

ECR GROUP

ACHIEVEMENTS 2019–2024


BRINGING COMMON
SENSE BACK



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FOREWORD



Dear reader,

The ECR Group emerged as a prominent centre-right force in 2009, driven by a clear dissatisfaction with the centralising tendencies of the EU. Since then, we have remained true to our pledge to bring common sense back to the policies of the European Union. In the following pages, we would like to show you what we have achieved in the European Parliament over the last 5 years.

In the 2019-2024 legislative period, the ECR Group continued to advocate for a reformed European Union under its guiding principle of Eurorealism, balancing cooperation between Member States with the preservation of their unique identities and autonomy. That is why we also advocated for the decentralisation of powers back to national capitals, town halls, families and individuals. The main objective of the ECR Group has been to focus the EU's efforts on areas that can truly benefit citizens and all Member States, emphasising added-value cooperation and rejecting a supranational superstate.

In the European Parliament, members of the ECR Group rolled up their sleeves and got down to the nitty-gritty of finding sensible solutions in a constructive way. Their efforts have led to results that improve people's lives every day, even if they do not always make good headlines in the newspapers and even if they have sometimes only been able to prevent the worst of what some over-ideological and out-of-touch majorities in Parliament have come up with. For the ECR Group, it is clear that this EU needs to be reformed and brought back to its original idea: to guaranteeing the prosperous cooperation of equal and sovereign Member States, making the EU more flexible, open, and economically dynamic.

We have always stood up for family values and stable family units, which are the cornerstones of social cohesion and play a crucial role in promoting individual well-being and community solidarity. We have also argued that every decision the EU takes must take into account whether it adds value for hard-working people who pay taxes across the EU.

The ECR Group's commitment to a better and more prosperous Europe is unwavering.
We believe that an EU that respects the wishes of its citizens, spends taxpayers' money responsibly and upholds the sovereignty of national governments can build a stronger future for all Europeans.

Yours sincerely,

Prof Ryszard Legutko & Nicola Procaccini
Co-Presidents of the ECR Group in the European Parliament

BORDER SECURITY

We have been at the forefront of calls for better border security

The ECR has helped combat illegal migration

The ECR underlined the need for a new asylum and migration pact that focuses on the real issues of migration. We see capacity building outside the EU's borders, partnerships with third countries and stronger protection of external borders as essential for a European migration strategy. The ECR opposed overloading the Pact with guarantees of asylum seekers' rights. While supporting a reform of the Dublin Regulation, the ECR argued for more emphasis on addressing migration failures from an external perspective. Through amendments, the ECR contributed to the Parliament's position that Member States should have the possibility to set up places for border procedures on the territory of the Member States and not only at the border.

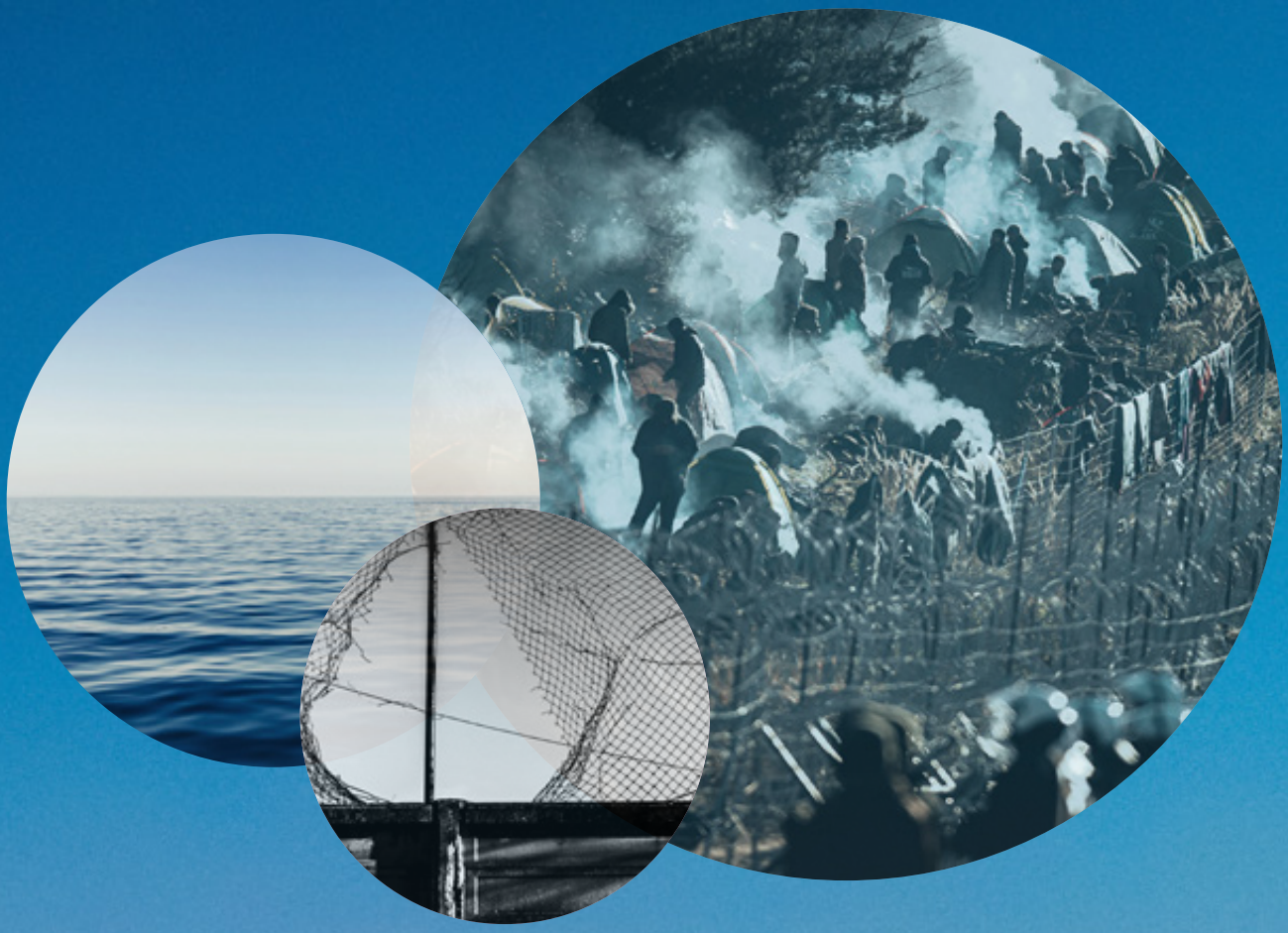
The ECR has helped Member States secure their borders against instrumentalised migration

Securing the EU's external borders is key to ensuring the security and free movement of European citizens within the Schengen area. The lack of tools to effectively combat the weaponisation of migrants, and the current lack of cooperation from our neighbours in the management of migration flows, show the need for profound changes in the EU's migration rules. In this context, the ECR led several initiatives to better support frontline Member States with EU funding, to build adequate infrastructure, including physical barriers to protect our external borders. The ECR also called for increased cooperation with third countries, including awareness-raising through information campaigns to deter migrants from making the dangerous journey to Europe. The ECR also supports making access to development funds conditional on a real cooperation, including an effective fight against human traffickers and human smugglers.

The ECR has improved internal Security via Eurodac

The reformed Eurodac database is a key element of the Migration Pact. It allows for the comparison of biometric data to identify individuals staying illegally in the EU in order to facilitate return procedures. The ECR rapporteur led the Parliament's negotiating team achieving a strong regulation that will help Member States in their fight against illegal immigration. The new database lowers the age for data collection to six years and introduces security alerts to inform competent authorities that a person may pose a security threat. From the date of entry into force, it will be more difficult for those carrying false documents or using any deceptive means, to avoid their identification when requested by the competent authorities.





The ECR has made returns of illegal migrants more effective

The ECR has worked hard to improve the Return Directive in order to streamline the return process for rejected applicants for international protection at the border. Key objectives include establishing clearer rules for return decisions, improving the exchange of information between authorities and effectively managing returns in order to deter illegal migration. The ECR called for the introduction of an option for Member States to charge the costs of enforced return to the foreign national and for a five-day time limit for appeals against return decisions. We believe that return decisions should be mutually recognised by Member States, with a voluntary departure period and appropriate safeguards.

The ECR has helped to digitise the visa process

The ECR has supported calls for the digitalisation of the visa procedure, as we believe that Member States would benefit by reducing the time needed to process visa applications thanks to the digitalisation of the procedure. A digital visa would improve the internal security of the Schengen area, as the visa sticker could no longer be falsified, and would significantly reduce the administrative burden on Member States' central authorities and consulates.

The ECR has been successful in strengthening border protection

The ECR has consistently argued that the EU budget should provide adequate funding to make our external borders more secure. The ECR has supported budget increases for the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), which assists Member States in protecting external borders and fighting cross-border crime. The ECR also took the initiative to allow EU budget contributions to finance the construction of border fences. The ECR also supported the mobilisation of substantial funds to strengthen border protection capacities and infrastructure, surveillance means, including aerial surveillance, and equipment.

SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE

We have been the most outspoken group against Russian aggression and the most loyal ally of Ukraine

The ECR has stood firm with Ukraine

From the very beginning of the legislature, the ECR has supported Ukraine's territorial integrity and pro-European aspirations. We managed to include a call for the cancellation of the Nord Stream project in almost every resolution on Ukraine or Russia, long before other political forces in the European Parliament recognised the nature of Putin's Russia and started to do the same. The ECR has consistently underlined the illegality of the occupation of Crimea and supported the Crimean Tatars by organising events and hearings in the Parliament and in different EU Member States. Finally, after Russia launched its war of aggression, the ECR was the first group to call for the widest possible military and financial aid to Ukraine, including the supply of advanced Western battle tanks, air defence, artillery and missile systems. We were also the first group to call for a military training mission for the Ukrainian Armed Forces (CSDP EUMAM Ukriane), which has been established and has trained some 40,000 UAF troops in combined and specialised weapons training by the end of 2023. We also successfully called for tougher sanctions against Russia and for finding a way to use frozen Russian assets for Ukraine's reconstruction.

