

**BRINGING COMMON  
SENSE BACK**



# ECR GROUP

## PRIORITIES 2024–2029

# BRINGING COMMON SENSE BACK







# Foreword

Dear reader,

Born in 2009 out of a dissatisfaction with increasing EU centralisation, we emerged as a leading centre-right force in the European Parliament devoted to refocusing the EU's efforts to make a real positive impact for all Member States.

Our goal is simple: to ensure that the EU focuses on its core tasks and prioritises value-added cooperation, while strongly opposing any move towards a supranational superstate. Our guiding principle of Eurorealism underlines the need for a reformed European Union that emphasises cooperation between the Member States while preserving their identity and autonomy within confederal institutions.

As a strong and constructive political force, the ECR is committed to relentlessly pursuing meaningful reforms for the betterment of Europe. Amidst the noise of superficial and divisive trends in our societies, such as excessive political correctness, environmental extremism, and wokeism, we want to emphasise the importance of paying attention to the issues that truly affect our communities.

Our aim is to safeguard our nations and their democracies that promote balance, harmony, and the overall well-being of citizens. We want to cultivate societies that prosper economically and uphold the timeless principles embedded in their collective heritage. In the face of looming demographic challenges that threaten the very essence of our continent, we uphold the family as the cornerstone of social cohesion, recognising their indispensable role in promoting individual well-being and community solidarity.

Ensuring the safety and security of every European is at the heart of our mission. Grounded in enduring European values and committed to improving the lives of all Europeans, we stand ready to contribute to building a brighter and more prosperous future.

Yours sincerely,



ECR Group

# We will protect national identities: Modernising the European Union while preserving the sovereignty of member states

## **The ECR will protect national democracies from disempowerment by Brussels**

Europe's freedom and economic prosperity rest on a bedrock of values and national customs cultivated over generations. The guardians of this foundation are the nation states and their respective democratic systems. The ECR will work to preserve Europe's cherished traditions, freedoms and principles, leading us to advocate for reform within the European Union. We support a vision in which the EU focuses on fewer tasks, but performs them more effectively.

## **The ECR will fight against further centralisation of EU powers**

We are strongly opposed to the unnecessary concentration of power in Brussels and instead hold that decision-making should remain as close to the citizen as possible. We will oppose any efforts to further centralise power within the EU or to extend qualified majority voting to areas currently excluded. It is crucial to understand that the role of the European Commission should not mirror that of a government overseeing a superstate.

## **The ECR will be at the forefront of the fight for respect for the Treaties**

The ECR advocates using existing Treaty provisions rather than introducing additional layers of legislation and procedures. We want to see the EU move into a new phase that empowers Member States, using EU Treaty mandates such as subsidiarity and proportionality. By applying these principles effectively, we can strengthen our decision-making mechanisms while preserving the sovereignty of our national democracies and celebrating the rich tapestry of cultures, economies, histories and perspectives that make Europe what it is.

# We will protect our citizens: Strengthening our defences with unity

## **The ECR will make security the EU's top priority**

The ECR will lead the effort to strengthen the EU's defence industry and keep Europeans safe. We will do this by working directly with industry and armed forces to ensure that the essential providers of our security are no longer ignored by Brussels. We will seek to leverage the financial resources needed for defence and security. The EU is well placed to do this, adding value through pooling efforts, coordination, and engagement in common projects.

## **The ECR will strengthen European defence industries**

The return of high-intensity warfare to Europe and the deterioration of regional and global threat levels require a change in the scale and speed with which Europe's defence, technological, and industrial base can develop and produce the full range of military capabilities. The ECR strongly supports initiatives aimed at providing Member States and their allies with high quality defence products in the required quantities and at short notice. We also strongly support measures to facilitate cooperation in research and development and joint procurement of defence products. To this end, the ECR has been at the forefront of legislative initiatives such as the European Defence Fund and the European defence industry reinforcement through the Common Procurement Act. At the same time, the Group strongly believes that defence itself and military preparedness should remain the prerogative of the Member States, and therefore remains sceptical about the establishment of a defence union at EU level.

### **The ECR will continue to stand by Ukraine's side**

The ECR has been vocal about the true nature of the Putin regime for over a decade. Russia's brutal war of aggression against Ukraine has opened the eyes of the West. We have been strong supporters of Ukraine since the Euromaidan protests, and later during the illegal annexation of Crimea, and especially after the Russian invasion in 2022. We will continue to stand by Ukraine and put pressure on EU institutions, the Member States, and our allies to keep sending supplies, weapons, ammunition and financial aid. The Ukrainians are fighting a common enemy, that will eventually turn its attention to other European countries. There is a struggle between the democratic world and tyranny. The ECR will actively campaign for even stronger sanctions against Russia, as well as the strengthening of existing sanctions and the continuation of arms and military aid. We will continue to offer support to Ukraine until the occupier is defeated, and we will extend our help to other peoples in the region who still live in fear and oppression, such as the people of Belarus. We will also continue to support Moldova and the people of Georgia on their path towards EU integration.





