

DRAFT

A NEW STRATEGIC AGENDA 2019-2024

In recent years the world has become increasingly unsettled, complex and subject to rapid change. That creates both new opportunities and challenges. The EU will have to adapt to this changing environment and deliver a determined and focused response. This is the only effective way to safeguard the interests of our citizens, businesses and societies.

This Strategic Agenda provides an overall framework and direction for that response. It is intended to guide the work of the Institutions in the next five years. It focuses on four main priorities:

- protecting citizens and freedoms
- developing a strong and vibrant economic base
- building a more climate-friendly, green, fair and inclusive future
- defending European interests and values on the global stage.

Lastly, it sets out how to deliver on those priorities.

Protecting citizens and freedoms

Europe must be a place where people feel free and safe. The EU shall protect its citizens against existing and emerging threats, and defend their rights and freedoms.

First and foremost we must ensure the integrity of our physical space. We need to know and be the ones to decide who sets foot on EU territory. Effective control of the external border is an absolute prerequisite for upholding law and order, and for ensuring properly functioning EU policies.

We will continue and deepen our cooperation with countries of origin and transit to fight illegal migration. And we are determined to find a way through on internal migration and asylum policy.

We will build on and strengthen our fight against terrorism and cross-border crime, improving cooperation and information sharing, and further developing our common instruments.

We will take the necessary steps to ensure proper functioning of Schengen.

We will increase the EU's resilience against both natural and man-made disasters. Active solidarity and the pooling of resources are key in this respect.

Our democratic and societal model must be protected from cyber attacks and hybrid warfare originating both from criminal gangs and from hostile State and non-State actors. Addressing such threats requires more cooperation, more resources and more technological capacities.

We need to fight the destabilising effects of disinformation and better engage with citizens, civil society and social partners, as well as with regional and local actors.

Individual rights must be safeguarded. Our common values are the foundation of European freedom, security and prosperity. The rule of law, with its crucial role in all our democracies, is a key guarantor that these values are well protected and must therefore be fully respected by all Member States and the EU.

Developing our economic base: the European model for the future

A strong economic base is of key importance for Europe's competitiveness, prosperity and role on the global stage and for the creation of jobs. In the context of the current reshaping of the global landscape, shaken by unprecedented technological, security and sustainability challenges, we need to renew the basis for long-term growth in the EU. We also need to achieve the convergence of our economies.

The Single Market in all its dimensions is a key asset in that regard. The EU cannot afford to under-utilise the potential of a market of half a billion people, particularly in the area of services. Short-term difficulties cannot be invoked as an argument against a long-term strategy that is bold, comprehensive, and forward looking.

Over the next few years, the digital transformation will further accelerate and have far-reaching effects. We need to ensure that Europe obtains its fair share of the benefits of this development and shapes it in such a way that it embodies our societal values and remains compatible with our way of life.

To this end, the EU must work on all aspects of the digital revolution and artificial intelligence: infrastructure, connectivity, services, data, regulation and investment. This has to be accompanied by the development of the service economy and the mainstreaming of digital services.

There is a need for a more ambitious, comprehensive and coordinated industrial policy. This should go hand in hand with the further development of the Single Market. The EU needs both, and needs them urgently.

At the same time, the EU must step up investment in people's skills and education, do more to foster innovation and increase research efforts, in particular by addressing the fragmentation of European research, development and innovation. Investing in our future also means encouraging and supporting public and private investment, including in infrastructure, to finance the growth of our economy and our businesses, including SMEs.

In a world where common rules and standards are increasingly questioned, it will be vital to promote a level playing field, including in the area of trade. This means ensuring fair competition within the EU and on the global stage, fighting unfair practices and security risks from third countries, and securing our strategic supply chains.

To maximise our impact, we need a more integrated approach connecting all relevant policies and dimensions: deepening and strengthening the Single Market, designing an industrial strategy fit for the future, and ensuring fair and effective taxation. We must also ensure that the euro works for our citizens and remains sustainable, deepening the Economic and Monetary Union, completing the Banking and Capitals Markets Union and strengthening the international role of the euro.

Building a more climate-friendly, green, fair and inclusive future

Europe needs inclusiveness and sustainability, embracing the changes brought about by the green transition, technological evolution and globalisation while making sure no-one is left behind.

