

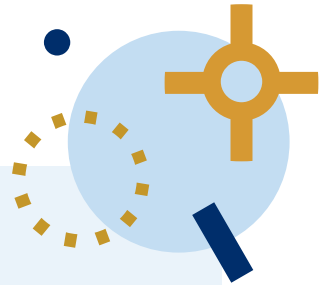
Solutions for the EU

From a regulatory powerhouse to a superpower
of growth and competitiveness



FINLAND
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

PRIORITIES FOR THE EU IN 2024–2029



- 1.** Effective implementation of the recent legislation will create growth
- 2.** Next steps of Green Deal need more technology neutrality and market economy
- 3.** EU needs competitiveness – Single Market must be strengthened
- 4.** Skilled EU and more workforce
- 5.** Effective Trade Policies – The Role of the EU in changing geopolitical landscape
- 6.** Safe, enlarging EU

INTRODUCTION

The EU is at a turning point. In the coming years, Europe will compete globally for investments, skilled workforce, technological leadership and raw materials. Success in the competition requires that the EU draws on its own strengths and ensures the functioning of the EU's internal market. The EU's internal state aid competition must be returned to common rules of the game, and trade barriers hindering the internal market must continue to be dismantled. As protectionism rears its head globally, the EU must continue its active trade policy and open markets for European companies.

The most important task for the next European Commission is to secure the EU's strategic competitiveness and growth.



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EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECENT LEGISLATION WILL CREATE GROWTH

The European Green Deal has been quite a success. Setting ambitious climate targets has been necessary for the survival of our planet and the EU is the right actor to lead the change that amounts to an industrial revolution.

However, setting ambitious targets to reach carbon neutrality by 2050 has unleashed a wave of legislation to get there. Since the European Commission's communication on Green Deal in December 2019, the Commission has generated an expansive amount of regulation that is very complicated and expensive to implement for the member states and European companies. In many cases, implementing EU legislation requires companies to make new investments, to change operational systems, to update technology, to increase compliance and reporting or to reskill staff.

Green Deal's aim is to build a growth strategy for Europe. Green Deal pursues to transform European economy into a modern, competitive and carbon neutral economy that uses its resources wisely and efficiently. If executed correctly, European companies and citizens will benefit from transition into a more sustainable economic growth.

For the Green Deal to reach its growth targets, it is necessary for the European Commission to cut down on producing new legislation and to focus on successful and effective implementation of the recent legislation. European companies need time to figure out the implications that the already decided regulation will spur on their businesses, time to adjust their operations and to make the investments needed.

Europe needs growth and competitiveness. EU growth forecasts remain low compared to other major and emerging global economies and Europe is facing multiple challenges that are testing the strength of its economy and its competitiveness. It should be the main task of the next European Commission to ensure that Europe will prosper and to oversee the effective implementation of the recent legislation.

Regulation that affects conducting business in Europe should be clear, predictable, proportionate and competition and technology neutral. It should favor and encourage innovations.

OVERLAPPING LEGISLATION NEEDS STREAMLINING

Addressing overlapping regulation is a crucial aspect of effective policy implementation. In the context of the European Green Deal, streamlining and harmonizing environmental regulations across member states can enhance efficiency and reduce administrative burdens.

Regulatory overlap of some of the recent legislation might lead to overlapping jurisdiction to some administrative agencies. This will lead to duplicative or conflicting demands for reporting which is inefficient and burdensome to European companies. Coordination among various regulatory bodies is essential to avoid conflicting rules and ensure a cohesive approach toward sustainability goals.

During the next five years, the European Commission should focus on streamlining regulation. It should aim to find regulatory synergy. The regulatory discontinuities should be smoothed over and the coherence of the legislation should be ensured.

REDUCING REPORTING OBLIGATIONS BY 25 %

It is necessary for the Commission to continue its work on reducing companies' reporting obligations at the European level by 25 percent. So far there are no signs of reduced reporting burden. Complex and heavy administration means that European companies have less time to innovate and to seek opportunities to grow. As Ursula von Der Leyen announced in the State of the Union speech in 2023: it is time to make business easier in Europe!

The Commission should undertake an overall mapping of reporting requirements across all Directorates-General, including reporting required by supervisory authorities. On the basis of such mapping, overlaps and inconsistencies should be addressed and minimized. For example, sustainability-related information is

currently required to be reported in several pieces of legislative acts, and such reporting requirements are not always consistent with the information required by the European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS).

