

The Amsterdam Declaration

Volt's programme for
the European Parliament
2019 - 2024



Volt

Foreword

In a time of great political tensions, a group of Europeans from all walks of life decided it was time to stand up for what they believed in. It was time to act; Volt was born. We came together to fight for a better society, to express our commitment towards cooperation, and to outline our belief in a shared future. Ours is a message of hope, of courage, and of solidarity. A message for all to see that divisions will not tear down what our parents have built. Volt was created to re-energise Europe and to solve the issues we all have in common. Volt offers Europeans a new vision for Europe, one that embraces the EU's common aspirations and that faces its shortcomings head-on.

Today, Volt is running for the European Parliament, to bring new energy to politics and to shape the Europe we all need.

A Europe based on a strong political Union, where risks are shared, where benefits reach all Europeans, and where every person has a voice. A Union that shall be fixed. A Europe with a robust economy that provides opportunities for all, now and for generations to come. A Union that is an economic powerhouse. A Europe that takes care of its people, where children enjoy a cleaner environment, where migration flows are managed together, and where rights are guaranteed and responsibilities shared. A truly progressive Union.

Unprecedented in European history, Volt will campaign for the European elections on a single, common platform: the Amsterdam Declaration. A platform which is both visionary and realistic. Volt wants to ensure that it delivers on its promises, while settling for nothing less than a new and improved Europe.

The following programme details what Volt aims to achieve in the European Parliament, and is supported by a longer document explaining in more details what we will do and how we will do it. Volt has ensured that all of its commitments can be worked upon in the European Parliament.

A vote for Volt will be a vote to:

#1 Fix the EU

- by
- > creating a strong political union
 - > empowering its citizens
 - > increasing security and accountability



#2 Make Europe an economic powerhouse

- by
- > boosting growth and standards of living
 - > investing in the future
 - > putting education first

#3 Build a just and sustainable society

- by
- > seizing green opportunities
 - > managing migration humanely and responsibly
 - > pushing for fairness and equality

#1

Fix the EU by creating a strong political Union

Over the past sixty years, the EU has grown from a guardian of peace in Europe to something more meaningful, as it now works to secure rights, enhance trade, increase shared prosperity, and protect our heritage and environment. However, crises have shown that our institutions are unable to meet their goals. The EU needs to be reformed as the future lies in a federal and truly democratic Europe that will be led by and built by its citizens.

Governance

- > **Establish a Federal Europe with a European Government**, headed by a Prime Minister elected by the Parliament, and with a President elected by the people. This will create a strong, open and transparent European parliamentary democracy.
- > **Enable the creation of real EU political parties.** Current EU parties are loose coalitions of national parties, often with conflicting interests; a real EU democracy needs strong parties defending their vision of the future of Europe.
- > **Ensure the EU's ability to act** by deciding by majority on all issues in the Councils. Currently, States still decide on many issues by unanimity or consensus, making it far easier to block than to act.

Economy and finance

- > **Make our economy stronger and sustainable** through a Eurozone+ budget, a Banking Union, and a full Economic and Monetary Union under a European Finance Minister who will represent the EU.
- > **Give the European Central Bank the power to support employment and growth**, as well as prevent and solve financial crises. Beyond limiting inflation, the European Central Bank's mandate must be expanded to promote employment, sustainable growth, and crisis prevention and mitigation.
- > **Ensure multinationals pay their fair share** by collecting a minimum European corporate tax of 15% and harmonising corporate taxation across Member States. Tax avoidance by multinationals has undermined the financing of public services for decades.

European Parliament

- > **Empower Members of the European Parliament to fully represent citizens' interests** by being able to propose bills. As the only directly-elected EU institution, the European Parliament must be given the right to initiate legislation – just like national parliaments.
- > **Ensure that the work of the Parliament is fully transparent and prevent last-minute rewrites and back-room deals.** Record and make public all votes of Members of the European Parliament, and ensure a fixed time span for public review of bills before they are voted on.
- > **Ensure fair representation of all EU citizens** and strengthen the link between citizens and their representatives. This can be ensured by implementing the same voting rules for the European Parliament elections across the EU and by having citizens locally elect their Members of the European Parliament, whilst ensuring proportionality.

#1

Fix the EU by empowering its citizens

Europeans often feel unable to have their voice heard and to participate in decision-making processes. They often feel left out of politics. By empowering citizens, democracy will be strengthened. Firstly, barriers to inclusion need to be removed. Secondly, Europeans need to be given the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes beyond elections. Thirdly, conditions for deliberation and reasonable debate need to be put in place, to enable Europeans and policy-makers to take informed decisions.