The ECR has supported the people of Ukraine in the face of Russian aggression

The ECR has been at the forefront of advocating additional EU budgetary support, both to help the innocent civilian population of Ukraine and to provide structural support to the Ukrainian armed forces in defence of their homeland. Through a pilot project, the ECR has succeeded in bringing the EU's extensive experience in mine clearance to bear in developing technology and supporting specific activities to remove munitions and conventional weapons from the sea. Indeed, the current war will leave the Black and Azov Seas littered with the remains of sunken ships and missiles, dumped munitions and other hazards that damage the underwater environment and pose a threat to coastal communities.

The ECR has been warning about Russia

The ECR has consistently warned against closer ties with Russia and against deepening dependence on it for energy and trade, which will still be the case for most of the old Member States until 2022. We have also pointed out the aggressive nature of the current regime, rooted in history and an imperialist, neo-colonial mind-set. At the same time, we have supported those who oppose Vladimir Putin and his rule, hosting numerous events and guests and working closely with representatives of nations that are part of the Russian Federation but would prefer to be independent. The ECR has also initiated resolutions on the difficult history and crimes of the Soviet Union and later Russia, including deportations, mass killings of people in Poland and Ukraine, and later atrocities in Chechnya, Syria and Ukraine. The ECR also initiated and led a report on the Arctic, highlighting the need for freedom of navigation and resource security, as well as transatlantic cooperation and deterrence against Russia.



The ECR has helped to mobilise emergency support amid Russia's invasion of Ukraine

From the outset of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the ECR has highlighted the urgent need for emergency support for those escaping the conflict. ECR MEPs welcomed the European Commission's CARE and FAST CARE proposals, introducing flexibility and simplification to swiftly reallocate funding within the 2014-2020 cohesion policy rules. The regulations aimed to help EU countries provide rapid emergency support, including temporary accommodation, food, water, healthcare, and education for those fleeing Russian aggression in Ukraine. Additionally, the €10 billion allocation from the Recovery Assistance Fund for Cohesion and Territories of Europe ("REACT-EU") for 2022 can be utilised for new requests, aligning with the overall goal of post-pandemic recovery.

The ECR has helped to strengthen the European defence industry

The ECR co-led the European Defence Industry Reinforcement through Common Procurement Act and the Ammunition Production Support Act, which successfully secured €300 million in subsidies for the European defence industry to replenish Member States' stockpiles, while also securing €500 million in subsidies for European ammunition development to ensure the continued supply of 155mm ammunition to Ukraine. The ECR also led several initiatives to secure the participation of third countries in ongoing PESCO projects, most notably the inclusion of the US, Canada and Norway in the Permanent Structured Cooperation on Military Mobility (PESCO), which continues to support and maintain transatlantic security cooperation to ensure that our allies can reach and manoeuvre in Europe.



PROTECTING CITIZENS

We have worked hard to protect Europe's citizens

The ECR has supported the fight against criminals and terrorists

Keeping Europe's citizens safe is a top priority for the ECR. Over the years, we have worked hard to secure borders, provide law enforcement with essential tools and promote cross-border cooperation. ECR members have successfully led negotiations in the European Parliament, resulting in impactful legislation. One notable achievement is legislation that hampers criminals and terrorists from using cryptocurrencies to finance or hide their profits. We also played a key role in shaping legislation on information about individuals flying across our borders. In both cases, we balanced strict privacy safeguards with necessary access for police, judiciary, and border authorities. These measures make life more difficult for criminals and terrorists, while enhancing the security for law-abiding citizens.

The ECR has been fighting against online terrorism

The ECR spearheaded the rapporteurship on the regulation for the removal of terrorist content online, playing a crucial role in shaping new rules that empower competent national authorities. These rules allow authorities to request the prompt removal of violent terrorist material within one hour.
The regulation mandates online platforms to take a proactive stance in detecting and removing terrorist content, ensuring swift action within the one-hour timeframe. Complaint mechanisms have been included so that content that has been removed in error can be restored as quickly as possible.
This initiative is part of the Commission's counter-terrorism agenda.





The ECR has improved Eurojust data exchange

The ECR led a report on how Member States exchange information on terrorism-related cases with Eurojust through various channels. The old system did not allow for adequate cross-checking of information. Eurojust will now be able to play a stronger and more proactive role in supporting coordination and cooperation between national authorities investigating and prosecuting terrorist offences.

The ECR has strengthened national cooperation with Interpol

The ECR led a report identifying areas where cooperation between national police authorities, Europol and Interpol should be intensified in order to meet a number of vital operational needs and to implement existing legislation to better combat terrorism and organised crime. Frontex should also have access to Interpol databases and Eurojust should be able to exchange operational information with Interpol. The Commission was also invited to examine the possibility of excluding the Russian Federation from Interpol systems.

LIMITING GREEN EXCESS

We have defended the interests of businesses and citizens against the excesses of the Green Deal

The ECR has called for a sensible and workable approach to EU climate policy

The ECR is dedicated to ensuring the EU's climate policy is based on sound evidence and realistic goals. We believe that flexibility is key for EU Member States, cities, and regions to achieve these goals. In contrast to other groups, the ECR opted not to endorse the EU's Climate Law, citing concerns over costly new administrative structures and the inclusion of a 2040 intermediate climate target. For the ECR, such measures might overshadow efforts towards achieving the current 2030 target, and hastily predetermine the policy requirements for achieving net zero emissions by mid-century. In early 2023, the ECR did not support the Fit for 55 policy package, citing reservations about potential cost escalations and administrative burdens for the sectors that would be affected. While the ECR acknowledged the role of a Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) in addressing carbon leakage, we expressed concerns about the overall policy design and its potential for cost increases for the industry and World Trade Organisation (WTO) non-compliance. The ECR also has misgivings about changes in the new Emissions Trading System (ETS), as it poses potential administrative burdens on industries during post-pandemic recovery. Despite obtaining some important concessions on scope and funding, the ECR was unable to endorse the agreement. We believe that the ETS must be designed in a way that fosters a healthy balance between environmental protection and economic growth. Lastly, the ECR rejected the regulation on CO_2 emissions from cars and vans, finding the path to zero CO_2 emissions and full electrification of all new light-commercial vehicles by 2035 unacceptable due to concerns about raw material scarcity and potential job losses in the automotive industry.



The ECR has been driving common-sense solutions in shaping Euro 7 vehicle emission standards

The ECR played a crucial role in shaping the Euro 7 vehicle emission standards, ensuring realistic and feasible pollution limits across various vehicle types. This legislation, covering cars, vans, buses, and trucks, introduces regulations for electric vehicles, addressing issues such as particulate pollution from brake wear, micro-plastic from tyre abrasion, and battery durability. The ECR has injected common sense into what was an overly ambitious Commission proposal and opposed extensive changes to combustion engine standards before widespread electrification in 2035, aiming to balance environmental goals and industry interests. Collaborating with other political groups, the ECR secured a strong Parliament negotiating mandate with realistic emission reduction targets, feasible timelines, and cost-effective testing measures. The Council shared Parliament's concerns about over-regulating the sector before electrification. As a result, they adopted a similar negotiating position that led to a prompt and fair agreement benefiting consumers, the environment, and the automotive industry.

The ECR has called for alternatives to the Green Deal's 'all-electric doctrine'

During the European Parliament's work on the Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Regulation (AFIR), the ECR strongly emphasised the need for a technology-neutral approach. Despite its advocacy, the final text remained disproportionately in favour of an immediate shift to electricity, raising concerns about dependence on China. The ECR criticised the regulation for its ideological approach, pushing for an all-electric transition without taking into account potential dependencies and the current energy crisis. We are determined to resist efforts to reload the Green Deal, which we see as an ideologically driven policy failure with potentially disastrous consequences. The ECR warns against over-ambitious targets that are out of touch with reality and risk making the transition unachievable.

The ECR has supported nuclear power and technological neutrality

In all areas of sustainable finance regulation, the ECR has negotiated in favour of a strong role for nuclear energy, as it provides pilot capacity and thus significantly secures Europe's fossil-free power supply. The ECR has repeatedly contributed to enhancing the role of nuclear energy as an affordable, reliable, fossil-free and safe energy source in Member States' energy mixes. While working on the creation of European Green Bonds, the ECR succeeded in mitigating excessive ideology and discrimination against both gas and nuclear energy.





The ECR has been striking a balance for sustainability

The ECR is in favour of promoting sustainable practices through circular design, but stresses that legislation should be proportionate and not overly burdensome for manufacturers, businesses, or consumers. In July 2023, the ECR expressed serious concerns about the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation, and rejected an overly ambitious negotiating mandate that had received broad support from other political groups. The ECR worked with the Council to address concerns related to administrative burdens, potential disruptions to manufacturing and innovation, and potential conflicts with existing legislation.

The ECR has been campaigning for the right balance in the packaging waste regulation

The ECR has helped to prevent new requirements in the Packaging Waste Regulation, such as refill quotas and bans, from being impractical and excessively costly for certain Member States, producers and consumers. The agreement is now an important milestone in tackling the environmental impact of excessive packaging waste and promoting a sustainable future for producers and retailers. It requires packaging to be recyclable and to minimise the presence of harmful substances. It also sets specific reuse targets, restricts certain types of single-use packaging and requires companies to minimise their use of packaging. In addition, the agreement raises consumer awareness by introducing standardised information labelling requirements.