#### **The ECR will continue to support EU-NATO cooperation**

The ECR is committed to enhancing NATO's transformation, strengthening the transatlantic bond, and improving the capabilities of its armed forces. Our pledge includes launching and supporting new initiatives to increase defence budgets, promote new technologies, and train our forces for future combat environments. We will actively promote defence spending, capability development, and upholding NATO as the primary security actor in Europe.

#### **The ECR will fight terrorism and organised crime**

The ECR is the leading advocate of security issues in the European Parliament. In view of the increasing number of terrorist attacks against European citizens and the continuing activities of criminal groups in all Member States, we stress the urgent need for decisive action. Terrorist organisations and criminal networks, characterised by their creativity, mobility, and violence, pose a significant transnational threat. It is therefore imperative that the EU is fully aware and that the European Parliament takes swift and effective action. ECR policies aim to degrade the operational capabilities of a wide range of terrorist organisations and criminal networks, ultimately leading to their defeat and reducing their motivation.

## **We will ensure border security: Implementing a holistic approach to migration management**

#### **The ECR will effectively secure Europe's borders against illegal migration**

The escalating number of irregular crossings at the EU's external borders demands immediate action. Illegal migration imposes an acute strain on reception infrastructure, the welfare state and compromises security across Member States to effectively combat this crisis, the ECR advocates a two-pronged approach. Firstly, it is imperative that EU rules be changed to enable the financing of border infrastructure so that all Member States contribute to the protection of the EU's external borders. Secondly, we endorse a proactive strategy focused on prevention and tackling the root causes of migration, so that the idea of entering Europe illegally is no longer attractive. Drawing inspiration from Australia's successful model, we will call on the Commission to start negotiating agreements for regional disembarkation platforms in third countries, so that asylum claims can be processed outside the EU, thereby deterring dangerous sea journeys and dissuading irregular economic migrants while providing safe avenues for genuine refugees.



### **The ECR will fight human trafficking and human smugglers**

The trafficking and smuggling of illegal immigrants remains a lucrative business for criminal organisations in Europe, in some cases even with the support of third country governments. The ECR pledges to put an end to this by addressing the external dimension of migration head-on. We must leverage access to development funds as a means to incentivise genuine cooperation in the management of migration flows, including facilitating returns and combating criminal syndicates. If we make the journey to the EU unsuccessful by setting up regional disembarkation platforms outside the EU, enforce the repatriation of individuals without valid asylum claims, and collaborate with third countries to prosecute criminal networks, then the number of arrivals will start to fall.

### **The ECR will combat abuse of the EU's asylum system**

In an era marked by mass migration, the ECR proposes further reforms to the EU asylum framework. To prevent abuse, asylum should be granted only to those who are genuinely fleeing persecution and whose lives are in danger. By processing asylum applications in countries with which applicants share close cultural, religious and/or geographical ties, we would promote their integration and prevent the abuse of Member States' asylum systems. We also support widespread and effective information campaigns in third countries to deter illegal arrivals.

### **The ECR will strengthen Frontex and Europol to make our borders more secure**

The ECR will work to strengthen EU agencies, such as Frontex and Europol, which safeguard our borders, ensuring they provide effective support to Member States in facilitating returns. We are also committed to enhancing the efficiency of IT systems such as the Schengen Information System, the Visa Information System, Eurodac and ECRIS-TCN, and the rapid implementation of new systems such as ETIAS and the Entry/Exit System.

### **The ECR will conditionally link trade and development policy with migration management**

The ECR believes that any increase in market access and development aid must be conditional upon recipient countries' willingness to repatriate their citizens who have attempted unauthorised entry into the EU. In view of the many challenges faced by the EU due to uncontrolled arrivals and fraudulent asylum claims, the ECR Group considers that access to the internal market and EU aid funds would serve as an incentive for better cooperation with developing countries on return and readmission, including more robust border controls and preventing illegal departures. In this context, the ECR will work towards mutually beneficial partnerships to address common challenges, in particular the root causes of illegal migration in developing countries.

## **We will cultivate agriculture: Promoting sustainable farming and fishing practices for a better tomorrow**

### **The ECR will mitigate the Green Deal's adverse effects on farming**

The ECR will work tirelessly to ensure that poorly evaluated EU regulations do not undermine food security and the viability of farming. We will advocate a common-sense, science-based and bureaucracy-free approach to the Green Deal, emphasising the high priority of food production and stable farm incomes. We will insist that the European Commission carries out a cumulative impact assessment of Green Deal initiatives, particularly those linked to the Farm to Fork strategy. In addition, the ECR will press for a greater focus on improving European farmers' competitiveness to ensure they are not driven out of business by unfair competition resulting from differing standards.