We also wish to stress the importance of once-only principle in reporting. The supervisory authorities should be required to use information that has already been filed with the authority, especially in cases where such information has been filed in digital form. Even though digitalization of reporting has many benefits, attention should be paid to how burdensome such reporting may be. For example, machine-readable reporting, such as the European Single Electronic Format (ESEF) for annual financial reports of listed companies, often requires significant amount of manual work and thus adds the reporting burden of companies.

With regard to planned new reporting requirements, we stress the importance of proper impact assessments and sufficient transition periods. Impact assessments too often disregard other legislative initiatives either being currently negotiated or already agreed but not yet applied. Regarding transition periods, it is too often the case that the deadlines for both the application of reporting requirements and the adoption of delegated acts specifying the information to be reported are specified in the legislative act approved by the European Parliament and the Council, but due to delays in the adoption of the delegated act the transition time for companies is reduced. The entry into force of the reporting requirements should therefore take place only after delegated acts specifying the reporting requirements have been adopted and companies have had sufficient time to prepare for such requirements.

- **Next EU Commission must cut down in producing new legislation – Businesses need time to implement recent legislation**
- **Overlapping legislation needs to be streamlined**
- **Reporting obligations need to be reduced by 25 % - reductions are not seen by businesses yet**
- **Better regulation - proper impact assessments and sufficient transition periods are needed**



NEXT STEPS OF GREEN DEAL NEED MORE MARKET ECONOMY AND TECHNOLOGY NEUTRALITY

The EU's goal of climate neutrality by 2050 must be supported. It is in the interest of all European companies that the EU pursues an ambitious climate policy in the coming years. Sustainable growth and the green transition are drivers of growth, and Europe must be a place where solutions for a more sustainable future are created for other countries in the world as well.

On the way to becoming climate neutral by 2050, the EU has previously set a goal of reducing emissions by 55 percent by 2030. In February 2024, the European Commission issued a communication on climate goals for 2040. As expected, the Commission recommended a 90 percent emission reduction target for 2040 compared to 1990. The communication starts the next phase of the EU's climate and energy policy. The actual bill on the 2040 climate goals will be left to the next commission.

It is good that the Commission recognized in the communication more strongly than before the importance of all technologies such as nuclear energy, carbon dioxide recovery and biomaterials in achieving the climate goals. The starting point of the future climate policy must be technology neutrality and cost-effective and market-based emission reductions.

Achieving the EU's climate goals requires substantial investments, which must be made mostly with private money. Therefore, the path to the goals must be built in such a way that the competitiveness of the EU is strengthened and member states can use a wider range of means to reduce emissions. In many European countries, such as Finland, significant green transition investments are planned. Climate policy must support the realization of investments and the EU's competitiveness.

- **EU's climate policies need to be technology neutral. The EU cannot pick winning technologies.**
- **Climate policy also needs to be driven by cost efficiency and market economy.**
- **Member states must be able to use wider range of means to reduce emissions.**
- **Nuclear energy and technical carbon sinks must be included in the toolbox.**

REACHING EMISSION TARGETS IN TRANSPORTATION PLAYS A KEY ROLE

Success in the emission targets of transport, especially road transport, largely determines the achievement of the emission targets. The key to success in the field of transport is ensuring the availability of affordable fossil-free energy and fuel options. In this effort, the different rhythms of different forms of traffic and transport in the energy transition must be taken into account. In addition, considerable investments are needed to secure Europe's energy self-sufficiency. Local production and distribution of energy can play a key role in supplementing our current energy system.

The electrification of land transport modes requires a considerable investment from the future commission, especially with regard to the development of the charging network. From the point of view of the European economy, it is very important that the change in the driving force of traffic is carried out cost-effectively and by producing new innovative and intelligent solutions, and especially by making use of European know-how.

The provision of reliable information about the availability of charging points and the introduction of advanced driving management tools are critical factors, especially in the electrification of heavy traffic. In the short and medium term, the electrification of transport must continue to be the number one priority, but

at the same time the EU must create a vision for the coming decades and start drawing up a road map for the next steps after electrification.

The EU also needs a strategy to support the use of sustainable aviation fuels in order to ensure a level playing field compared to non-European airlines.

In heavy traffic as well as sea and air traffic, considerable energy savings and thus reductions in CO₂ emissions can be achieved by promoting and enabling energy optimization and efficiency solutions. Providing research, development and innovation support and incentives for the widespread adoption of these readily available solutions could facilitate and accelerate the achievement of our common goals. In addition, the promotion of traffic automation is essential. Automation regulation requires a practical approach that supports technical development and innovation.

