

**Dear Chancellor,**

**Dear Mr. President,**

**Dear fellow citizens in Europe!**

In May, Europeans in 28 countries will elect the new European parliament. In the run-up to these elections, it is not only the tense situation in Ukraine, the debate on free movement with regard to Romania and Bulgaria or the Swiss referendum against immigration that cause our concern. While approval of the European Union has continuously diminished, the tendency towards exclusion and nationalism is rising in alarming ways – including in our generation. And we wonder: will nationalist forces soon drive Europe apart?

After World War II, our great-grandparents pushed European integration on the basis of the humanistic values that have been Europe's cultural, political and economic foundation for centuries: the respect for human dignity, the protection of human and minority rights, democracy, the rule of law, freedom of opinion and religion, equal rights for the sexes and the social market economy. We, young Europeans from Germany and France, adhere to these values. We acknowledge European integration, since it is the only historically appropriate answer to the wars of the past and the challenges of the future. Yet, the legacy of three generations is more and more at risk.

In merely one decade, Europe has moved from being the epitome of stability, progress and growth to being a synonym for crisis. On average, about 25 percent of 15- to 24-year-olds in Europe do not have a job. In Greece and Spain, youth unemployment even exceeds 50 percent. Our generation is increasingly under pressure. We experience competition that is more and more unfair. And we wonder: will everybody soon be fighting against everybody else in Europe?

We are deeply concerned by the lack of courage to take on necessary reforms and initiatives. We miss convincing answers to questions on joint European action in order to fight unemployment and public debt and to find ways and means to together limit the negative consequences of climate change and demographic developments. And we wonder: What will the European Union's future look like?

It is because of our common history that we consider it our task and historical duty to protect the achievements of European integration and to shape Europe's future together. We therefore call upon the German and French governments to finally act together in a visible manner in order to reinvent the European project and to endow it with a new dynamic. To that end, we need a new agenda that guarantees dependable conditions in Europe and again offers prospects to us young adults. We are prepared to work towards this Europe together with you and in a dialogue with our European neighbours. Because we are Europe's future.

The TerraEuropa ambassadors:

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## **Our Agenda**

### **I. For an ambitious youth programme in Europe**

### **II. For a sustainable Europe**

### **III. For a Europe that is close to its citizens**

#### **I. For an ambitious youth programme in Europe**

More than 50 percent of young adults in Greece and Spain do not have a job; youth unemployment amounts to 25 percent within the entire EU – endless internships and dumping wages characterise reality for the “internship generation”.

We need secure prospects for the future. We believe that an action plan for youths to that end must be pursued with the same intensity as the attempts to save the financial system since 2008. Not only banks are system-relevant. We are too.

#### **For a large-scale European education offensive**

Despite all efforts to harmonise the various educational systems of the 28 member states: national educational borders continue to hamper the professional and cultural mobility that we need for the European economic area to develop in a dynamic way.

*1) How can we make successful exchange programmes such as Erasmus, Comenius or Leonardo accessible to all students and apprentices in Europe, as quickly and reliably as possible?*

We believe personal EU experiences already at a young age to be indispensable in order to develop necessary language skills, unfold talents and seize opportunities.

*2) How can we accomplish the most urgent and necessary harmonisation of secondary education, vocational training and university degrees as quickly as possible and in a dependable manner?*

Obstacles to educational mobility must be removed quickly, so as to facilitate the necessary professional mobility within Europe. We want to preserve the diversity in Europe's educational landscape and the unique features of its educational institutions. We want harmonisation, yet no mishmash.

### **For a dynamic European labour market**

In its current shape and organisation, the European labour market is hardly able to adequately use and take advantage of many young Europeans' potential. For that reason, we need new and determined cooperation within the European Union:

*1) How can we better link supply and demand for labour within Europe?*

Only improved professional mobility within Europe can reduce the imbalances created by the increasing need for skilled workforce in Northern Europe and the high rates of youth unemployment in Southern Europe. We need a European Labour Agency that makes job offers and further professional training opportunities accessible throughout Europe.

*2) How can we implement the dual vocational training system, which has proved to be so successful, as quickly as possible in all EU countries?*

Germany, Austria and Switzerland have the lowest youth unemployment rates in Europe: below ten percent. In these countries, the dual system of vocational training makes starting a career easier. Hands-on training offers young people early insights into professional practices while simultaneously catering to the needs of businesses. It is time this model was introduced in all member states with counselling and financial support by the EU.

*3) How can we better support innovative entrepreneurship throughout Europe?*

Innovation secures European businesses' competitiveness and creates jobs. For that reason, we need a pan-European programme in order to set free entrepreneurial potential, notably through tax incentives for research activities and the targeted support of private funding for small and medium enterprises in the field of new technologies.

## II. For a sustainable Europe

What will we inherit? Many EU member states' high public debt will remain a burden in the future. The consequences of climate change will drastically alter living conditions worldwide. Demographic change challenges our social systems.

This calls for new approaches throughout Europe. We cannot accept the intergenerational contract's unilateral cancellation. Neither side would be able to absorb this.

### **For an attractive, socially secure and just Europe**

By the year 2050, about one third of all EU citizens will be older than 65. Unless we take action, long-term imbalances in paying for social systems will be the result. In order to sustain our social systems based on the idea of solidarity and preserve our economic strength, we are dependent on immigration.