### **The ECR will make Common Agricultural Policy less bureaucratic**

The ECR Group will work for a Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) that guarantees viable food production in Europe. A modernised and well-funded CAP is critical to achieving key EU policy objectives, including food security by providing consumers with high-quality and safe food at affordable prices, preserving landscapes and the natural environment, and ensuring a fair standard of living for farmers. We advocate for reducing bureaucracy and simplifying the CAP, and believe in the power of voluntary incentives rather than top-down measures. The CAP must allow farmers the flexibility to adapt their food production to local conditions.

### **The ECR will enable more sustainable food production through innovation**

The ECR Group will call for better use of innovation to achieve sustainable food production. For instance, to enable greater circularity, the full potential of nutrients in animal manure must be made available for reuse by farmers. In addition, precision farming, which can reduce the use of pesticides, water and fertilisers while improving soil fertility and boosting yields, has great enormous potential for sustainable food production.

### **The ECR will keep forests under national management**

The ECR will maintain its steadfast opposition to the European Commission's persistent attempts to extend its own competences in the area of forestry on the grounds of environmental protection. Our Group will continue to insist that forest policies be adapted to specific regional and local needs and expectations, and that forests remain under national management.

### **The ECR will promote geographical indications**

The ECR will promote a well-functioning system of geographical indications for agricultural products. This system, unique in the world, is designed to create value without requiring public investment. The focus is on promoting quality production, which encourages convergence and clarity in all sectors. The ECR is committed to ensuring a fair income for quality producers and maintaining product excellence, thereby contributing to rural development objectives.

### **The ECR will call ensuring competitiveness in view of EU enlargement**

The ECR will work for a fair CAP that takes into account the interests of consumers and farmers in both the EU and Ukraine, especially in light of EU enlargement. It is essential to maintain the EU's global competitiveness and this can only be achieved by reducing burdens on farmers, who are currently ravaged by excessive rules and regulations. The ECR will push for policy adjustments that meet the challenges ahead without increasing the overall EU budget or tax burden. We prioritise market principles, the removal of harmful regulations and the need to cut red tape. In addition, the ECR will continue to advocate for minimal regulation and ensure that our policies support the interests of farmers and consumers alike.

### **The ECR will ensure sustainability and responsibility in fishing practices**

The ECR will address the challenges facing the EU fisheries sector through a comprehensive reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), spearheading various initiatives to ensure sustainability and responsible fishing practices. Any reform should strike a delicate balance between social, economic, and sustainability concerns, considering the specificities of different sea basins, with particular attention to coastal and artisanal fleets. Recognising concerns surrounding the landing obligation, the ECR calls on the European Commission to urgently propose alternative measures. Furthermore, the ECR will actively contribute towards the development of the blue economy, emphasising the responsible and sustainable use of marine resources.

### **The ECR will push for fisheries partnership agreements and urge the European Commission to withdraw the Fisheries Action Plan**

The ECR is committed to promoting global cooperation through Fisheries Partnership Agreements with third countries, allowing EU vessels to fish beyond the EU's borders. Through these strategic efforts, the ECR envisions a future where the fishing industry thrives in harmony with environmental conservation objectives, supporting local economies, ensuring the sustainability of jobs and contributing to the overall

well-being of marine ecosystems. The ECR recalls that there is no legal basis for the measures and deadlines proposed by the Commission in its Action Plan for the protection and restoration of marine ecosystems for sustainable and resilient fisheries. We consider the ban on mobile bottom gears in marine protected areas to be an unjustified measure that lacks a thorough socio-economic analysis and is not based on the best available science. It also appears to contravene international obligations. The ECR calls for an assessment of the Action Plan in terms of its socio-economic impact on coastal communities and its cumulative effect on the availability of food supplies.

## We will review the Green Deal: striking the right balance between climate action and economic prosperity

### **The ECR will work hard to revitalise industry in Europe.**

Industry is the backbone of Europe's economy and the prosperity of millions of its citizens. However, in the attempt to address vital climate issues, European policymakers have designed policies without due diligence and sound impact assessments. The EU has overshot many of its climate targets and placed unrealistically high expectations on its industries. The harmful mix of excessive red tape, costly investments to meet new requirements and high energy costs has seriously undermined competitiveness, forcing many companies to close or to relocate elsewhere. The ECR will work hard to reverse this trend and give new hope to European industry. We cannot accept the industrial desertification of entire regions, followed by economic migration for new jobs which only appear in a few centres of the continent due to subsidies from Member States with higher fiscal capacities. We call for a sensible approach to key policies that combine decarbonisation with economic growth, jobs, and global competitiveness, while strengthening our resilience and security of supply. We call for policies that ensure the maintenance and development of the industrial potential of regions undergoing energy transition.