The movement of information, people and goods is a prerequisite for good everyday life and international competitiveness. Of all the industries, the transport sector is one of the biggest areas of change, as the sector simultaneously becomes electrified, digitized, automated and serviced intensively.

Building a future-proof transport system is one of the big tasks of the future commission. At the same time, the change is a significant opportunity for digital green expertise. Europe's opportunities in digital traffic are supported by a strong competence base built up in recent decades, especially in mobile and online services, as well as legislation supporting new services and automation. By utilizing our expertise in solutions for digitized and electrified transport, we can achieve strict emission reduction targets in transport, promote the development of cities and rural vitality, and increase jobs and exports for our companies.

The digitalisation of traffic is no longer just a support measure, it is an essential part of the core work. Smart traffic and traffic digitization must be involved better than at present both in the development of transport networks and in ensuring daily trafficability. With the increased availability of data and advanced tools utilizing artificial intelligence, much more complex analyzes of the use and demand of transport systems can be made than before.

Digital solutions must be built into all transport industry plans and funding. Digitalisation and the data economy are the fastest way to improve European

resilience in challenging and rapidly changing situations now and in the future. Investments are needed to improve data interoperability, quality and utilisation, digital infrastructure, transparency and standardization of data reserves, and system interface solutions.

- **The key to success in reaching emission targets in transportation is ensuring the availability of affordable fossil-free energy and fuel options.**
- **The electrification of land transport modes requires a considerable investment for the development of the charging network.**
- **The EU needs a strategy to support the use of sustainable aviation fuels in order to ensure a level playing field compared to non-European airlines.**
- **Providing research, development and innovation support and incentives for the widespread adoption of readily available energy optimization and efficiency solutions could facilitate and accelerate the achievement of our common goals.**
- **Building a future-proof transport system is one of the big tasks of the future commission. The digitalisation of traffic is no longer just a support measure, it is an essential part of the core work.**



EU NEEDS COMPETITIVENESS – STRENGTHENING THE SINGLE MARKET WILL CREATE GROWTH AND COMPETITIVENESS

Strategic competitiveness is the most important goal of the next European Commission. After many years of crisis, it must be ensured that the competitiveness of the EU is strengthened. A united, competitive EU guarantees growth and success for all member states.

In the coming years, Europe will compete globally for investments, skilled labor, technological leadership and raw materials. Succeeding in the competition requires that the EU's single market works and that the playing field between EU member states and companies is as equal as possible.

The single market is the EU's undeniable success story that has boosted European economy and attracted businesses. Four freedoms of the EU Treaty: free movement of goods, services, capital and people have created a home market of almost 450 million consumers for companies in the EU. The EU's GDP is over 14 percent of the world's GDP. The single market was established to strengthen European integration by eliminating trade barriers, ensuring fair competition, and promoting cooperation and solidarity among member states.

SINGLE MARKET MUST BE RENEWED AND DIGITAL SINGLE MARKET DEEPENED

After three decades, the European single market still needs strengthening. First of all, the single market is an ongoing, developing project that will never be completed. Secondly, the geopolitical landscape has profoundly changed and highlighted the need to reflect the state of the single market in the context of the current international business environment.

A real European level-playing field for businesses is needed. We still have structural regulatory obstacles and technical barriers that continue to hold businesses back. They need to be removed.

The increasing shift from goods production to services has had drastic implications for the economic leadership of European companies. Europe is underperforming and the USA and China are setting the pace when it comes to the digital economy and future-oriented technologies.

The European Commission should assess the competitiveness of Europe's digital operating and regulatory environment and take the measures needed to increase EU's competitiveness. It should especially focus on digital services and developing data economy infrastructure.

STATE SUBSIDIES NEED LIMITS

At the moment, large state subsidies fragment single market and threaten to break it. After the covid pandemia, European economies needed recovery measures. This led to flexibility in the EU's state aid rules and a shared RRF-package. As the Europe was still recovering, the Russian war on Ukraine led to further economic issues as well as the need to minimize Europe's energy dependence on Russia. At the same time, global competition for green transition investments intensified as the USA introduced its IRA package. Advancing green investments leaped to the top of the European agenda and the flexibility of EU's state aid rules was continued. Since then, various EU countries have responded to the state subsidy competition with large, targeted national subsidies.