As the effects of climate change become more visible and pervasive, we urgently need to step up our action to manage this existential threat. The EU can and must lead the way, by engaging in an in-depth transformation of its own economy and society to achieve climate neutrality. This will have to be conducted in a way that takes account of national circumstances and is socially just.

The climate transition will afford us a real opportunity to modernise and at the same time to become a global leader in a green economy. Our policies should be consistent with the Paris Agreement. The EU cannot be the only one to act: all countries should move forward and step up their climate action.

The success of the green transition will depend on having an effective circular economy, and an integrated, interconnected and properly functioning European energy market that provides sustainable, secure and affordable energy. The EU will accelerate the transition to renewables, reduce dependence on outside sources, and invest in solutions for the mobility of the future.

In parallel, we must continue to improve the environment in our cities and our countryside, and enhance the quality of our air and waters. We will lead efforts to fight the loss of biodiversity and preserve environmental systems, including oceans.

Change towards a greener, fairer and more inclusive future will entail short-term costs and challenges. That is why it is so important to accompany the change and to help communities and individuals adjust to the new world.

Inequalities, which affect young people in particular, pose a major political, social and economic risk; generational and educational divides are developing and new forms of exclusion emerging. It is our duty to provide opportunities for all. We need to do more to ensure gender equality, which is both a societal imperative and an economic asset.

Adequate social protection, inclusive labour markets and the promotion of cohesion will help Europe preserve its way of life, as will a high level of consumer protection, good access to healthcare and significant investment in culture and in our cultural heritage.

Promoting Europe's interests and values in the world

In a world of increasing uncertainty, complexity and change, the EU needs to set itself a strategic course of action to defend its interests, uphold its values and way of life, and help shape the global future.

The EU must continue to stand up for multilateralism and the global rules-based international order. At the same time we will be open to reform, ensuring openness and fairness.

The EU should use its influence to lead the response to global challenges, by showing the way forward in the fight against climate change, promoting sustainable development and cooperating with partner countries on migration.

The EU should promote its own unique model of cooperation as inspiration for others. A dynamic neighbourhood policy, coupled with a readiness to keep the door open for those willing and able to join the family, are major ingredients of that model. Together with global partners sharing our values, the EU will continue to work towards global peace and stability, and to promote democracy and human rights.

But to defend its interests and values effectively, and help shape the new global environment, the EU needs to be more assertive and more powerful. This requires us to be more united in the

stances we take, and more determined and effective in exerting our influence. It also means making more resources available and better using those we already have at our disposal. And it means giving a clearer priority to European economic, political and security interests, leveraging all policies to that end.

A robust, ambitious and balanced trade policy based on reciprocity and mutual benefits is a central element in that respect, both at the multilateral level and in the bilateral relations between the EU and its partners.

The EU's CFSP and CSDP must become more responsive and active and be better linked to the other strands of external relations. The EU also needs to take greater collective responsibility for its own security and defence, by boosting European defence investment and cooperation, in particular with NATO.

Relations with strategic partners and emerging powers have to be a key component of a robust foreign policy. To that end, there need to be far more synergies between the EU and the bilateral levels. The EU can only engage with other global powers on an equal footing if it avoids a piecemeal approach and presents a united front, backed up by EU and Member State resources.

Delivering on our priorities

For the EU to be effective, our Institutions must focus on what really matters. The EU must be big on big and small on small. It must leave economic and social actors the space to breathe, to create and to innovate.

The EU must also address internal and external challenges in an integrated manner. For external action to be effective, we need a strong internal economic base.

Good governance depends on rigorous implementation and enforcement of policies decided and rules accepted. Our Institutions will ensure this in accordance with the spirit and the letter of the Treaties. They will respect the principles of democracy, rule of law, transparency and equality between citizens and between Member States.

Institutions and Member States must work side by side and use their considerable resources in a joint endeavour, and the diverse talents of regional and local actors should be harnessed for the benefit of the overall effort.

This Strategic Agenda is the first step in a process that will be taken forward by the Institutions. The European Council will follow the implementation of these priorities closely and will define further general political directions and priorities as necessary.
