fair. Anyone who undermines fair trade with
58 nationalistic tariffs, unfair price dumping, or non-compliance with sanitary norms
59 at the expense of Europeans will face Europe's reciprocal response. We stand
60 ready to accompany the Mercosur agreement - a flagship project for more than
61 750 million consumers - with measures that address the needs of our farmers and
62 concerned sectors. We must offer a vision and a plan to strengthen the
63 transatlantic economies and address unfair, non-market practices by China that
64 harm our economic security.

65 5) **We are supporting our farmers and fishers:** EPP scored tangible success in
66 simplifying further and reducing the burden on our farmers, notably with the
67 delayed implementation of the deforestation regulation, and the outcome on the
68 Nature Restoration Law. We will continue pushing for and supporting all actions
69 to ensure that farmers receive a fair price for their products. Farmers must be
70 rewarded for their efforts to preserve our ecosystem and not blamed. To that end,
71 we will revise the unfair trading practice directive. We will also revise the wolves'
72 protection status in the Habitats directive. Equally, with the leadership of our EPP
73 Commissioner, we will work to ensure that our common fisheries policy provides
74 a good income and a long-term future to all our fishers, in particular by securing
75 sustainable and healthy marine ecosystems, which is the foundation for the long-
76 term competitiveness of the European fisheries sector.

77 **II. Ensuring a turning point in reducing irregular migration and ending**
78 **decisively the smugglers' business model**

79 In 2024, our fight against smugglers showed initial success. For example, thanks to the
80 EU-Tunisia agreement, the number of arrivals to Italy has been reduced by 2/3. In 2025,
81 we are going one step further. We are committed to tackling the increasing

82 instrumentalization of migrants. Our goal is to eliminate the organised-crime model of
83 the smuggling networks through five measures.

- 84 1) **We are accelerating the returns based on a new legal basis:** We will support
85 the revision of the outdated return directive and replace it with a new regulation
86 on returns within the next six months. In this framework, we will also support
87 proposals for return hubs outside the EU. We also support the review of the safe
88 third-country concept so that only security concerns matter, not individual
89 wishes to stay longer in the EU. We will review our trade and development
90 cooperation policies to promote third countries' cooperation and readmission.
- 91 2) **We are developing and adopting the Mediterranean Pact.** The EPP has already
92 shown that reducing illegal migration is possible. For example, the EU-Tunisia
93 Agreement already shows successful results with over 60 percent fewer irregular
94 arrivals coming from Tunisia to Italy last year compared to the previous one. Until
95 recently, we witnessed the same effect with the partnership between the EU and
96 Lebanon with nearly no irregular arrivals coming from Lebanon to Cyprus and the
97 reduced pressure of illegal border crossings on Greece's land borders also due to
98 the cooperation with Turkey, noting with concern that the Western African route
99 to the Canary Islands is the fastest growing, with record numbers of arrivals. We
100 want Europe to conclude a new partnership agreement with Mediterranean
101 countries and further strengthen existing bilateral agreements, e.g. with Egypt,
102 Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia, in order to boost economic cooperation and
103 prevent irregular migration. We must drive the smuggling gangs out of the
104 Mediterranean.
- 105 3) **We are setting the starting point for tripling the number of Frontex officials
106 and equipping them better.** Together with the border and coast guards of the
107 Member States, Frontex will ensure secure external EU borders. We support the
108 conclusions of agreements with neighbouring countries like Serbia, Bosnia and
109 Herzegovina, as well as key African countries like Mauritania and Senegal, for the
110 deployment of Frontex standing corps.
- 111 4) **We are implementing the Migration Pact fully and as swiftly as possible.** With
112 the Pact we have a unified approach to managing migration as Europeans to
113 address a common challenge. The implementation shall not affect the exercise of
114 the responsibilities incumbent upon Member States with regard to the
115 maintenance of law and order and the safeguarding of internal security. At the
116 same time, we want to improve it continuously by working on innovative solutions.

117 III. Making European security a key priority

118 Europe is under attack. Putin's war crimes in Ukraine, disinformation campaigns by
119 foreign autocrats, terrorist attacks, organised crime and hybrid warfare at our borders -
120 they all have one goal: to destroy the European way of life. Freedom and security, the rule
121 of law and defence belong together. We support the "security" priority of the Polish

122 Council Presidency under Donald Tusk's leadership. We as the EPP are the guarantor of
123 a secure Europe, in all its dimensions.