The situation damages the EU's single market. Unity erodes, especially when smaller member states such as Finland do not have the opportunity to compete in state aid with the larger EU member states. At the same time, state aid competition weakens competition and functioning of market economy.

In a current geopolitical landscape where state subsidies and protectionism are quickly replacing market economy, it is understandable for the EU and its member states to rethink its economic foundations. But instead of replicating the protectionist ways to behave in the other countries and trying to compete with state subsidies, the EU should draw on its unquestionable strengths: a free single market, limits on state subsidies and effective trade policy.

The EU needs to return to stricter state aid rules and ensure an equal operating environment for its member states. The EU needs more market economy, less state subsidies.

The way forward for Europe is strategic, but open market economy. It is important for the EU to have reduced dependence on external actors, the ability to pursue policies according to its own interests and the ability to build better resilience in the rapidly changing global economy.

- **EU needs to return to stricter state aid rules and ensure an equal operating environment for its member states.**
- **Technical barriers to trade must be dismantled and standardization promoted**
- **The digital single market and the free movement of services should be promoted**
- **Capital market union must be further developed**
- **Strategic autonomy must be strengthened, but protectionism avoided**



SKILLED EUROPE – CONTINENT OF RESILIENT AND FUTURE MINDED PEOPLE

It's time to steer Europe towards a future-oriented, innovative direction that attracts new talents and international companies to establish themselves in the region. This requires a shift away from a parochial and aging Europe towards a dynamic and multicultural Europe.

The shrinking and aging population pose a threat to the dependency ratio across Europe. Europe needs skilled individuals to keep our societies functioning and to fill positions across all professions.

In the upcoming term, the European Union must invest more strongly in promoting the mobility of labor and students, as well as in raising the level of education in its member states. Promoting mobility requires better recognition of skills and qualifications. Workforce availability is a key factor for Europe's competitiveness. For instance, in Finland, 60% of companies suffer from a shortage of skilled workers. Therefore, the EU should place greater emphasis on the positive opportunities for businesses and economic growth brought about by skills-based immigration.

Migration and effective integration are one solution to the concerning demographic trends and labor shortages. Now that EU countries have managed to reach an agreement on a migration package, it is high time to invest in cooperation among member states on how to promote positive, skills-based migration in the region, considering labor shortages in many sectors across the EU. As part of these efforts, it is crucial to strengthen common practices in recognizing and acknowledging prior skills and to explore ways to leverage the skills and language proficiency of immigrants more broadly. Sharing good experiences and lessons learned among EU countries, for example, regarding various entry and settlement practices, types of residence permits, and ways to support genuine inclusion of immigrants into society, is essential.

To address the skills shortage, **the attractiveness and flexibility of vocational education** in choosing and completing studies need to be enhanced across the entire European region. Strengthening skills doesn't always require completing a full degree. **The opportunities for completing smaller skill sets** should be increased across Europe, and previous studies and acquired skills from another EU country should be better recognized and integrated into education and qualifications.

Smoother recognition of skills would also promote student mobility within the EU and could encourage participation in student exchanges. Currently, the popularity of student exchanges has declined significantly. European countries and universities should collectively strengthen principles for incorporating studies completed during student exchanges into degrees. Additionally, shorter internationalization periods should be developed alongside longer student exchanges, which would be directly recognized as credit towards the degree.

The EU's success in accelerating global competition requires **the strengthening of research and development** in the region. Taking bold steps to utilize new innovations and growth opportunities is essential. Therefore, the focus of funding should shift towards high-quality research, development, and innovation efforts, enabling Europe to become the most attractive and strongest hub of expertise globally.

- **EU-level strategy for skills-based immigration needs to be established.**
- **Opportunities to complete small skill sets should be improved across the entire European region.**
- **There should be better comparability and recognition of qualifications and studies completed in different EU countries and outside of the EU.**
- **More diverse models alongside the current Erasmus exchange program must be developed, allowing students and young people to gain international experience.**
- **The EU must shift the focus of funding towards high-quality research, development, and innovation efforts.**



THE EUROPEAN UNION'S ROLE IN THE CHANGING GEOECONOMIC LANDSCAPE

In the shimmering aftermath of the Cold War, the Western liberal democracy was believed to become the dominant global narrative. However, a quarter of a century later, this optimism seems misplaced as we are witnessing a remarkable shift from open globalization to a more fragmented and protectionist world order.

