



OSTEND declaration

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We've been warned. If we do not reform Europe, the continent will undergo a "slow agony". So says Mario Draghi in his report on the future of European competitiveness. His words echoed with us, Renew Europe MEPs, assembled in Ostend. His report takes up many of the ideas Renew Europe has long campaigned for. It is a manifesto against declinism. It offers solutions, opportunity and hope. It offers a platform to renew Europe.

We stand ready together as the pro-europeans in the European Parliament to champion the ideas of Mario Draghi. We will work hand in hand with a Von der Leyen college that embraces his program. We send this message to the new Commission: "Draghi: just do it".

We call on Pro-European forces to reaffirm their commitment to renew the European project. The future of Europe will be crafted by the political centre, not the extremes. Our beliefs extend beyond the forthcoming parliamentary hearings, they are our Group's liberal and democratic DNA, now and in the future.

Implementing the Draghi agenda means selecting a College of the European interest. In this regard, we, Renew Europe, will judge the commissioner-designates and set our priorities for the first 100 days of the new College of Commissioners.

Our criterion for the selection process of the next Commissioners is simple: adherence to both the letter and the spirit of the Treaties.

The Treaty on the European Union says Commissioners must be chosen on the basis of their general competence. We will ask them to show the utmost competence and integrity over their portfolio but also have a clear vision for it. The Treaty also says that Commissioners should show European commitment. We will ask them to confirm they are firm believers in the further integration of the EU as a political project. The Treaty says Commissioners shall be completely independent. We will ask them to never nationalise European politics but instead Europeanise national issues.

The Treaty says that Commissioners have political responsibility and the Commission is accountable to the European Parliament. We will insist that Commissioners respect Parliament, in attending debates, moderating legislative negotiations and answering questions substantially. We will ask Commissioner-candidates to show pro-active commitment in defending the EU values enshrined in Article 2 of the Treaty, the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the conventions to which the EU is party, especially the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women. We strongly defend the gender balance principle in the composition of the Commission. Finally, the Treaty says the Commission serves the general interest. We will ask it to embrace 'ever closer union' and commit to reforming the institutions of the Union by supporting the Parliament's proposal to amend the Treaty.

Our criteria for the first 100 days policy platform of the new Commission are: liberty, prosperity and security.

Liberty

Freedom is at the very essence of the EU. But as some parts of Europe slide into autocracy, we must now insist on freedom's twin concept: liberty. Freedom is the right to act, make choices and take responsibility for it, while liberty is the state of being free from oppressive restrictions on one's way of life. To preserve liberty, the Renew Europe group believes that a solid arsenal of measures must be deployed by the next Commission to guarantee certain basic rights and to protect and restore the Rule of Law where it has been damaged. Our democracies must be shielded from and be able to fight malign interference.

We therefore ask the future College to commit to defend our fundamental values, ensure the independence of judicial institutions; protect media, cultural and artistic freedom in all Member States; extend the scope of the Rule of Law conditionality mechanism and speed- up its implementation; include the right to abortion in the EU Charter of fundamental rights; ban "conversion therapies" and introduce the recognition of same- sex marriages, civil partnerships and parenthood across the EU; introduce a harmonised definition of "rape" based on the lack of consent; guarantee that the EU does anything in its power to uphold, defend and promote human rights within its own Member States and in third countries; monitor closely the strict implementation

of the Asylum and Migration Pact; ensure effective return and readmission policies; investment in strategic partnerships with third countries of origin or transit; defend the Schengen principles.

Prosperity

We are starting to trail behind our global competitors. The next Commission must focus on laying the foundations for our companies to regain their competitive edge and ensure a just, strong, and open resilient economy -- our strategic autonomy is at stake. We ask the future College to launch a New European Industrial Deal and a Competitiveness Act; build a stronger Digital Market and a strategy for open AI; commit clearly to easing the administrative burden by cutting red tape and simplifying and codifying EU corporate rules, with a special focus on SMEs; developing smarter regulation that gives due consideration to the horizontal impact it may have.

But make no mistake, becoming more competitive does not mean giving up our environmental goals. Quite the contrary, those goals will give us a head start in the green and digital transition races. Clean growth is growth. We ask the future College to show more ambition and build on the Green Deal, without any backtracking, through the thorough implementation of all texts adopted; complement the Green deal with a Blue Deal for our oceans, seas and rivers; aim for a zero carbon energy union while ensuring lower energy prices and secure access to critical raw materials; accelerating and simplifying permitting for green and low-carbon technologies; review the public procurement directive and enhance the demand for clean, sustainable and European products; continue building the health union by improving access to health. We also ask the future College to ensure a level playing field and reciprocity for farmers, make their life easier, offer them sustainable solutions and redress the balance of power between producers and retailers.

We must invest or perish. But prosperity will not be achieved by injecting public money only. Private capital, investment and savings must be mobilised and used to promote strategic investments and the European common good. We ask the future College to create a Savings and Investment Union, through the completion of the Capital Markets Union.

Finally, investment must be channelled towards people. We ask the future College to recognise vocational degrees and skills throughout the Union; promote cross-border regional development and ensure the further cohesion of the Union through diminishing socio-economic discrepancies between countries and regions; reform the Blue Card system in order to attract the talents, skills and workforce we need; support full Schengen accession for Romania and Bulgaria.

Security

Our first priority remains to speed up and reinforce our military support to Ukraine. Whilst always respecting the various constitutional requirements of each Member State, we must now act to strengthen our capabilities, increase our cooperation among Europeans, diminish fragmentation of our defence industry. Massive public and private investments are needed in defence and imply creative public financing and eliminating the obstacles to significant private financing.

We ask the future college to lay the foundation of true Defence Union, build on the Draghi report, clarify and broaden the mandate of EIB; introduce a European purchasing preference and incentives for joint procurement in the field of defence; create an internal market for defence by standardising ammunitions and interoperability of weapon systems; fight unnecessary red tape; support the participation of small and medium-sized enterprises in the defence industry; incentivise the shift away from existing supply chains that rely on countries with incompatible democratic values; commit to set an end date for the import of Russian oil and gas; strengthen the Transatlantic security partnership through information sharing, collaborative research and coordinated policy initiatives; establish a Union-wide cyber unit to tackle Foreign interferences and disinformation in our democratic processes using a European democracy shield; secure our external border and enhance police and judicial cooperation against transnational threats and networks such as terrorism, organised crime, drug and weapon trafficking, smuggling and child exploitation; develop our common capacities in response to the consequences of climate change and natural disasters; strengthen coordination of development policy and humanitarian aid and lead on the implementation of the UN sustainable development goals; advance the accession process of Ukraine and Moldova and the Balkans as a geostrategic investment.

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Renew Europe enters the coming weeks with these criteria in mind. We will scrutinise the values and visions of the candidates for the job of Commissioner and hold them, individually and collectively as a College, to the highest standards. We know our Renew Europe commissioner-designates meet those standards. We will stand behind them whatever it takes. In this regard, we ask the President-elect to grant them portfolios and responsibilities matching their level of commitment and expertise.



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