The ECR has been supporting workers and businesses

The ECR played a key role in negotiating the Just Transition Fund (JTF), the primary component of the Just Transition Mechanism. This tool aims to support regions, industries, and workers facing challenges in implementing the European Green Deal. The investment package, totalling €17.5 billion, comes from the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027 and the European Recovery Instrument. The ECR worked diligently to allow support for financially struggling businesses under temporary EU state aid rules. Additional exceptions were secured for natural gas projects replacing coal heating, retrofitting gas infrastructure for renewables, and procuring clean vehicles for civil protection and fire services.

A DIGITAL EUROPE

We have made the digital world a priority

The ECR has called for an ethical framework for artificial intelligence

The ECR has supported calls for the establishment of a European legal framework in the field of artificial intelligence that is capable of meeting the challenges of the future, in particular with regard to ethical principles for the development, diffusion and use of artificial intelligence, robotics and related technologies. We have worked to reaffirm the central and irreplaceable role of human control and a human-centred approach.

The ECR has promoted freedom, transparency, and consumer protection in the digital realm

In the 2019-2024 term, the ECR's work in the digital policy area – spanning the AI Act, Digital Services Act (DSA), and Data Act – has been guided by a commitment to balancing the need for regulation with the imperative to foster innovation, in line with the principles of the ECR. Across various legislative files, we have consistently championed the cause of freedom of speech and transparency. In the DSA, the ECR ensured that the regulations addressed challenges posed by large online platforms without restricting free expression. Our efforts resulted in provisions empowering users to challenge content moderation decisions and ensuring greater transparency regarding internal moderation policies of online platforms. We successfully opposed the introduction of mass surveillance of the internet, a measure that could have limited citizens' freedoms.

The ECR has ensured consumer protection in the Digital Services Act (DSA)

Across all of our legislative frameworks, we have sought to ensure that consumer protection is not overlooked. In the DSA, our focus on better tackling interfaces that have been carefully crafted to trick users, known as dark patterns, and on additional safeguards for products sold through marketplaces was aimed at preventing consumer abuse in the digital space, but also to avoid higher prices and more limited choice for consumers. In addition, in the General Product Safety Regulation, we ensured that online marketplaces meet strict safety standards while preserving their business models. We refused to simply turn these platforms into online shops. This balance is crucial to maintaining a competitive and convenient shopping option that benefits consumers and keeps prices low. The ECR was also able to retain its amendments focusing on developing the digital capacity of market surveillance authorities, which will be key to detecting and successfully removing dangerous products from the market.




BRINGING COMMON
SENSE BACK

The ECR has been an advocate for transparent artificial intelligence (AI) systems

We have been advocating for transparency in AI systems, particularly in foundational and general purpose AI systems such as ChatGPT. The ECR has ensured that AI development is transparent and accountable, in line with our commitment to individual freedoms and democratic accountability. We see AI as a driver of growth and prosperity, provided it has proper oversight. The ECR rejected the use of powerful AI systems for social scoring or mass surveillance that could deter participation in demonstrations or general opposition to controversial public policies, where political correctness and ideology prevail over common sense.

The ECR has broken through the barriers of geo-blocking

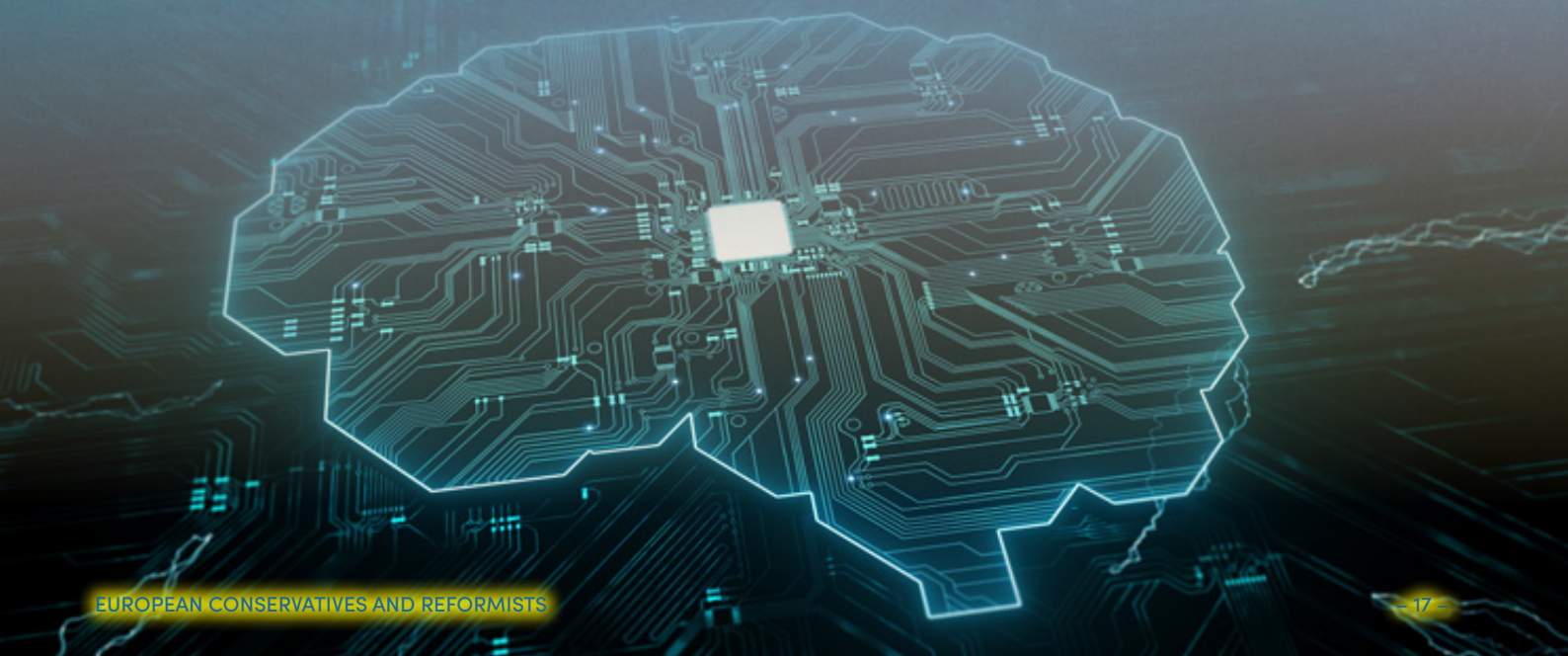
The ECR led the evaluation of the implementation of geo-blocking rules as part of its broader agenda on cross-border trade and digital market integration. With a balanced approach, especially in the complex area of audio-visual content, the ECR demonstrated evidence-based policy-making, taking into account the unique dynamics in different sectors. The focus was on reducing geo-blocking, especially for EU citizens, and ensuring access to entertainment and news in their national language. The complexity of copyright and licensing agreements was recognised with a balanced approach being sought that promotes consumer choice without jeopardising the creative industries and their economic contribution.

The ECR has fostered innovation and competitiveness in the digital marketplace

Recognising the importance of cloud services in the Data Act was a crucial step for the development of advanced applications or AI. The ECR refocused the Commission's proposal to better serve the needs of business customers, ensuring that EU customers can continue to choose from the most advanced technologies on the market. This approach required a series of intense negotiations. In the end, however, the ECR succeeded in creating more flexibility between providers and customers, keeping innovation channels open and preserving the freedom to do business in the EU for all market players.

The ECR has enhanced regulatory sandboxes for artificial intelligence

In the Artificial Intelligence Act, our pursuit of regulatory sandboxes was an example of our commitment to innovation. These sandboxes allow AI systems to be tested in controlled environments, fostering technological progress while managing potential risks. The ECR is proud that the Commission has decided to take up the ECR's idea, which was first proposed and included in the Parliament's own-initiative report on product safety in 2020.



BOOSTING GROWTH

We have put forward sound, pragmatic, non-ideological policies to boost economic growth

The ECR has been reviewing EU legislation

In line with the principles of market efficiency, evidence-based policy and regulatory prudence, the ECR has succeeded in including strategic review clauses in EU legislation. These clauses require a careful assessment of the effectiveness of specific provisions and their impact on citizens and businesses. The review clauses will provide an opportunity to assess whether legislation is, in practice, efficient, delivering its objectives and in line with evolving market realities and technological advances. This is an important opportunity to make EU legislation more consistent with the principles of market openness, fair competition and consumer choice.

The ECR has fostered an open single market

The ECR has significantly shaped the Commission's agenda, among others, through own-initiative reports, prioritising an open and competitive internal market. This focus involves breaking down service market barriers, reducing non-tariff obstacles, and boosting administrative digital capacity. Guided by these principles, the ECR has showcased its commitment to the EU's most significant accomplishment—the internal market. Our aim is to uphold the four freedoms, fostering a single market driven by non-discriminatory rules that benefit all Member States, businesses, consumers, and the broader European economy. The ECR's steadfast commitment to the Internal Market has led to the establishment of the Single Market Enforcement Taskforce and the formulation of crucial reports on the single market's future. One example is the report on Tackling Non-Tariff and Non-Fiscal Barriers in the Internal Market & Strengthening the Free Movement of Services, where we made clear recommendations to the Commission on what needs to be done to enable businesses to better benefit from the untapped potential of digital integration in the services sector.