The world is increasingly seeing a weaponization of its core elements: trade, economy, resources, and raw materials. Countries, especially major powers, are using these elements not just for economic benefit but for strategic and political gains. This shift towards 'gloeconomics' indicates that economic strategies are being deployed for geopolitical ends and gloeconomics is reshaping the landscape of international relations.

Parallel to this rise in gloeconomic strategies is a decline in multilateralism. Institutions like the United Nations and World Trade Organization once seen as pillars of a cooperative global order, are now facing challenges to their legitimacy and efficacy. The world seems to be in a retreat from these multilateral institutions, as regional blocs and bilateral agreements become more prominent.

EUROPE'S ROLE IN A FRACTURING WORLD

The EU finds itself at a unique crossroads. On one hand, it's a product of post-war liberal ideals, and on the other, it's facing the pressures of this new gloeconomic age. How should the EU navigate this turbulent landscape?

Firstly, the EU, with its considerable economic weight, can play a pivotal role in preserving the multilateral order. By actively supporting and reforming institutions like the UN and WTO, the EU can ensure that these organizations remain relevant and effective in the face of emerging challenges.

Secondly, The EU should align with democracies and market economies globally to form a robust coalition against protectionism and geoeconomic power plays. We need to strengthen a global order based on shared values, free markets, and mutual respect by cooperating with the like-minded.

The United States is the most important partner in the Democracies and Market Economies. Therefore, the European Union needs to work closely with the new US administration to reshape the transatlantic relationship. Focus on areas of common interest while addressing differences constructively. Trade and Technology Council is a useful tool to solve practical problems, but we need more. We need a new Transatlantic Political and Strategic Pact. A strengthened US-EU alliance that can effectively influence global affairs.

THE EU MUST DIVERSIFY ITS ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIPS

In the wake of Sino-American duel, the European Union must develop strategic partnerships in Africa, Asia, and the Americas, promoting cooperation, shared values, and mutual benefits. To be truly sovereign and independent, Europe needs to reduce over-reliance on any single economic partner and enhance EU's global outreach. Trade Deals of all kinds are a best tool to promote these partnerships.

The EU needs to recognize China's influence while also promoting European values. We need to engage in dialogues that focus on mutual benefits and respect, addressing issues like trade, technology, and human rights. Europe needs to have a stake in shaping global narratives and doesn't become a mere spectator in the US-China rivalry.

Regaining a digital sovereignty and technological leadership is important. The Europe needs to invest in research and development, promoting innovation in critical technological sectors like AI, quantum computing, and green technologies. On top of the innovation, we need to invest. Europe shouldn't be left behind in the technological race. We need to remain as a leader in setting global tech standards.

LEADING THE WAY FORWARD

While challenges abound, they also present opportunities. The EU must recognize the inherent strengths in its model. The EU has a unique chance to lead by example, showing that cooperation, multilateralism, and shared values can still shape the world order. By actively championing these principles, the EU can not only safeguard its interests but also carve a path for a more inclusive and cooperative global future.

With strategic foresight, astute diplomacy, and a commitment to shared values, the liberal order can adapt and thrive in this new geoeconomic age. The EU, with its rich history and shared ideals, is perfectly poised to lead the way.

- **Reassert multilateralism.** By actively supporting and reforming institutions like the UN and WTO, the EU can ensure that these organizations remain relevant and effective.
- **Align with democracies and market economies globally** to form a robust coalition against protectionism and geoeconomic power plays.
- **The EU needs to work closely with the new US administration** to reshape the transatlantic relationship.
- **Diversify economic partnerships.** Trade Deals are a best tool to promote these partnerships.
- **The EU needs to recognize China's influence** while also promoting European values.
- **Regaining a Digital Sovereignty and Technological Leadership** is important.



SAFE, ENLARGING EU

Europe needs to strengthen its defence and military arm. We need to be better prepared to ensure our security independently, while not undermining the role of the NATO as the guarantor of peace and stability in Europe.

As stated in a new European Defence Industrial Strategy, the EU must be better prepared to protect the security of its citizens, the integrity of its territory and critical assets or infrastructures, and its core democratic values and processes. This includes an ability to provide military assistance to its partners, such as Ukraine. A strong EU defence industry is an essential pre-requisite to achieve defence readiness.

The EU must support Ukraine as much as Ukraine needs to win the war. The support must be quickly process when needed. To be able to offer sufficient military support to Ukraine, The European defence industry needs to be boosted. Member states must continue to increase their efforts to invest more in defence spending as well increase investing collaboratively.