At the same time, the population in especially Asia and Africa will grow considerably. In Africa, the population is likely to double. We expect waves of migration to Europe, for political and economic reasons. EU member states need to prepare themselves together.

#### *1) How can European social systems become more compatible?*

In the long run, EU member states will have to harmonise their social systems so as to create good working conditions and the same prerequisites for social security. In light of continuously increasing life expectancies and, simultaneously, falling birth rates, we need a dependable common basis in order to pay for pension and long-term care insurance systems.

*2) How can we create an optimal framework for immigration at the EU level?*

Demographic developments throughout Europe make immigration a necessity that needs to be organised and managed at the European level. In addition, a successful integration policy is becoming more and more important if we want to ensure our societies' cohesion. For that reason, the EU member states should declare their adherence to their European values and define a common immigration and integration policy, built upon a common legal framework and protecting our European values.

*3) How can we act in concert when it comes to “development policies”?*

In the long run, peoples' flight from hunger and persecution and its dramatic consequences – such as, for instance, on Lampedusa – can only be reduced through political and economic improvements in their countries of origin. The European Union's member states must engage in development and cooperation in a more concerted manner and invest more in a coordinated development policy in order to effectively fight global imbalances.

## **For a European Green New Deal**

Worldwide, about 80 percent of the energy supplied stems from fossil sources. These do not only contribute to global warming and thus climate change, fossil reserves will also inevitably be depleted in the decades to come. EU member states must now agree on a joint programme for a massive increase of regenerative energy sources und speak with one voice for binding climate goals. Politicians must no longer ignore the problem at the expense of the next generation.

*1) How do we attain an infrastructure for alternative energy in Europe?*

Europe possesses great potential for renewable energy. Close cooperation in Europe on producing, distributing and storing green electricity makes sense

both ecologically and economically. To that end, we need a common energy policy with harmonised objectives and a consistent management.

*2) What should a strong European environmental policy look like?*

Ambitious intra-European CO<sub>2</sub> emission reduction targets, effective CO<sub>2</sub> emission trading and the EU speaking with one voice at the 2015 UN climate conference in Paris must be the EU's environmental policy objectives for the years to come.

*3) How can we secure Europe's competitive advantage in the Green Economy?*

Developing innovative procedures creates competitive advantage and employment in Europe. We therefore need to boost investments in research on increased efficiency of renewable energy and fuels. Targeted support for green technology "Made in EU" moreover makes for attractive jobs in Europe.



### III. For a Europe that is close to its citizens

Many European citizens feel only inadequately represented by EU institutions and consequently turn away from Europe. Young Europeans in particular mainly experience current developments in Europe as uncontrolled liberalisation, rather than as the successful unification of nations.

The EU again needs clearly set objectives. The EU countries' governments therefore must very openly support European integration. With the European Parliament's and the national parliaments' consent, the European Commission must be assigned an agenda that is closer to the concerns and expectations of Europe's citizens.

#### **For a comprehensible Europe**

The EU's political system seems undemocratic, complicated and opaque to many. The "EU's Management" has to reinvent itself, to act with citizens at the centre of attention and improve communication.

*1) How can we foster trust in the European Union and its institutions throughout Europe?*

Technocratic language creates distance and prevents understanding. Politicians and bureaucrats must communicate their projects and measures in ways that allow all citizens to understand what they are about. After the European elections, the EU's visions and objectives will moreover need to be redefined, with citizens' participation in this process through dialogue and via the media.

*2) How to make decision mechanisms more comprehensible?*

The European Commission, the European Parliament, the European Council, national parliaments and heads of government: Who decides what? Who is in charge of what? Who is responsible for what decision? And are decision-makers democratically elected? In our view, actively promoting clarity on those crucial issues time and again is a decisive prerequisite for broader acceptance of the EU's institutions and representatives among citizens.

**For a united Europe**

Europe is more than its institutions, as its distinct values govern our daily lives and our society. These values should serve as a firm footing in times of profound change and guide us in our decisions.

*1) Do we need a European charter of values?*

The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, solemnly proclaimed in 2000, was meant to raise EU citizens' awareness on European values and become a central point of reference. This could, for instance, be fostered by each elected politician's signing the European Charter of Fundamental Rights before taking office. Also, whoever applies for a residence permit in the EU should acquaint himself or herself with its values in this way.

*2) How can we ensure greater acceptance of the European Union?*

For reasons dictated by election campaign strategy, politicians again and again tend to make the EU responsible for unpopular national decisions. This sort of "EU bashing" leads to EU institutions and their decisions losing credibility and being less accepted. In the interest of all EU citizens, this must end.

## About TerraEuropa

TerraEuropa is an international platform in order for young adults to exchange their ideas on Europe among themselves and with representatives from politics, business and society. It was initiated by Michel Marlière, a French entrepreneur who chose to live in Germany. In the face of growing euroscepticism and separatism, he aims to encourage the young generation to more actively engage in Europe and participate more strongly in shaping the European House. TerraEuropa cooperates with Stiftung Genshagen, the French university Sciences Po, the Free University Berlin and the Franco-German Youth Office. Ipsos, the international market and social research company, is partner for opinion research.

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