The ECR has been fighting the Due Diligence Directive to avoid unnecessary red tape

The ECR has been the most critical group of the new Due Diligence Directive, pointing out that the proposal will be very problematic to implement, especially for small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), as supply chains are complex and consist of hundreds, sometimes even thousands of companies. Therefore, due diligence should only apply to the upstream part of the supply chain. As the EU already has a very high standard of human rights, environmental standards and legally binding frameworks in place, companies based in the EU should be presumed to act in accordance with national and EU law. Supply chains within the EU should therefore be excluded from the scope of the directive.





The ECR has been protecting intellectual property

Intellectual Property (IP) intensive industries account for 45 per cent of total EU GDP and 93 per cent of total EU exports, while the value added from IP is growing in most European industrial ecosystems. The ECR made a particular effort to highlight the importance of financial support for SMEs for IP protection and screening, as well as assistance with the speedy filing of trademarks or designs. Previously, EU legislation only protected geographical indications (GIs) for agricultural products, foodstuffs, wines and spirits, and there was no mechanism at EU level to protect the names of craft and industrial products. The ECR has succeeded in making GI protection directly applicable to these products. Producers will be able to certify the link between quality and geographical origin, thereby safeguarding specific local skills and traditions.

The ECR has helped to make investment fund rules more flexible and business-friendly

The ECR has successfully negotiated a revision of the European Long-Term Investment Fund (ELTIF) rules. It will be easier for retail investors to invest their savings in a well-diversified asset class, subject to appropriate investor protection safeguards. EU companies will have better access to more stable and diversified long-term funding, benefiting the EU economy as a whole. According to industry estimates, the ECR-led reform could lead to an additional €100 billion of private financing over the next five years in areas such as infrastructure projects, real estate and SMEs.

The ECR has made payments smoother and faster for consumers and businesses

Thanks to the work of the ECR, EU banks will be obliged to offer their customers instant payment services at no extra cost and within strict time limits. Money will have to be transferred within ten seconds at any time of the day, including outside business hours, not only within the same country but also to another EU Member State. Customers will enjoy smoother payment options, businesses will face lower costs, and EU payment systems as a whole will become more competitive. The ECR has also ensured that, under certain conditions, fintech companies will have direct access to the European Central Bank's payment infrastructure, rather than having to pay banks to do it for them.

The ECR has contributed to establish clear rules for crowdfunding

With the help of the ECR, a harmonised approach has been established with a single set of rules for crowdfunding services operating in the EU, with no possibility for national legislation to deviate from the regulation. As crowdfunding is often an attractive funding option for start-ups and SMEs, a high level of consumer protection is also part of the package.

The ECR has advocated realism and technology neutrality in sustainable finance regulation

A key priority for the ECR was to reduce much of the stifling regulation that the EU has adopted and applied to businesses, while ensuring that this does not happen in the future. By ensuring that the EU is held to account on unnecessary sustainable finance regulation, businesses will be better able to grow, remain competitive and profitable, and create more jobs. The ECR emphasised the need to counterbalance the emphasis on specific green sectors, promoting innovation in diverse areas to ensure broader economic growth.



The ECR has ensured a fair and open digital market

Throughout our work on the Digital Services Act (DSA), we have been vigilant in upholding the principles of limited liability and country of origin, which are cornerstones of a fair and open digital market in Europe. Our efforts have been instrumental in ensuring that these principles remain intact for SMEs, fostering a digital environment where businesses can thrive without undue regulatory burdens. In the Data Act, our advocacy against excessive compliance costs and our support for multi-cloud strategies reflect our commitment to an open and competitive economy. We have also worked to ensure that regulation does not unnecessarily burden small businesses, promoting a diverse and vibrant digital marketplace.

The ECR has shaped EU standardisation

The ECR has been instrumental in moulding the European Parliament's standardisation approach in line with our core values of market efficiency and strategic geopolitical cooperation. Addressing challenges from disruptive technologies like AI and the growing reliance on digital tools necessitates a collaborative approach with our global partners. Our commitment is made clear in an ECR report on the internal market's standardisation strategy and in our active participation in the regulation on European standardisation. We emphasised the importance of an open and competitive EU market that collaborates effectively with global counterparts. Rejecting the Commission's proposal to single out certain companies based on their country of establishment, unless it threatens national security, the ECR upheld partnerships with partners from the transatlantic community and allied Asian countries. We advocated for cooperation and healthy competition, discouraging the use of standards as a barrier to market access. A key achievement of the ECR was that the Parliament's recommendations stressed giving SMEs a stronger voice, making the standardisation process more democratic and representative of diverse market needs.

ECR has helped SMEs navigate the new forced labour legislation

With regard to the new regulation banning domestic and imported products that have been produced wholly or partly using forced labour, the ECR stressed the need for an impact assessment on how forced labour legislation would affect the European economy. As part of our efforts, we successfully pushed the Commission to produce guidelines specifically designed to assist SMEs in navigating the implementation of these rules. While there may be reservations, regarding the potential effects of the new rules on the internal market, especially concerning European SMEs and consumers, the ECR stands behind the regulation's objective and condemns forced labour in all of its forms.



ENHANCED TRADE

We have been the strongest voice for a bold vision for trade

The ECR has supported open strategic autonomy

In the aftermath of the Covid-19 crisis and the brutal Russian aggression in Ukraine, it has become clear that globalisation as we know it, with its just-in-time model, is under stress, with the EU facing various supply chain vulnerabilities. The ECR has therefore supported the concept of Open Strategic Autonomy, which encourages nearshoring and the re-shoring of key production to the EU-27, while de-risking our vulnerable supply chains without falling into the trap of protectionism.

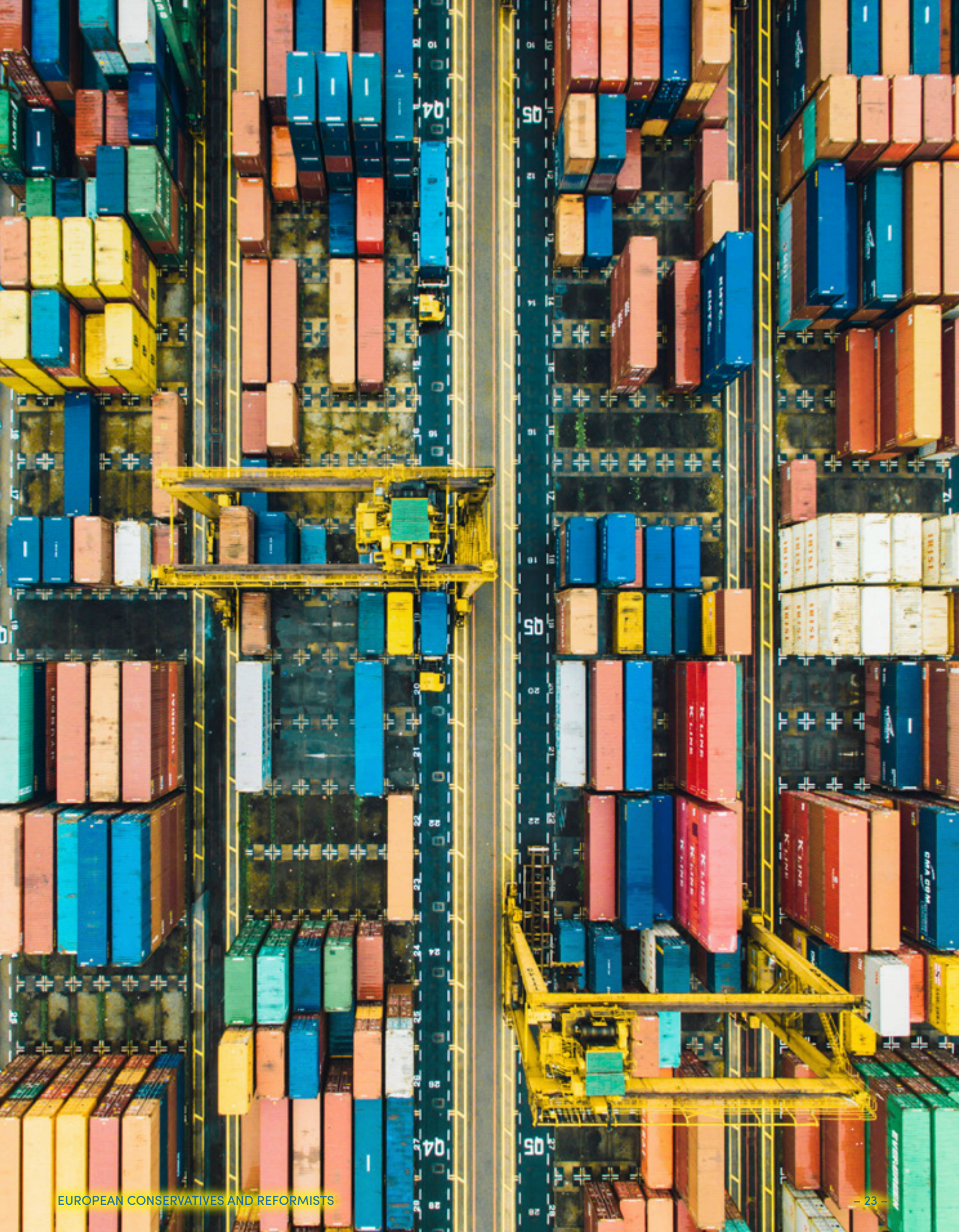
The ECR has encouraged the EU-Vietnam Free Trade and Investment Protection Agreements

Throughout this mandate, the ECR has defended rules-based and open trade. More open trade means more jobs, more business opportunities, a greater diversification of our supply chains, and cheaper goods. The ECR led on the most comprehensive trade agreement ever concluded with a developing country: the EU-Vietnam Free Trade and Investment Agreement. We managed to steer these agreements through the European Parliament at a difficult time when other political groups were much less favourable to new EU trade agreements and favoured a sanctions-based trade model.