### **The ECR will promote sustainability in the automotive sector**

The ECR welcomes the recent advancements in the development of more circular and resource-efficient vehicles. However, we are committed to preserving the competitiveness of the European automotive sector while also ensuring that all EU citizens have access to private transportation. Additionally, we will advocate for fair compensation for individuals whose vehicles must be scrapped due to export restrictions. It is crucial to acknowledge that these individuals are among the most vulnerable, and they must receive appropriate support, to make sure no person and no place is left behind.

### **The ECR will call for a revival of the internal combustion engine**

The ECR rejects the regulatory ban on internal combustion engines set for 2035, due to concerns about its timing and broader socio-economic impacts. European automakers and suppliers of components face significant operational challenges in striving to transition to electric vehicles in just over a decade. Moreover, electric vehicles still cost more upfront than combustion engine cars, even with tax incentives, and it is essential to keep vehicles affordable for working families who are already vulnerable to the soaring cost of living. To help address these difficulties, the ECR will push for the ban to be scrapped, while urging the EU to give greater priority to investments in education, training, and reskilling programs as automotive workers transition to new roles in a dynamic and ever-evolving sector.



### **The ECR will prioritise meeting current climate targets before considering any new ones**

The ECR recognises the importance of addressing the negative impacts of climate change. Therefore, we emphasise the need for a comprehensive and pragmatic strategy that deals with critical issues such as food security, agriculture, water resources, natural eco-systems and urban development. In this work, we must take into account the geographical diversity of the EU as well as the specific economic needs of Member States, regions, and local communities. Most importantly, we urge the next Commission to prioritise implementing and consolidating the Fit for 55 Package before introducing new climate regulations. This approach will ensure a focused effort on achieving tangible results and maximising the effectiveness of existing legislation.

### **The ECR will contest plans to set further greenhouse gas emission reduction targets**

The EU is already struggling to meet the costs of its 2030 climate goal. Therefore, the ECR will firmly challenge un-costed plans aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 90 per cent from 1990 levels by 2040. Amid unprecedented global challenges, escalating energy prices and rising carbon costs, we are concerned about the timing of this ambitious climate target. Moving forward with this ambitious and untested target, which necessitates near-zero emissions from energy- and emission-intensive industries, could incentivise companies and industrial value chains to relocate outside the EU, where production costs are typically lower. This could lead to severe financial strain and job losses across the continent. The ECR Group believes that climate ambition should be achieved through innovation and investment, not deindustrialisation. Hence, we insist that the Commission produce a timely and comprehensive impact assessment analysing the different scenarios, reduction pathways, and costs and benefits of an increased climate target well before its proposals for enabling legislation.

### **The ECR will protect citizens and businesses from the negative impacts of the Green Deal**

The ECR will do all it can to counter the negative economic impact of the Green Deal. We must ensure that it does not inadvertently harm the welfare of European citizens or undermine business competitiveness. To this end, the ECR stresses the importance of preventing an increase in energy poverty resulting from Green Deal policies. We need a balanced approach that safeguards environmental goals and socio-economic well-being, ensuring that vulnerable consumers have access to essential energy services and products.

### **The ECR will fight transport poverty**

The ECR will fight for a harmonised definition of transport poverty and urge all Member States to assess the number of citizens affected by this phenomenon. In order to improve the competitiveness of European industry, it is also crucial to align regulatory measures with infrastructure capacity. We therefore oppose the imposition of additional levies, such as Emission Trading Scheme (ETS) taxes or additional duties on energy products used as fuel, where reliable grid connections necessary for electrification are not yet available. Industries should not be penalised for circumstances beyond their control and the EU should encourage a fairer transition to greener alternatives.

### **The ECR will promote greater EU connectivity and investments in strategic infrastructure**

The ECR will advocate increased investment and easier authorisation procedures in the development and modernisation of the EU's infrastructure, which is particularly important in rural and remote areas where targeted investment is needed to improve accessibility and ensure that remote communities are not left behind. We will continue to push for faster development of north-south transport corridors such as the Via Carpathia, better-developed multimodal transport hubs and the Rail Baltica high-speed rail link between the Baltic States and the rest of Europe. We will also continue to support the interconnection and modernisation of EU countries' energy infrastructure – projects that address the pressing needs of European citizens and industry for access to diverse, reliable and affordable energy sources, including electricity and natural gas networks.