Inclusion

- > **Remove barriers to voting for the European Parliament**, by testing electronic voting to offer voters better accessibility to elections, including expatriates and those with reduced mobility.
- > **Grant better access to public services and make it easy to interact with EU administrations**, by introducing an e-ID and by digitalizing the EU administration.

Participation

- > **Enable Europeans to participate in policy-making**, by creating digital platforms and citizen assemblies. This will give people the possibility to give feedback on legislative proposals, take part in political decisions and shape their societies.
- > **Give Europeans a say in how the budget of the EU is allocated**, by implementing participatory budgeting. EU citizens will be able to decide how a specific portion of EU funds is spent.

Deliberation

- > **Strengthen tomorrow's democracy with today's education**, by pushing States to include media literacy, citizenship education and knowledge of institutions in their curricula. This will strengthen EU citizens' active engagement in public life.
- > **Create real, trustworthy European news**, by introducing a common European Public Broadcasting Platform. This will supply EU citizens with an effective means of receiving information.



#1

Fix the EU

by increasing security and accountability

Security, transparency and anti-corruption measures are essential for generating trust in governments. The EU can and must do more on each of these fields. While Member States invest a lot in security, many resources are wasted due to duplication of investments and inefficiencies. The EU is in a better position to deal with cross-border threats. The fight against corruption and efforts towards better transparency need to be significantly improved.

Security

- > **Boost European defense capabilities**, by establishing a European army of committed Member States, while working towards the creation of EU-wide permanent forces with a unified EU military command under civilian control.
- > **Strengthen European internal security**, by turning the EU's current law enforcement agency (Europol) into a true federal-level police force and granting it authority to fight crossborder crime, terrorism and cybersecurity threats.
- > **Ensure the safety of the EU's digital infrastructure**, by making all EU software open source. This will reduce the dependency on monopolistic companies and will make our institutions cheaper, more transparent, and more resilient to data breaches.

Transparency

- > **Increase the transparency of the EU**, by requiring elected officials to disclose their office expenses and spending.
- > **Protect the press and whistleblowers**, by introducing strict guidelines limiting government punishment for the publication of confidential information in the public interest.
- > **Make all lobbying in the European Institutions transparent and monitored.** The registration of all lobbying activities in the public transparency register will be made mandatory, and a strict code of conduct will be introduced.

Corruption

- > **Make EU project funding dependent on national efforts to fight corruption.** Member States combating corruption will see their efforts rewarded, and others failing to do so will be sanctioned.
- > **Stop corruption by granting new investigative powers to the European Anti-Fraud and Public Prosecutor's Offices**, and increase the competences of the European Ombudsman to include examining suspicious handling of public funds.

#2

Make Europe an Economic Powerhouse by boosting growth and standards of living

The lack of quality jobs in many European countries is increasingly harmful, particularly to the European youth. Without enough jobs, room for entrepreneurship and equal chances for everyone, the continent will not thrive. Entrepreneurship needs to be promoted and access to opportunities made easier. Unemployment should be tackled by investing in education and empowering citizens in their job search, and those in need have to be supported.

Create Jobs

- > **Channel EU funds in challenged regions to create jobs**, by sponsoring smart and environmentally friendly investments, such as high-speed railway connections, improved accessibility and connectivity to rural areas and clean, local energy production sites.
- > **Increase public spending on professional and vocational education** to increase lifelong employability and the international competitiveness of apprentices. A special focus will be placed on areas with high long-term unemployment.
- > **Make it easier to find a job across Europe**, by setting up a real European Labour Platform to match the unemployed and employers across Europe. Expand the European Employment Services (EURES) and foster better cooperation with the private sector in order to move towards a truly united labour market.
- > **Invest in programmes supporting decentralised digital labour**, by providing devices and digital skills trainings at low costs. Investments will be focused on regions with high unemployment rates and with low level of digital skills or access to technology.

Entrepreneurship

- > **Make it easy to set up a business** by creating a European Digital One Stop Shop. This will enable people to set up a business in 3 working days at a minimal administrative cost. To complement this, registration fees and processes will be harmonised and reporting, tax filing, and other government interactions will be streamlined across the EU.
- > **Boost entrepreneurship and the creation of jobs**, by scaling up investments in technologies such as blockchain, big data, artificial intelligence and cloud technologies to help Europe's strategic sectors to compete globally.