The ECR has endorsed the EU-New Zealand and EU-Chile Trade Agreements

The ECR also supported the adoption of the EU-New Zealand and EU-Chile Trade Agreements. It is regretful, however, that only three new trade agreements were ratified under this mandate, preventing further progress on important new trade and investment agreements with key partners. The ECR believes that it is essential to open up more markets and diversify our supply chains, particularly in terms of access to critical raw materials. ECR MEPs have been at the forefront of promoting ambitious new agreements beneficial to both parties





The ECR has backed the Trade and Cooperation Agreement with the UK and the establishment of a Trade and Technology Council with the US

Recognising the importance of further strengthening the transatlantic relationship, the ECR fully supported the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) and the subsequent Windsor Framework Agreement, which maximises frictionless trade between the EU and the UK. We have also been at the forefront of calls for the establishment of a fully-fledged Trade and Technology Council with the US.

The ECR has improved trade, geographical indications, and investment relations with India

The ECR has been focused on the fast-growing Indo-Pacific region. Not only did we secure the rapporteurship of a forward-looking and ambitious report on EU-Indo-Pacific relations, we also took the lead in promoting closer EU-India relations. The ECR also secured the rapporteurship for the conclusion of ambitious and comprehensive EU-India Free Trade, Investment and Geographical Indication Agreements, which garnered strong support in plenary. Further, the ECR strongly supported the creation of a dedicated Trade and Technology Council with India.

The ECR has protected EU businesses from unfair competition

To better protect EU companies and jobs from unfair competition, the ECR supported several new autonomous EU instruments, such as the new EU Anti-Coercion Instrument, the Foreign Subsidies Instrument and the International Procurement Instrument. The ECR also welcomed the creation of a stronger trade enforcement service within the Commission to ensure a level playing field for EU companies around the world. Regarding the reform of the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP), the ECR will continue to support the Commission's proposal to link GSP trade preferences to beneficiary countries' cooperation on migration and the readmission of rejected asylum seekers.

The ECR has promoted reform of the World Trade Organisation

The ECR recognises that free trade and globalisation must benefit everyone, and that in any international trade agreements, lawmakers must be mindful of their impact on wages, jobs, local industry and the future of the EU economy. That's why we believe that the EU, together with strategic allies such as the US and the UK, should take the lead in promoting a future-proof reform of the World Trade Organisation, including a well-functioning appellate body as a two-tier dispute settlement system. countries' cooperation on migration and the readmission of rejected asylum seekers.



A HEALTHIER EUROPE

We have played a key role in protecting the health of citizens

The ECR has helped respond to the Covid-19 emergency

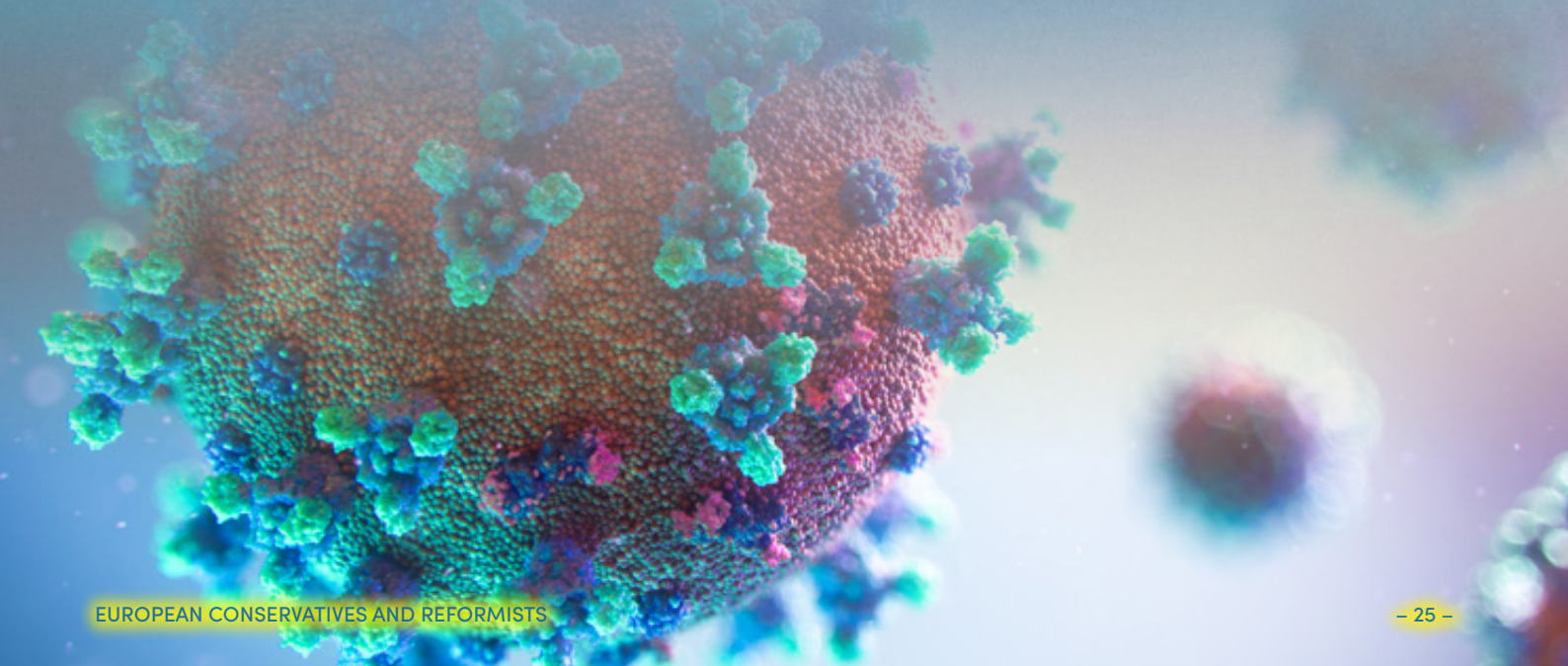
During the Covid-19 crisis, the ECR helped expediting the approval of the "Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative" (CRII) and "Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative Plus" (CRII+). ECR MEPs actively supported and welcomed the Commission's proposals, contributing to the speedy adoption of regulations during the emergency. Emphasising the need for cohesion policy rationalisation, the ECR highlighted the importance of simplification and flexibility in resource utilisation to meet the real needs of Member States and their constituent regions.

The ECR has contributed to manage the crisis with cohesion and efficiency

Amid the Covid-19 pandemic, the ECR played a vital role in the quick adoption of the REACT-EU Regulation. This €47.5 billion aid package, channelled through the European Structural Funds, allocated €37.5 billion for 2021 and €10 billion for 2022. REACT-EU funds were deployed to provide immediate support for the economy in response to the pandemic, addressing issues such as job maintenance and creation, youth employment, health systems, and financing for SMEs. The ECR actively collaborated with other political groups to ensure the inclusion of all affected sectors, such as tourism and culture, in the fund.

The ECR has been enhancing the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control mandate for effective disease prevention and control

The ECR took the lead in negotiating the mandate of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC). The resulting agreement brought in significant updates to surveillance, early warning, and response strategies. It established an EU Health Task Force and tasked the ECDC with developing digital platforms. The ECR's influence guaranteed the Centre's alignment with the World Health Organisation (WHO). The agreement prioritises the processing of personal data only when strictly necessary. Importantly, the ECR ensured that EU actions support and coordinate with Member States, recognising the limitations of national-level efforts alone.





The ECR has strengthened the European Medicines Agency's preparedness for public health emergencies

The ECR also played a vital role in enhancing the European Medicines Agency's (EMA) ability to respond to public health emergencies like Covid-19. Thanks to the ECR's efforts, the EMA is now better equipped to monitor and address shortages of critical medical products, facilitates the timely development of safe and effective medicines, and ensures expert panels assess high-risk medical devices to provide crucial advice on crisis preparedness and management.

The ECR has helped prepare for future public health crises

The ECR played a crucial part in developing a coordinated European plan, linked to national plans, to tackle serious cross-border health threats and strengthen the framework for crisis preparedness. At the EU level, the Commission has the authority to recognise a public health emergency, which activates mechanisms to monitor drug shortages or activate support from the ECDC. The Health Security Committee (HSC) of the Council plays a crucial role in reinforcing coordination and information sharing on national preparedness activities. With their expertise, they ensure effective actions are taken to safeguard public health.



The ECR has supported every effort to defeat cancer

The ECR played a central and influential role in the Beating Cancer Special Committee. As a result of the ECR's active involvement, the final report on cancer prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and care now includes significant improvements. Our pivotal role in shaping the report's recommendations demonstrates the ECR's unwavering commitment to improving cancer care outcomes.

The ECR has helped to create a single market of medicines in the EU

The ECR significantly contributed to updating EU pharmaceutical laws to make medicines more accessible, available, and affordable for patients throughout the EU. This involves establishing a competitive regulatory framework to improve control over the environmental impact of the pharmaceutical supply chain, ultimately working toward a unified market for medicines in the EU.

The ECR has tackled asbestos risks

Although banned in the EU, asbestos remains the main cause of work-related cancer, accounting for 78 per cent of occupational cancers in EU Member States. The ECR supported a report calling for better protection and endorsed a tenfold reduction in the occupational exposure limit value. Member States are given sufficient time to introduce advanced technology (electron microscopy) to detect smaller asbestos fibres, a measure that will improve the protection of workers in the future.

STANDING WITH FARMERS

We have defended our farmers and our fishermen

The ECR has always defended farmers from being victims of the Green Deal

ECR has been active in ensuring that food is supplied in the most economically sustainable way. The ECR has campaigned for a science-based approach to the Green Deal and, in particular, its impact on food production and farmers' incomes. ECR members have been at the forefront of insisting that the European Commission carry out an additional and cumulative impact assessment of Green Deal initiatives, in particular those related to the Farm to Fork strategy.