At the same time, crisis management and diplomacy are the best tools to prevent and manage any security threats. Therefore we need also to be ready play a better role in mediating global crises, such as the Ukraine war, when the time is right. We need to strengthen diplomatic ties and use the EU's vast soft power more effectively. Establish the EU as a credible and influential peace broker on the global stage.

CASE FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION'S ENLARGEMENT TO UKRAINE, WESTERN BALKANS, MOLDOVA, AND BEYOND

The EU has been a great success story, despite its flaws and momentary inaction. As a democracy and market economy itself, the European Union is a self-correcting entity that has been able to create peace and prosperity within. The enlargements have been part of the EU's DNA and a substantive part of its overall success. After a decade, we need to restart this success story to bring stability and economic growth in Europe. We look closer into these benefits in the next section.

The European Union's enlargement to include Ukraine, Western Balkans, Moldova, and eventually countries beyond, is not just about expanding its territorial reach. It's about creating a larger, more cohesive, and resilient European community that can stand as a beacon of stability, prosperity, and democratic values in an increasingly fragmented world. The enlargement process, while challenging, carries the potential for tremendous benefits both for the EU and the nations that join it.

STABILITY AND SECURITY

The bigger European Union is a bigger conflict deterrence. The EU's enlargement can act as a deterrent against potential conflicts. As seen in the past, EU integration processes have often provided incentives for countries to resolve their territorial and border disputes.

Welcoming new members can help the EU to counterbalance the increasing influence of external powers, like Russia and China, and ensure a buffer against potential geopolitical threats. Also by fostering economic development, social cohesion, and political stability through EU membership, the risks of radicalization and extremism in these countries can be significantly reduced.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS

Enlarging the EU would lead to a more significant common market, which can boost trade, investment, and economic growth. These new regions have varied

resources, both natural and human. Their integration can diversify the EU's resource base, making it more resilient to external shocks.

The EU investments in these countries can lead to improved infrastructure, thereby creating a more interconnected and cohesive European continent. The history of global wealth is a history of logistics and infrastructure. It is not coincidence that China had its Road and Belt Initiative. The European tools as Connecting Europe Facility has brought similar gains regionally.

DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION

As countries align with EU standards, they undergo reforms that promote democracy, human rights, rule of law, and minority protection. The enlargement process necessitates strengthening institutions, reducing corruption, and improving governance, which can be beneficial for the long-term stability of these nations.

The EU promotes active civil society engagement, which can further democratize these nations and ensure people-centric policies. Even as we have seen derogation from these principles in some European Union's member States, the situation would've been worse without the EU. And as some recent elections show us, the tide will eventually turn in the countries able to uphold democratic institutions with the support of the European Union.

Many of the regions have historical and cultural ties with present EU member states. Their integration can be seen as a natural progression of uniting Europe. A larger, more diverse European Union can wield more considerable cultural and soft power globally, promoting European values and ideals more effectively.

ENHANCED GLOBAL STANDING

With more nations under its banner, the EU would have a louder and more unified voice in global affairs, further solidifying its position as a major global player. Enlargement can serve as a testament to the EU's collaborative approach in international relations, providing a stark contrast to zero-sum geopolitics. Having a stronger voice requires the European Union to shift to majority decision-making also in the Foreign Affairs. The enlarged EU cannot be held as a hostage of one of a very few Governments playing advancing their own domestic or international agendas.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND ENERGY COOPERATION

We have only one planet. Climate action and preserving biodiversity are our shared goals. Saving the planet it from imminent threats future requires common action. Energy policy is tightly linked to Climate policy. At the same time energy policy has become an important security issue. New regions can diversify the EU's energy sources, reducing its dependency on external providers and bolstering energy security. A larger union can lead to more collaborative handling of shared resources, especially water bodies, forests, and air.

FUTURE GROWTH AND EXPANSION

Successful integration can act as an advertisement for the EU model of governance and cooperation, drawing more nations into its fold in the long run. By integrating new members, the EU sets a precedent for future expansions, thereby creating a roadmap for other nations aspiring to join. We need to be a Union that attracts to join, promoting the internal democratic development in the countries around us. Let's continue this success story.

- **Europe needs to strengthen its defence and military preparedness.**
- **A strong EU defence industry is an essential pre-requisite to achieve defence readiness. The European defence industry must be boosted.**
- **Support for Ukraine must be sufficient and quickly processed when needed.**
- **The European Union's enlargement including Ukraine, Western Balkans, Moldova, and eventually countries beyond must be promoted and supported.**

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