No One Left Behind

- > **Ensure decent living standards**, by adopting a minimum income above poverty level in all Member States.
- > **Support people who lost their jobs in sectors or regions affected by economic crises**, by doubling the funding of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund and making it more flexible. These mechanisms will make the transition toward new jobs easier when a company ceases operations due to economic difficulties or moves outside the EU.

#2

Make Europe an Economic Powerhouse by investing in the future

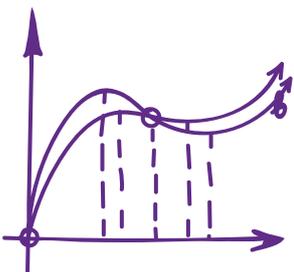
The world economy is undergoing major transformations, resulting in both opportunities and challenges for the continent. Europe needs to lead by example when it comes to the future of work, sustainability, competitiveness, and wellbeing. To this end, it is crucial for Europe to develop its research and innovation capacities. Amongst all technological developments to come, artificial intelligence is to be the most disruptive; Europe needs to be at the forefront of exploring its future potential.

Innovation

- > **Ensure European excellence in the future by doubling the spending on Research and Development to 4% of EU GDP by 2025.** Push countries to invest in innovation to master the environmental and social challenges of tomorrow.
- > **Become smart in Artificial Intelligence**, by creating the EU High Level Artificial Intelligence Coordination Office to gather the best minds and businesses in the field, set up a European AI Initiative, and establish high ethical standards for AI.
- > **Make Artificial Intelligence available and accessible for everyone**, by increasing the European Investment Bank's support for AI investments to at least €1 billion a year by 2020, and by setting up a centralised "AI-on-demand-platform" to provide a single access point to key AI resources in the EU.

Future of Work

- > **Protect the dignity and safety of workers, especially in new sectors.** Provide workers with non-traditional long-term contracts (e.g., gig, platform, freelance) with standards of protection comparable to those applicable to traditional forms of work.
- > **Create flexible workplaces via an EU-wide Working Time Choice Act**, enabling workers and employers to negotiate flexible forms of work that reflect the needs of the individual, the team, and the business.
- > **Prepare the European labour force for the challenges of tomorrow**, by setting up the European Sector Skills Council to research the skills needed in the future. This will enhance synergies between the private and public sector.



#2

Make Europe an Economic Powerhouse by putting education first

For Europe to reach its full potential, the education of its citizens must be a core priority. Education allows for the creation and sharing of knowledge, which enhances both mutual understanding and social cohesion. Volt wants to upgrade education from an early age duty to a lifelong companion, while improving the learning of formal and informal skills, and their recognition across Europe. This will ensure citizens stay employed and find better suited jobs.

Education

- > **Enable more people to experience different European countries**, by increasing the budget for EU exchange programmes (ERASMUS+), especially for secondary school students, apprentices and disadvantaged students.
- > **Make sure that everyone can keep up with a rapidly evolving society**, by extending lifelong learning to all, throughout their professional and personal lives.
- > **Bring education to the next level**, by increasing EU funding for teachers, school teachers, and introducing new teaching methods. This will adequately address how different students learn best and enhance their educational success..

The “Volta Programme”

- > **Establish the EU “Volta Programme”**, that will provide comprehensive financial support for all training activities, including the reskilling and upskilling of people.
- > **Make it easier to study and work anywhere in Europe**, by increasing the transparency and recognition of knowledge, skills, and competences.
- > **Increase the focus on digital literacy for all ages**, by starting online education and coding at an early age, by introducing respective life-long learning and vocational trainings, and by emphasizing mental health and social well-being in digital environments.



#3

Build a just and sustainable society by seizing the green opportunities

Europe must be at the forefront of a green economic transformation to reap its benefits and lead the fight against climate change. The world only has 12 years left to fight climate change and fulfill the Paris Climate Agreement. For this to happen, the shift towards sustainability needs to be much faster and bolder than it is today. While the EU cannot address global challenges alone, it can and should lead the way in trying to reduce the immediate and future effects of climate change and set an example for other regions. Only then will it be able to position itself in the green industries of the future.

Smart Energy

- > **Grow the green economy**, by introducing an EU-wide carbon tax and other forms of carbon pricing along the entire production chain and by ending subsidies on fossil-based fuel. The funds gained will be used for relevant climate mitigation and adaptation projects and to create new jobs.
- > **Use energy in a smarter way**, by introducing smart electricity grids, by setting more ambitious energy-saving targets, and by creating incentives for green and low-energy public transportation.