The ECR has pushed for realism in the EU Farm to Fork Strategy

The ECR opposed the Farm to Fork Strategy's target-based approach to reducing pesticide use, raising concerns about the dubious evidence behind the draft legislation and its failure to consider the diverse conditions of European agriculture. While supporting sustainable agriculture, the ECR emphasised the need for a holistic approach that considers environmental, health, biodiversity, and economic factors. The legislation underpinning the strategy is encountering significant cost-related obstacles, which adversely affect both producers and consumers. Additionally, there are growing fears regarding its implications to food security.

ECR has fought to prevent economic damage from over-regulated nature conservation legislation

The ECR took a strong stance on the Nature Restoration Regulation, raising objections due to concerns about the impact of biodiversity targets on development projects and food security. However, during negotiations with the Council, the ECR was able to address some of these concerns by securing more flexibility for Member States. This involved securing opt-outs, voluntary indicators, and additional safeguards to account for food security. Despite these efforts, there are still some lingering concerns regarding unforeseen impacts on national and European budgets, as well as more administrative burdens.




BRINGING COMMON
SENSE BACK

The ECR has been pushing to cut red tape in the Common Agricultural Policy

The ECR has called for less bureaucracy and more simplification of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Farmers should remain in charge and have the flexibility to ensure that food production on their farm is adapted to local conditions. Thanks to the ECR, precision farming has been recognised as one of the eco schemes for which farmers can receive a premium.

The ECR has supported young farmers

The ECR is the voice of young farmers in Europe. It is important to keep farming attractive for the new generation of farmers who will be indispensable for our food production in the future. Thanks to the ECR, a higher percentage of the CAP budget has been dedicated to the specific challenges of young farmers. It has been agreed that an amount equal to at least 3 per cent of each EU country's direct payment envelope must be used to support young farmers setting up in farming. The ECR also called for new EU policies and legislation to be assessed for their impact on young farmers.

ECR has fought that the greening of agriculture does not jeopardise viability and profitability

The ECR has worked hard to ensure that EU policy is based on a balance between economic, environmental, and social aspects. In the case of the nature protection regulation, the ECR managed to build a coalition, which, in the vote on the Parliament's position, removed the most controversial provisions, including excessive restoration obligations for the agricultural sector. Despite having been able to remove some controversial elements, the ECR considers the nature restoration law's negative impact on farming and on socio-economic activity in rural areas too high and has therefore taken a clear stance against it.

The ECR has fought to ensure that forestry remains an exclusive competence of the Member States

For several years now, the Commission has been making consistent efforts to extend its own competences in the field of forestry, using the legal basis of shared competences in the field of environmental protection (Article 4 TFEU). These activities have accelerated in 2022, with the "Conference on the Future of Europe" becoming an additional driving force and, so to speak, its ideological basis. The ECR strongly opposes these attempts, including our reservations about the new EU Forest Strategy for 2030. Our members emphasised that forest policy should be bottom-up, responding to regional and local needs and expectations, and thus independently defining its own objectives and courses of action, with an appropriate balance between environmental, economic, and social aspects.



The ECR supported a school scheme for fruit, vegetables, milk, and dairy products

The ECR supported access to healthy and sustainable diets for all children, regardless of their socio-economic status. The ECR's amendments call on Member States to reduce the administrative burden of implementing a school scheme for healthy dairy products. The ECR supported calls for greater focus on communicating how dairy products are produced, with a particular emphasis on promoting regional and local products.

The ECR has helped to establish a unique system of geographical indications

The ECR Group has supported the work to develop a system of geographical indications (GIs) that is unique in the world and capable of generating value without the need for public investment. For the first time, quality production has come to the fore, capable of ensuring greater convergence and clarity between all agricultural sectors. GIs will ensure that agricultural products are of high quality and that they really come from the region where they are typically produced using traditional methods.

The ECR has been at the forefront of ensuring high quality seed for optimum yields

The ECR underlined the importance of the availability of high quality seeds and other propagating material to ensure optimum yields. The ECR took the lead on a number of dossiers, including a report on extending the term of plant variety rights and the Agriculture Committee's position on new genomic techniques. The ECR is fully aware that healthy food starts with healthy seeds. The ECR has also been at the forefront of initiatives to ensure that no patents are granted on plant material.

The ECR has advocated new breeding techniques

The ECR played a pivotal role in enabling new breeding technologies, advocating for a revision of legislation to officially permit these technologies in Europe. Plant breeding, particularly through gene editing technologies, allows for faster and more efficient development of resistant/tolerant crop varieties, contributing to reduced use of plant protection products. ECR's success is evident in the European Commission's draft regulation, currently under examination by co-legislators, marking a significant step toward aligning Europe with the rest of the world in adopting these advancements.





The ECR has fought to protect livestock from wolves

The ECR has highlighted the need to address the impact of large carnivores, in particular wolves, on livestock. On the co-initiative of the ECR, the strict protection status of wolves must be adapted to the new reality of the exponentially growing wolf population in Europe. Thanks to ECR plenary amendments, the Commission has now taken the first steps to review the protection status of wolves.

The ECR has recognised fishermen as "guardians of the sea"

On various occasions, the ECR stressed that fishermen play a key role as "guardians of the sea" and that fisheries and aquaculture are much needed suppliers of healthy food and animal proteins that would otherwise have to be imported. We called on the Commission to ensure a level playing field for all economic sectors in the implementation of marine protected areas.

The ECR has protected the Mediterranean fisheries sector

The ECR played a key role in addressing the protection of fisheries in the Mediterranean, emphasising the socio-economic dimensions and addressing dangers faced by EU fishers due to non-compliance with international agreements by neighbouring countries. Recognising the importance of fishing in the region, the ECR sought to protect millenary traditions while cautioning against sacrificing EU food production for elevated environmental standards. The report underscores the need for compliance with international agreements to prevent dangerous incidents involving European fishing boats. Furthermore, the ECR advocated for a balanced implementation of the common fisheries policy, considering economic, environmental, and social sustainability, and emphasised the importance of greater involvement of local actors in data production on fish stocks.

The ECR has provided support to fishermen and coastal communities

With the help of the ECR, easier access to funding from the European Maritime, Fisheries, and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) will be provided for fishermen and coastal communities. Promotion of sustainable fisheries and assistance in economic diversification for coastal communities have also been among the initiatives facilitated by the ECR. The ECR has addressed challenges in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors amid the Covid-19 crisis, which caused a significant drop in demand, leading to market disruptions and decreased prices and volumes. ECR-backed measures include supporting fishermen for temporary cessation, aiding aquaculture farmers, and assisting producer organisations in product storage.

The ECR has highlighted the environmental impact of offshore wind farms

The ECR called for an assessment of the potential economic, social, and environmental impacts of the construction of offshore wind farms, in particular where conflicts with the fishing sector and the sustainability of marine life may arise. The ECR also stressed the need to consider the impact on the marine ecosystem and fisheries when Member States determine their energy mixes.

The ECR has supported EU fishing in the North Pacific

Led by the ECR, the EU has joined the Convention on the Conservation and Management of High Seas Fisheries Resources in the North Pacific Ocean. EU fishermen already operate in the South Pacific, where fishing is restricted to the summer months. Extending fishing to the north will allow EU fleets to fish in the Pacific all year round.

The ECR has combated by-catch landing obligations

The ECR actively opposed the new obligation to land bycatch, citing concerns in the fishing industry and scientific community. The ECR's stance focused on issues like inadequate port infrastructure and escalating operating costs. The ECR also argued against the landing obligation, highlighting its introduction without sector support and insufficient attention to practical implementation.

The ECR has helped the European eel

The ECR has recognised that the current regime for the recovery of European eel stocks could be improved. Under the leadership of the ECR, several recommendations have been made to reduce barriers to eel migration and to keep sustainable eel fisheries in place.





The ECR has raised the flag against the obligation to carry out tele-surveillance

The ECR opposed the obligation to carry out closed-circuit television (CCTV) because of the privacy of people on board. New traceability rules are a huge administrative burden, while adding nothing to food safety. The ECR also stressed the importance of putting a stop to non-transparent and unregulated Chinese fishing activities worldwide. Third-country fishing vessels should be subject to the same rules as EU operators to ensure fair competition, traceability, food safety, and the fight against illegal fishing.

The ECR has stressed the importance of a level playing field between EU and non-EU vessels

The ECR has recognised the importance of improving the monitoring of all fishery products imported into the EU market to preserve public health and the competitiveness of the EU fishery sector. The ECR also stressed the importance of guaranteeing a level playing field between EU and non-EU vessels, and taking every action to stop all unfair conduct with negative socio-economic effects on involved EU territories.

The ECR has called for the removal of chemical residues from the Baltic Sea

Following a petition, the ECR initiated a resolution addressing the urgent issue of chemical residues in the Baltic Sea. Highlighting the dangers posed by dumped munitions containing hazardous substances, the resolution emphasises the slow degradation of these munitions, risking contamination, severe burns, and poisoning. It calls on the international community to enhance monitoring, minimise risks, and urges declassification of information on dumping activities. The resolution also urges the European Commission to collaborate regionally and internationally, prompting a positive response, with the Commission including the Baltic Sea in its zero pollution plan after the resolution's adoption.