## **We will boost economic growth: Harnessing the power of the single market and Europe's small businesses**

### **The ECR will work to reshape the EU's digital future**

The ECR will drive a bold vision for Europe's digital future. In today's world, technology empowers companies to increase efficiency, optimise operations and compete globally. For that reason, we consider it vital that the EU has a New Legislative Framework (NLF) that truly understands the digital world, liberating innovative software products from outdated rules. We will cut through red tape, digitise operations, and encourage a culture of digital entrepreneurship. It is therefore imperative to review all relevant recent laws to eliminate overlaps and conflicts. Our aim is to turn the EU into a hotbed of innovation by boosting investment in cutting-edge technologies such as AI, 5G/6G, quantum computing and others. We urge the Commission to present a genuine digital vision for the EU, enabling Europe to effectively rival the ambitions and achievements of the US, China or India.

### **The ECR will continue to fight for less red tape**

The ECR will always fight against unnecessarily onerous regulatory requirements that impede the effective operation of the single market and the EU's global competitiveness. These regulatory constraints also hinder the ability of financial institutions to respond effectively to market dynamics, innovate with new products and services, and provide optimal solutions to their clients. We are dedicated to streamlining bureaucratic procedures, and removing unnecessary reporting and disclosure requirements.

### **The ECR will fight administrative burdens**

The ECR will strongly support the implementation of the Once-Only Principle (OOP) as the standard approach, with the goal of reducing administrative burdens and improving efficiency across all sectors. It is time for a bold paradigm shift, led by the ECR, away from the stifling grip of overregulation and towards unleashing the power of innovation, particularly in Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies. We refuse to stand idly by as Europe risks falling behind in the global technology race. Our mission is to spearhead a transformative change that propels the EU to the forefront of technological innovation, liberating our continent from the shackles of regulatory dominance. This is not just a political agenda; it is a solemn commitment to enhance the quality of life and prosperity of our citizens and future generations.

### **The ECR will advocate rigorous impact assessments for all major legislative changes**

The ECR is dedicated to reshaping the EU's 'Better Regulation' agenda to transform it from an empty pledge into tangible action. We are committed to wholesale reform, enforcing a mechanism that requires rigorous impact assessments for all significant legal changes to draft legislation. Our aim is to counter the trend of hastily transforming untested ideas into onerous regulations that have a negative impact on citizens and businesses. Whether it is a consumer policy that affects citizens economically or the imposition of unnecessary rules—such as applying the same cybersecurity requirements to a smartphone game as to a nuclear power plant—we will endeavour to produce more thoughtful and effective legislation.

### **The ECR will call for a continuous evaluation and cost-benefit analysis of EU legislation**

The ECR will champion policies grounded in careful preparation. We will prioritise objective data and best practices, analysing situations across all Member States rather than selectively chosen markets. Moreover, we support continuous evaluation through ongoing cost-benefit analyses in line with the Court of Auditors' recommendations for measurable result indicators. This guarantees efficiency and a clear understanding of the impact of EU initiatives. Our pledge is to cultivate policies that achieve their objectives, promote sustainability, and enhance competitiveness in the EU.

### **The ECR will fight for a level playing field for state aid**

The ECR will firmly advocate for a level playing field within the EU's internal market that ensures equal competition among companies across all EU Member States, irrespective of whether they are new or old, large or small. We advocate for fair competition that gives consumers access to a diverse range of high-quality products and services at competitive prices. Allowing certain EU countries to provide unfair subsidies not only disadvantages businesses in other Member States, but also leads to job losses and economic difficulties. By calling for a level playing field in state aid, the ECR will strive to ensure fair competition in the single market. We want companies, regardless of their size or origin, to compete equally. Our goal is to foster fair competition that benefits consumers by offering a range of quality products and services at competitive prices, while enhancing the EU's global competitiveness.

### **The ECR will reform the market for services, unlocking huge potential for growth**

The ECR will drive forward initiatives aimed at transforming the internal market for services and unleashing its significant economic potential, estimated at €389 billion or 2.28 per cent of EU GDP. We are determined to eliminate the barriers that currently hinder Europeans, ranging from entrepreneurs to large companies, from offering their services across borders. Recognising the diversity of national rules, our focus is to promote greater use of mutual recognition mechanisms, making it easier for all Europeans to market their services across the EU. Our ultimate aim is to create a single market that facilitates seamless service provision across borders, thereby boosting economic growth and innovation for everyone.