Circular economy

- > **Truly kick-start the circular economy**, by stimulating the provision of goods and services that are renewable and sustainable. This will be done by harmonizing tax incentives, speeding up the regulatory processes and providing funds to rethink the design and digitalisation of organisations, goods and services.
- > **Stop plastic-based pollution and reduce waste in general**, by taxing the use of plastic, single-use products and polluted recyclables, and by banning the export of waste into non-EU countries.
- > **Move towards sustainable consumption and government spending**, by introducing a Circular Economy Label, by adopting a green public procurement standard and by supporting resource sharing and product longevity.

Sustainable agriculture



- > **Support sustainable agriculture**, by refocusing the Common Agricultural Policy away from larger producers and towards smaller producers that use ecological approaches.
- > **Increase product quality and biodiversity**, by supporting farms that manage land in accordance with local ecosystems, by focusing on connecting natural habitats, and by banning the use of pesticides and neonicotinoids.

#3

Build a just and sustainable society by managing migration humanely and responsibly

The EU is undergoing a political crisis in its management of migration flows. Undoubtedly, the refugee crisis is a political crisis. Europe has a legal and moral responsibility to help, it has the capacity to absorb refugee flows, and Volt will turn this into opportunities for everyone. Accommodating a diverse group of labour migrants into the European labour market can contribute to both the welfare of European countries and that of the migrants' home countries.

Asylum Seekers and Refugees

- > **Manage refugee flows from outside the EU**, by setting up a Unified EU Refugee System. The Dublin System must be reformed and complemented by a settlement scheme which provides for penalties and sanctions against States refusing to fulfil their responsibility.
- > **Make the asylum system fair, effective and quick**, by issuing EU guidelines that ensure shorter asylum procedures and provide for social, legal and psychological support.
- > **Ensure successful integration and a benefit for the economy**. Asylum seekers must be able to enter the job market from day one, and their skills must be more easily recognised. In addition, language training must be offered to all asylum seekers.
- > **Uphold asylum seekers' and refugees' rights**, by monitoring and sanctioning Member States who breach these rights, e.g., by detaining asylum seekers when unnecessary and under inhumane conditions.
- > **Protect those in need**, by classifying famine and climate migrants as refugees under European law and by strengthening the use of humanitarian corridors.

Labour migration

- > **Protect both domestic and foreign workers against the negative effects of economic migration**, by applying minimal harmonization among all European countries ensuring that access to basic social, legal and medical services is guaranteed.
- > **Turn Europe into a talent and innovation hub**, by making it simpler and more attractive to obtain an expert visa, especially after acquiring a university degree from an EU Member State.
- > **Increase legal pathways into Europe**, by developing a specific visa that will be made available to temporary foreign workers.
- > **Ensure that countries of origin and European countries benefit from temporary economic migration**, by aligning the interest of both and by involving all relevant stakeholders (e.g., employers and trade unions) in the policy making process.

#3

Build a sustainable and just society by pushing for fairness and equality

People are still subject to discrimination and social exclusion because of their gender, sexuality, disability, appearance, origin, or beliefs. The EU needs to adopt a comprehensive approach, seeking to end all forms of discrimination. Everyone has to be guaranteed equal rights and opportunities, and human rights need to be respected, applied, and upheld. Let's make Europe equal by 2025!

Equality & Anti-Discrimination

- > **Break the glass ceiling**, by legally enforcing representation of women on publicly-listed corporate boards by 2025 and requiring businesses to report on gender pay and gender balance.
- > **Ensure that women's rights are upheld**, by legalizing and providing access to free abortion until the end of the first trimester, and providing free contraception everywhere across Europe.
- > **Guarantee equal rights to all**, by ensuring access to the same procedures, rights and unions to every individual in society, including marriage for all.

Public Sector

- > **End police violence and discriminatory treatment of minorities**, by providing police training and revising laws, ending biased persecution and ensuring that the justice system does not discriminate against minorities.
- > **Aim for full equality and diversity for underrepresented groups in the public sector in Member States and in EU institutions**, by putting in place preferential treatment, reporting on diversity and accommodating special needs.
- > **Ensure equal gender representation in EU politics and encourage female participation**, by having gender-alternate lists of candidates and by other means, such as mandatory reporting on gender representation.

Inclusion

- > **Make housing affordable**, by integrating social and shared housing into the EU cohesion policy. Use available funds for social housing to improve the situation of low income groups, including marginalised groups, and urge Member States to subsidise shared social living.
- > **Alleviate child poverty**, by implementing a minimum standard for universal child benefits across the EU.

Volt