NO REGION LEFT BEHIND

We have cared for the European regions

The ECR has worked to ensure that no region is left behind

The ECR played a crucial role in shaping the Common Provisions Regulation for the 2021-2027 period. It ensured that less developed regions continued to receive significant funding to narrow the gap with more developed regions. In this programming period, these regions will benefit from substantial EU support, with co-financing rates of up to 85 per cent in specific projects. Transition regions have a 60 per cent co-financing rate, while more developed regions have one of 40 per cent.

The ECR helped rebuild the tourism sector after Covid-19

The ECR played a crucial role in guiding a report within the European Parliament and the TRAN Committee focusing on the reconstruction of the tourism sector after Covid-19. Emphasising a shift in government policy, the ECR called for strengthening industry initiatives for sustainable and smart tourism, anticipating changes in demand. The ECR's commitment to supporting the tourism industry's recovery reflects its recognition of the sector's substantial contribution to the European economy, employing 27 million people and accounting for 10 per cent of EU GDP.

The ECR has called for demography to be made a priority

The ECR consistently argued that demography should be a top priority in all budgetary policies. We suggested that EU funds could be effectively utilised to enhance public infrastructure, making it more accessible to older persons, families with children, and individuals with disabilities. We emphasised the need to address the requirements of depopulating regions, asserting that increased EU funding could significantly improve infrastructure, communication, access to broadband internet, and digital literacy in these areas.





The ECR stressed the importance of harnessing talent in the EU's regions

The ECR actively contributed to a report adopted by the European Parliament addressing the EU's declining population, projected to decrease from 448.4 million in 2023 to 419.5 million by 2100. Acknowledging the impact on working-age population and regional disparities, the ECR emphasised the crucial role of an adequately funded cohesion policy. Thanks to ECR Members, the report proposed tax breaks and incentives for families and businesses in regions facing a "talent development trap." It also suggests measures to enhance urban services' accessibility, especially for people with disabilities, and encourages institutions to promote policies fostering local entrepreneurship. We highlighted the urgency of addressing brain drain and depopulation, calling for cohesive policies equipped with tools and resources to combat these challenges in affected regions.

The ECR has addressed challenges in the Mediterranean region

The ECR highlighted the importance of the Mediterranean basin for the EU and calls for better coordination of cohesion policy to address its various challenges. ECR members played a crucial role in broadening the EU's focus beyond environmental pollution to include issues like energy supply, immigration, illegal fishing, tourism, and relations with Mediterranean bordering countries. In various reports, several ECR amendments were included, focusing on efficient cohesion fund use for technology and infrastructure, promoting trade and infrastructure connections, and simplifying access procedures. Additionally, the ECR emphasised the significance of regional cooperation between Europe and Africa to manage migration and prevent humanitarian disasters in the Mediterranean.

The ECR has helped to minimise economic disruption caused by the Green Deal in mining regions

The ECR has always emphasised the need for the Green Deal's climate agenda to be equitable, socially fair, and economically inclusive, considering the diverse starting points of Member States. Acknowledging the challenges mining regions face, the ECR supported a legislative agreement in May 2021 to establish a Just Transition Mechanism. This mechanism aims to provide substantial support—unlocking up to €17.5 billion—to minimise economic disruption and facilitate the transition of these regions.

The ECR has represented the miners of Turów

In the PETI committee, the ECR raised the concerns of 30,000 people about their jobs in defence of the Turów mine. As the Greens and Renew only pushed the petition against the mine and called on the EU institutions to intervene, ECR MEPs managed to present a different point of view, stressing that the matter should be resolved by the Czech and Polish governments. Later, the governments reached an agreement.

A CONNECTED EUROPE

We have built connections across Europe

The ECR has campaigned for better transport infrastructure and links

Throughout the mandate, the ECR actively advocated for a robust European transport network, prioritising infrastructure development and accessibility. Recognising the importance for economic activities and territorial cohesion, the ECR focused on addressing missing links in Central and Eastern Europe, expediting North-South transport corridors, enhancing multimodal hubs, and promoting projects like 'Via Carpathia' and 'Rail Baltica' for improved connectivity. Additionally, the ECR championed a comprehensive high-speed rail network, envisioning efficient links between all EU capitals.

The ECR has made truck parks safer

In response to a petition from Romanian truck drivers, the ECR initiated a resolution for enhancing safety in EU lorry parks and addressing the driver shortage. The text also called for improved coordination among EU Member States' law enforcement to combat organised cross-border offenses. Additionally, the resolution suggests introducing language-barrier-free systems for drivers to report offenses and creating tools for finding and reserving safe parking areas.

The ECR called for the full implementation of the Schengen acquis by Romania and Bulgaria

Following a petition, the ECR supported a resolution for the full implementation of the Schengen acquis by Romania and Bulgaria and stressed that all Member States must be treated equally and be able to benefit from all the advantages offered by membership of the European Union and the Schengen area.

The ECR has supported the standardisation of cabin baggage

The ECR strongly supported the standardisation of cabin baggage. Currently, airlines individually set rules on the amount and dimensions of baggage that passengers can take into the cabin. These dimensions often vary by just a few centimetres between airlines. This sometimes causes inconvenience to passengers, especially when travelling with several airlines. Harmonising cabin baggage rules and introducing a common minimum size is essential for fair competition and makes life easier for European citizens.

The ECR has worked to improve the processing of lorries at border crossings

In its fight for better conditions for truck drivers along with sustainable transport and good prerequisites for economic growth, the ECR supported an important petition concerning the lack of efficiency in border crossing of heavy goods vehicles within the European Union (not only on Schengen borders). The waiting time within internal EU borders could be very lengthy and the petition's proposal is to create a pan-European norm of an average of one minute for the handling of heavy goods vehicles at border crossing points.





The ECR has been active in making rail travel safer

The ECR played a key role in tackling delays and inefficiencies in the update of the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS). One of our recommendations is to encourage the phasing out of older, country-specific signalling systems in favour of the more modern ERTMS. This move will ensure standardised train systems across Europe, making cross-border travel easier.

The ECR calls for more flexible rules on coach tourism

The ECR has consistently advocated clear and practical rules for all modes of transport, with the aim of minimising administrative burdens and costs. In the context of road passenger transport, in particular the dossier on minimum breaks and rest periods for occasional bus and coach transport, the ECR worked hard to ensure efficient and high quality services for travellers while ensuring road and driver safety. The ECR played a key role in making the rules more flexible and simpler for bus and coach drivers and companies, with specific derogations tailored to the real needs of the tourism sector and passengers on international and national tourist trips.

The ECR has been committed to practical and sensible regulation of the transport sector

The ECR successfully thwarted a highly controversial Green proposal to introduce a new driving licence category, B+. The original proposal was to limit the validity of the standard B licence to vehicles up to 1.8 tonnes, with a B+ licence required for vehicles between 1.8 and 3.5 tonnes. The new licence would only be available from the age of 21, after holding a standard B licence for two years. This highly bureaucratic approach would have affected many SUVs and electric cars, causing inconvenience and additional costs. The ECR also ensured that a proposed mandatory penalty point system was removed from the directive. In addition, we were successful with a proposal to allow electric vans weighing up to 4250 kg on a B licence, initially an optional idea that is now proposed to be made mandatory, thus addressing the weight challenges posed by batteries.

SUPPORTING CULTURE

We have championed supporting culture and exchange

The ECR has campaigned for the mutual recognition of EU diplomas

On various occasions, the ECR has supported the mutual recognition of secondary and other types of diplomas or learning experiences.

The ECR has been supporting Europe's artists

The ECR has been actively addressing bureaucratic obstacles for artists in EU cultural and education programs, with some proposed changes already included in final reports. However, persistent concerns linger regarding the complexity of the application process for funds within the Creative Europe program. This issue continues to be a priority, especially as it disadvantages young artists while favouring experienced ones. The ECR remains committed to finding a solution to ensure fair access for all individuals to the program.

The ECR has championed digital citizenship

The ECR has suggested additional measures to strengthen democratic accountability and personal responsibility among EU citizens. These include recognising digital skills not just in the labour market but also for active participation in society and democratic processes. The ECR has further proposed addressing the digital divide within and between Member States, advocating for tailored solutions rather than one-size-fits-all strategies.

The ECR has helped to make the European Solidarity Corps more attractive and effective

The ECR was instrumental in shaping the European Solidarity Corps programme. Under the ECR's leadership, the age limit for volunteers was raised to 35 and 6 per cent of the budget was allocated to humanitarian volunteering. The ECR emphasised the importance of experienced professionals supporting young volunteers and introduced monitoring and evaluation protocols to assess the impact of volunteers on local communities. This will ensure a more inclusive and effective European Solidarity Corps programme.

The ECR has been leading the way in recognising esports

The ECR welcomed the report recognising the significance of video games in the European Union, both economically and culturally. With a value of €23.3 billion, the video game industry is a crucial part of the EU's cultural and creative landscape, displaying strong growth potential. While the market is global, Europe is a leading player in video games, contributing at every stage from creation to distribution. The ECR has highlighted challenges in the esports sector, particularly focusing on issues like doping.





The ECR has been helping the Creative Europe Programme

Throughout the 9th term, the Creative Europe Programme 2021-2027 has been a central focus for the ECR in the CULT Committee. The ECR continued its dedication to advocating freedom of expression, creativity, and talent within the program. A significant priority for the ECR was the pursuit of fair geographic balance in fund distribution, despite challenges and limited support faced during the project's attempts.

The ECR has contributed to ensuring cultural diversity in the European music streaming market

The ECR staunchly upholds market freedom and has proposed numerous amendments to safeguard market players. We emphasised the necessity of fostering a fair and sustainable ecosystem for music streaming in the EU.

The ECR has helped make Erasmus+ an even bigger success

The ECR fully supported the flagship Erasmus+ programme. In addition to co-signing an amendment to triple the budget, we aimed to at least double it during the negotiations. Recognising Erasmus+ as a joint EU achievement, the ECR is committed to ensuring good access for every young person, not forgetting those from remote areas and those on lower incomes.