### **The ECR will call for standardisation driven by experts, not bureaucrats**

The ECR will lead the charge to reform EU standardisation governance, advocating for a system guided by industry experts, not bureaucrats. We are addressing the Commission's shift towards protectionism and fragmented standardisation, promoting open, collaborative, and globally-minded approaches essential for the EU's digital strategy. Our aim is to realign EU standardisation with global like-minded

partners and broad stakeholder engagement, creating an ecosystem where innovation transcends borders. The current European system of Harmonised Standards is bogged down with legal complexities and bureaucratic delays, leading to increased costs and concerns, particularly for small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). We warn that creating a hermetic EU standards ecosystem would be like building a digital fortress, trapping our companies inside and hindering their global expansion. We aim to make standardisation into a catalyst for European competitiveness and scalability, ensuring it facilitates growth and innovation, rather than hindering them.

### **The ECR will call for an SME-friendly EU**

The ECR acknowledges the pivotal role of SMEs in the EU economy. Navigating the rapidly changing regulatory landscape poses significant challenges for SMEs and regulatory authorities alike, putting investment at risk, innovation, and digital advancement in the EU. In order to support SMEs effectively, we advocate adaptable regulation, prioritising the “Think Small First” principle, emphasising enforcement over new regulation, the need for thorough SME impact assessments, setting realistic timelines, simplifying procurement, and promoting mutual recognition. In addition, we question the creation of the Commission’s new EU SME Envoy, to guide SMEs and advocate for their interests, as our focus should remain on rectifying implementation challenges rather than creating new bureaucratic structures.



### **The ECR will advocate for more efficiency in EU cohesion policy**

The ECR reiterates that cohesion policy, representing approximately one third of the EU budget, must remain a fundamental pillar of the EU. Its primary objective should be to strengthen economic, social and territorial cohesion, and to minimise regional disparities, all while respecting the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. The ECR emphasises targeted support for regions facing development challenges and underscores the need for sufficient funding to address new ones that emerge. The ECR promotes shared management and the partnership principle for more effective cohesion policy outcomes. Enhancing the effectiveness of cohesion policy for EU Member States and regions is paramount, and we are committed to achieving this through streamlining and providing increased flexibility. Simplification efforts must focus on minimising burdens for national, regional, and local administrations. Additionally, we will work to prioritise granting Member States and regions greater autonomy in decision-making regarding resource targeting and allocation, thereby fostering a more adaptable and responsive cohesion framework.

## **We will ensure energy security and drive innovation: Steering towards resilience in the future**

### **The ECR will work against discrimination against nuclear energy**

The ECR will continue to support and defend the principle of technology neutrality in new legislative initiatives by the European Commission. There should be no discrimination against any technology that could help Europe achieve a net-zero economy in a cost-effective way. We recognise the importance of nuclear energy in the energy mix of individual Member States that have chosen to rely on this energy source. Furthermore, the ECR sees a need for increased attention to small modular reactors in the forthcoming mandate and urges the European Commission to prepare a regulatory framework to support these reactors.



### **The ECR will make geothermal energy an integral part of a just energy transition**

Geothermal energy is a local renewable energy source that can provide electricity, heating, and cooling in all Member States. It has low operating costs, but compared to other renewables, it can be easily switched on and off, requires limited land use, and can be easily integrated into the landscape. Despite this, geothermal energy often plays a marginal role in the renewable energy debate, in particular with regard to the energy transition, reindustrialisation, and the fight against energy poverty. The ECR initiated the debate on geothermal energy in the last mandate, leading to the adoption of a report on geothermal energy by an overwhelming majority of the European Parliament. We intend to build on the momentum of the two forthcoming Presidencies, which plan to make geothermal energy their flagship initiative.

### **The ECR will advocate greater support for research and innovation**

The ECR will work for a stronger focus on the needs of industry to enable its competitiveness and to address pressing societal needs. We will further promote and advocate for Horizon Europe as the most extensive EU research and innovation programme with an overall budget of €95.5 billion for the ongoing MFF 2021-2027. The ECR will continue to support widening research and development (R&D) actions to address and mitigate disparities in research and innovation activities among different Member States. Keeping R&D in a broader range of regions helps ensure that research efforts align better with the diverse needs of society. This approach can lead to the development of solutions that are more context-specific and relevant to different communities. Widening measures should continue and be enhanced further in the future European R&D framework programmes in the interest of every Member State to create a well-balanced European Research Area. The ECR will also keep addressing the issue of academic freedom, having regularly expressed grave concerns about the spread of progressive orthodoxy and the rise of cancel culture in academic institutions, which has silenced alternative voices and diverse perspectives, limited academic freedom, and eviscerated proper intellectual debate.

## **We will fight for fundamental freedoms and against those who seek to undermine them**

### **The ECR will stop ideologists from hijacking the internet**

The ECR will continue to fight for digital freedom and transparency, building on our successes with the Digital Services Act (DSA). We are committed to ensuring that digital regulation effectively addresses the challenges posed by large online platforms without compromising freedom of expression. Protecting internet freedom from overzealous surveillance and censorship remains a top priority as we work to preserve the open nature of the internet. We won't allow public opinion to be misled and voices that disagree with mainstream politics to be labelled as hate speech that can be silenced and eradicated.