- 124 1) **We are starting a real European Defence Union** complementary to NATO: We
125 are committed to a strong NATO and also to the neutrality commitments of
126 individual Member States. Within NATO and in strong collaboration with our
127 transatlantic partners, we will significantly expand European defence efforts. We
128 will support the work on a roadmap for the creation of the internal defence
129 market. As a first step, we believe procurement rules should be made more
130 stringent, less vulnerable to foreign interference and that financing should
131 continue beyond this year, opening up new approaches to defence financing. We
132 are committed to strengthening the European Defense industrial and
133 technological base. Taking all defence spending by the Member States into
134 account, our goal is for the EU to collectively reach the 2% of GDP goal in 2025
135 and be open to higher levels for the years to come.
- 136 2) **We are taking strong action against Russian hybrid warfare.** We encourage the
137 EU and the member states to strengthen their countermeasures and protect their
138 critical infrastructure, to counter an increasingly aggressive Russia. We welcome
139 increased NATO presence in the Baltic Sea and call for tougher sanctions against
140 Russia's shadow fleet that presents both an environmental risk and acts as an
141 instrument for hybrid operations, such as cutting undersea cables.
- 142 3) **We are stepping up our fight against disinformation and digital information**
143 **warfare.** We will support a Democracy Shield, including through pilot projects, to
144 tackle disinformation across Member States. We have to implement the DSA in
145 the sharpest manner, increasing the amount of EU-wide inquiries and
146 investigations, holding tech giants to account for the promotion of content that
147 undermines democratic processes in Member States. We advocate the rapid
148 introduction on the platforms of privacy-friendly solutions for online protection,
149 such as age verification of minors through secure digital ID. We should also
150 explore solutions to end anonymity on social media platforms, leading to the
151 spread of hatred, misinformation, and conspiracy theories.
- 152 4) **We are safeguarding the rule of law, in defence of our democracy.** Without
153 democracy, there would be no European Union, and without Rule of Law,
154 democracy would be impossible. We express our deep concern about
155 developments in Hungary, Slovenia, Slovakia and Spain. The European
156 institutions have to secure the respect of the Rule of Law and the separation of
157 powers in the entire European Union and react when those principles are under
158 attack. In the same vein, we defend democracy and freedoms throughout the
159 world. We therefore denounce the consummation of the coup d'état in Venezuela
160 and the usurpation of power by the Maduro regime.
- 161 5) **We are launching a European action against organised crime.** Europe's open
162 borders serve its citizens, not criminals. Organised criminals fear an effective
163 police force and joint actions by state authorities to destroy their business
164 models. We must strengthen Europol by enlarging its mandate and inserting

- 165 enforcement and autonomous investigation powers, legally but also financially,
166 by increasing its budget and doubling its staff.
- 167 6) **We are implementing a zero-tolerance strategy towards violence and crimes**
168 **against children.** Protecting children is one of our key priorities, therefore we
169 want to finalise work on a Regulation to Prevent and Combat Child Sexual Abuse.
170 We will support the EU action plans against cyber-bullying and online child abuse
171 and for the protection of the minors. To protect the minors better in the digital
172 world, we need a Digital Fairness Act for tech companies to also take their share
173 of responsibility.
- 174 7) **We are strengthening social and health security in Europe, to respond to the**
175 **demographic challenge.** Most of the European welfare systems are Christian
176 democratic ones. For us, solidarity and responsibility go hand in hand. We believe
177 in social market economy and we think it should be strengthened and better
178 reflected in our single market. Furthermore, housing and demographic crises are
179 becoming an increasing social issue for young families, the middle class,
180 pensioners, and people with low incomes. Europe will only be seen as a home if
181 its people have a chance to live in their own homes. We need an initiative for
182 sustainable and affordable housing in Europe. In addition, health should never
183 depend on how high the income is or where one lives in Europe. We must stick to
184 our Beating Cancer and Alzheimer plan and launch new action plans on
185 cardiovascular and mental health.
- 186 8) **We are working towards effective policies against natural disasters** through
187 prevention and action. Through natural disasters, climate change threatens our
188 societies across Europe. Therefore, we must implement the necessary
189 mechanisms to protect our societies from them, while we continue to work
190 tirelessly to mitigate the effects of climate change and reinforce the European
191 civil protection force and our emergency response.
- 192 9) **We remain fully committed to a unified Cyprus.** The deadlock shall be
193 overcome and negotiations to end the 51-year-long occupation of Cyprus by
194 Turkey has to resume. The EPP remains committed to supporting the process for
195 a comprehensive, settlement of the Cyprus problem, in accordance with the
196 relevant UN Security Council resolutions and in line with EU law, values, and
197 principles. The EPP and the international community will never accept the
198 partitionist position of Turkey to create two states on the island of Cyprus.