### **The ECR will defend online anonymity**

The ECR will strongly oppose proposals to de-anonymise the internet and to require user identification through eID systems. Such measures amount to putting a digital leash on every citizen – an approach that stifles freedom and creativity under the guise of security. Instead, we advocate a safe internet based on parental empowerment, not government control. We propose a new initiative to establish basic parental control tools that allow parents to effectively monitor their children's online activities. This approach will ensure a safer internet environment for young users, without infringing on parental rights or turning the state into a digital overlord. Our vision is a digital space that balances freedom and safety, where families are the first line of defence in protecting themselves online, not intrusive government surveillance. This approach is consistent with our core values of individual freedom, family integrity and minimal government interference, ensuring a free yet responsible digital future for all.

### **The ECR will fight anti-Semitism**

The ECR reaffirms its support for an EU strategy to combat the alarming rise in anti-Semitism. We will therefore continue to unequivocally condemn all attacks targeting Jewish communities and remain fully committed to their safety, security and future within Europe. The ECR Group will continue to support the work of the European Commission in promoting an EU strategy to combat anti-Semitism and foster Jewish life in Europe. We strongly value the integral part Jewish communities have played in Europe and their many contributions to European history, culture and science for centuries. In this light, we believe it is important to combat both old and new anti-Semitism, with the latter dangerously and increasingly taking hold in large parts of Europe in response to events in the Middle East. We will therefore continue to condemn any attacks against Jewish communities and stand by our unwavering commitment to their safety, security and future in Europe.

### **The ECR will fight all forms of extremism**

The ECR will remain firm in its fight against all forms of extremism in order to ensure the social cohesion of our societies. Regarding violent, religiously motivated extremism, we express deep concern about the allocation of EU and foreign funding to the Muslim Brotherhood and affiliated organisations operating in Europe and will continue to call for its immediate cessation. It is imperative that we remain vigilant and proactive in preventing the proliferation of extremist networks of any kind within our societies.



# We will spearhead global economic growth: Crafting a bold trade vision

## The ECR will promote rules-based trade and more high-quality free trade agreements

The ECR will actively pursue additional trade agreements to help EU companies diversify their supply chains, favouring strategic partners such as the US, India, Mexico, Australia and Thailand. Strengthening agreements on digital and critical raw materials is also crucial for the resilience of EU businesses. We will work to strengthen and broaden cooperation in the EU-US Trade and Technology Council, while actively pursuing associate status for the UK. With regard to EU-UK relations, we support building on the Windsor Framework Agreement and prioritising the strengthening of defence and security cooperation.

## The ECR will fight against unfair trade practices

The ECR will call for a swifter and firmer response to unfair trade practices, while cautioning against resorting to protectionist measures. Moreover, the ECR will support an EU de-risking strategy vis-à-vis China, while acknowledging China as a partner, competitor and strategic rival. We also advocate for a reformed World Trade Organisation (WTO), that prioritises transparency, fairness, and effectiveness. This includes a renewed Appellate Body as a two-tier dispute settlement system with a more timely resolution of disputes, enhancing enforcement mechanisms, combatting market-dumping practices, and facilitating easier market access for SMEs.

## The ECR will promote a thriving partnership with India

The ECR Group remains steadfast in its commitment to advancing the longstanding and fruitful relationship between the EU and India, the world's largest democracy. We will work actively to deepen and broaden the EU-India Trade and Technology Council, as well as comprehensive agreements on trade, investment protection and geographical indications. Beyond trade, we will forge new partnerships in security, semiconductors, the environment, energy, maritime transport, and customs cooperation. Furthermore, we support the EU-India human rights dialogue, leveraging it as a powerful platform to promote religious freedom worldwide, a core value that the ECR ardently defends and champions.

## The ECR will campaign for more effective spending on global development

The ECR believes that better coordination between the European Commission and EU financial institutions such as the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) is essential to ensure their effectiveness, so that their actions align and synergise rather than duplicate efforts or create competition. The ECR will also advocate for increased engagement of the private sector in development efforts to augment these initiatives.



# We will invest wisely for a smarter future: Transforming the EU budget for the 21st century

## **The ECR will call for an effective budget reallocation instead of new own resources**

The ECR Group will fight to build on the elements of performance-based budgeting within the Financial Regulation. We believe it is imperative that the EU pays greater attention to achieving concrete results from EU funding, to ensure effective policy management and optimal value for money. We expect the Commission to introduce a robust 'performance culture' across its Directorates-General, using clear and easily understandable performance indicators in line with the principle of sound financial management. We also call on the Commission to adopt a lean management approach to streamline operations and improve efficiency.

## **The ECR will call for better budget control**

The ECR Group requests that the Commission develop an improved and proportionate system of budgetary control. We believe that an integral part of this system should be reporting requirements, which must be both detailed and transparent, providing comprehensive insight into the recipients of EU funds and the punctuality of payments. Performance, value for money, and the results achieved through EU funding should always be carefully scrutinised in order to determine the long-term impact of EU spending.

## **The ECR will strongly oppose the introduction of EU taxes**

The ECR Group supports the current system of national contributions because it distributes the tax burden fairly and equitably among Member States. We strongly oppose the introduction of taxes at the EU-level, as this would reduce tax transparency and encroach on Member States' competence in tax matters. Such a move would also result in a higher overall tax burden for both citizens and businesses.

## **The ECR will defend the fiscal sovereignty of the Member States**

The ECR stands firm in its commitment to keep taxation fully within the competence of Member States. We believe that healthy tax competition between Member States is essential for promoting fiscal accountability, protecting taxpayers' interests, while driving economic growth across the EU economy. Moreover, we will vehemently oppose Euro-federalist groups who are eager to encroach upon Member States' fiscal sovereignty through the imposition of qualified majority voting on tax matters in the Council.

# We will steer Europe's course: Advocating for enlargement and navigating the changing geopolitical landscape

## **The ECR will support further EU enlargement**

EU enlargement has proven to be a geostrategic investment in peace, security, stability, and prosperity, and we will therefore support further enlargement. We underline that the enlargement process is a merit-based one, where candidate countries can move forward on the enlargement path if they implement the necessary reforms. Candidate countries must fully comply with all Copenhagen criteria, and the EU should maintain and deepen its capacity to integrate new members without applying a one-size-fits-all approach. In particular, as regards the EU's neighbouring candidate countries Ukraine and Moldova, we encourage the Council to adopt the negotiating frameworks as soon as they have taken the necessary measures. We underline that the enlargement process must not be used as a backdoor to introduce, for example, treaty changes and new powers such as qualified majority voting in the Council on foreign policy issues.

## **The ECR will push for strengthening ties with the UK**

The ECR wants to see deep and comprehensive cooperation between the EU and the UK in many policy areas, such as intelligence sharing, cyber, counter-terrorism, foreign and security policy, energy, and migration management. Given the active role played by the UK, a close and indispensable NATO ally in European security and defence, we would favour a structured EU-UK framework for cooperation in foreign and security affairs. The ECR stands ready to welcome the UK's participation in new EU programmes such as Erasmus+, if it so wishes. In addition, we believe that the UK should be a partner in a new macro-region for the North Sea, strengthening cooperation between all bordering countries and regions.

## **The ECR will promote a more nuanced approach to China**

The ECR will continue to address the risks of the EU's efforts to improve relations with China. The ECR is particularly concerned about the widespread repression of minorities, increasing restrictions on fundamental freedoms, diminishing autonomy and democracy in Hong Kong, and China's growing assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific region. The ECR will also seek to strengthen the EU's relations with Taiwan.

## **The ECR will call on the EU to improve relations with the Middle East and North Africa**

The ECR will continue to monitor the geopolitical situation in the Middle East. In the Maghreb, our focus is on promoting solid relations, particularly in the area of migration in order to curb illegal entry to the EU. The ECR supports the Abraham Accords and encourages more countries to normalise relations with Israel. The ECR condemns terrorism in the region and ensures that European taxpayers' money does not go to organisations or individuals on the EU terror list. In response to the unprecedented terrorist attack by Hamas against Israel on 7 October, the ECR calls on the EU to fully designate the Hamas leadership on the EU terror list.

### The ECR will promote a more assertive EU policy towards Iran

The ECR will continue to push for a more assertive EU policy towards Iran, focusing on its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes, state sponsorship of terrorism, and hostage diplomacy. We have consistently condemned and will continue to condemn Iran's flagrant human rights violations and support for terrorism in the region and globally. The ECR therefore urges the EU to fully designate the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), the Houthis, and Hezbollah on the EU terror list. Furthermore, the ECR remains steadfast in its support for human dignity and democracy and against extremism in the region.

### The ECR will call on the EU to improve relations with Sub-Saharan African regions

The ECR will keep a close eye on the geopolitical situation in sub-Saharan Africa, focusing on the fight against internal migration to the Maghreb region, which usually leads to illegal migration to Europe. The ECR will support political engagement and policy dialogues to define a cooperative relationship between the EU and Sub-Saharan Africa. We will also focus on the protection of Christians in the region whose security is threatened by Islamic terrorist groups.



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