The ECR has worked to preserve the authority of the Member States in education and culture

During the 2019-2024 term, the ECR prioritised preserving Member States' authority over education and culture, emphasising the importance of the subsidiarity principle. The ECR advocated for cooperation between Member States, the exchange of good practices, and non-intervention in national policies. The ECR firmly supports cultural and linguistic diversity, opposing the concept of a European uniform identity. Additionally, the ECR aims to ensure fair treatment for all EU countries, regardless of their size. We opposed the final version of a report that suggested a common framework, expressing concerns about ideas of European federalism, a uniform European identity, and shared competencies in education.

The ECR has led the fight against the smuggling of cultural goods

The ECR took the lead in a transatlantic effort to combat the trafficking of cultural goods for terrorism financing and money laundering. Successfully incorporating it into Common Security and Defence Policy mission mandates, the ECR secured an official EU strategy published in December 2022. Hosting international conferences, the ECR facilitated the exchange of best practices between the EU and the US, maintaining collaboration with law enforcement, national representatives, and trafficking victims. The ECR remains at the forefront of this initiative across the EU.

CITIZEN RIGHTS

We have been defenders of citizens' rights and fighters against those who would undermine them

The ECR has helped to ensure that all Europeans living abroad can vote in local elections

There are currently around 11 million Europeans of voting age living in another EU Member State to their own. These citizens sometimes face obstacles when they want to vote in local elections. The ECR led a report calling on Member States to introduce the registration of non-national EU citizens on the electoral roll for local elections, provided that the EU citizens concerned have given their consent as residents of the Member State. The same rules for participation in local elections should apply to all EU citizens throughout the EU. The ECR particularly supported the facilitation of voting for people with disabilities and called on Member States to provide, wherever possible, appropriate voting facilities for people with disabilities in accordance with their constitutional principles and traditions.

The ECR has been fighting for media freedom

The ECR contested the European Media Freedom Act, asserting that it would be more aptly labelled the 'Media Surveillance Control and Censorship Act.' Criticising the European Commission's claim of promoting media freedom, the ECR argued the regulation could subject journalists, their employers, and families to unwarranted surveillance by security agencies. The ECR proposed amendments to eliminate provisions allowing such surveillance, but they were rejected by the majority Groups. The ECR highlighted the alarming potential for a controlled and surveyed media and urged Parliament to reject the Media Freedom Act Regulation, foreseeing severe consequences for democracy and freedom of speech in the European Union.

The ECR has strengthened consumer rights and improved product safety

In the area of consumer rights and product regulation, the ECR's work has been characterised by a holistic approach, combining the principles of consumer welfare, market fairness and promotion of innovation. This approach is reflected in several legislative initiatives, including the General Product Safety Regulation, the Machinery Directive, the Common Chargers Initiative and the Right to Repair Directive. The ECR has sought to put the consumer before ideology and to ensure that we can all choose products that are fit for our needs – whether expensive or affordable, the EU consumer must retain their choice. The green transition should not hurt the less affluent part of society and the targets set in Brussels must be citizen-driven, not NGO-driven.





The ECR has made the common charger more consumer friendly

The ECR's approach to the common charger initiative showcases our dedication to consumer convenience and reducing electronic waste. We championed a practical scope and gradual implementation, ensuring a smooth transition to a common charging standard that benefits both consumers and manufacturers. Our collective efforts successfully prevented the mandatory dismantling of charging cables and mobile devices. Thanks to our advocacy, EU customers are also spared from double charges for products already included in the price of the phone.

The ECR has introduced a 12-month repair guarantee in the Right to Repair Directive

In the Right to Repair Directive, the ECR focused and successfully influenced the Parliament's position to ensure that increased demand for repairs and parts should be balanced by increased supply through easier access to spare parts and additional rights for independent repairers. The changes we achieved go hand in hand with new rules to prevent unfair manufacturers from deliberately shortening the life of a product. The ECR also supported the introduction of a new 12-month guarantee for repair services to boost confidence and give consumers extra peace of mind, while maintaining the option to select a new product as a replacement for the faulty device. Other measures to limit administrative burdens have made the Directive more workable. This is crucial to keeping repairs feasible and costs reasonable for both businesses and consumers.



The ECR has promoted digital access and skills

The ECR emphasised the crucial importance of widespread high-speed internet access in both public institutions and households to advance digital education and skills. Recognising the significance of adapting to a digitised job market and mitigating adverse social impacts, such as job losses and digital exclusion, the group stressed the need for comprehensive digital skills development. This includes teacher training, skills assessments, certification mechanisms, and fostering critical thinking and media literacy in children and young people to navigate challenges like fake news, cyber-bullying, radicalisation, cybersecurity, and fraud.

The ECR has fought discrimination against older people

The ECR led a report on challenges and possibilities in aging policy post-2020. The report emphasises combating discrimination against older persons, promoting active aging, and creating lifelong learning programs. Key aspects include intergenerational bonds, health, long-term care, and dignified living spaces. The ECR addressed societal and labour market exclusion of older people and supporting the silver economy. We successfully retained key elements like mentoring, support for traditional crafts, and constructing day-care facilities near educational institutions to foster intergenerational ties.

The ECR has helped to harmonise European motor insurances and insurance discounts

The ECR supported an important revision of the Motor Insurance Directive, which allows EU citizens to travel across borders without additional insurance; for example, people living in Italy who buy a car in Germany will no longer have to insure it in Germany. Even more interesting for motorists: EU citizens with no accident history who move to a member state where accident-free drivers have cheaper insurance will also be entitled to a discount.

The ECR has protected borrowers' rights

The ECR has worked hard to help update the Consumer Credit Directive, with a particular focus on new types of credit such as buy-now-pay-later. Consumers will have the right to know why their credit application is rejected if the credit assessment is based on automated processing of personal data. Tying the loan to other products, such as insurance, from the same creditor, will also be prohibited. The new rules also prohibit discrimination against cancer survivors seeking credit that requires insurance.

The ECR has been calling for an EU-wide consumer redress mechanism

The ECR has supported calls for improved tools to stop illegal practices and to facilitate redress when a large number of consumers are victims of the same breach of their rights. Consumer organisations should be able to take representative action to protect the collective interests of consumers.

The ECR has promoted flexibility in the European Social Fund+

The ESF+ is the EU's primary tool for investing in human resources, with a budget of nearly €99.3 billion from 2021 to 2027. It plays a crucial role in EU employment, social, education, and skills policies. Article 7 of the new regulation focuses on thematic concentration, requiring Member States to allocate funds to specific social objectives. The ECR Group opposed this, as it would limit flexibility and increase bureaucracy. Through our amendments and active involvement in trilogues, we contributed to acceptable compromises, reducing compulsory allocation levels and safeguarding flexibility for Member States.

ECR has been a leading advocate of vocational training for the EU's workforce and economy

The ECR spearheaded a report emphasising the attractiveness and necessity of modern vocational education and training (VET) to address labour market challenges like shortages and mismatches. Key conditions include collaboration with companies, lifelong learning, and fostering intergenerational links. This is crucial for EU resilience and specialist training, as evident from the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. The report emphasises individualised learning while respecting Member States' competences in education.

The ECR has protected media freedom and journalists

Media freedom and pluralism are essential to the functioning of democracies and the fight against fake news. It is even more important when human rights are violated in their efforts to maintain transparency and expose abusive and unlawful behaviour. The ECR has fought for the highest possible standards of protection against abusive lawsuits against journalists and human rights defenders, known as SLAPPs (strategic lawsuits against public participation).



The ECR is committed to the protection of journalists

In several reports, the ECR has underlined the universal right to freedom of expression and information and the importance of protecting journalists from all forms of violence. This commitment is in line with the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024. The ECR expressed its deep concern about the state of media freedom worldwide and condemned in particular abuses and attacks against journalists and media workers in various countries.

The ECR has been organising a fact-finding mission to assess the linguistic situation in Catalonia

Following an initiative of the ECR, the PETI committee organised a fact finding visit to Catalonia and adopted a report exposing the violation of the rights of families, pupils, teachers and staff using the Spanish language in Catalan schools. The visit and the report revealed harassment and verbal and physical violence against families who tried to exercise their right to educate their children in Spanish and follow judicial decisions in this regard. For the first time in history, the text called on national and local authorities to end the violation of fundamental rights of parents, children and families. It also underlined the obligation to establish protocols for the defence and protection of families who resort to the judicial system to ensure education also in Spanish and a commitment of the European Parliament to continue investigating linguistic situation in Catalonia.

The ECR has been fighting against the sexual exploitation of children in care in the Balearic Islands

Following the discovery of EU-funded shelters linked to the abuse of minors under the guardianship of the Balearic Socialist and Communist Government, the ECR presented a petition calling on the Parliament to investigate. The ECR's initiative gained considerable traction, leading to a debate in the PETI committee and a visit by a delegation from the European Parliament, which resulted in a powerful report exposing irregularities. The ECR's coordinated efforts raised awareness of the case across the continent. This success demonstrates the power of the ECR in defending fundamental rights, upholding conservative values and fighting systemic injustices through collective action.



LESS WASTE

We have been good stewards of citizens' money

The ECR has protected taxpayers' money

Fully aware that every euro spent by the EU is money from the pockets of European taxpayers, the ECR is committed to safeguarding taxpayers' money, promoting financial responsibility, reducing waste, increasing transparency and ensuring that public funds are used efficiently for the benefit of citizens. The ECR has consistently supported the idea of preserving the fiscal sovereignty of individual EU countries, to ensure that national budgets and fiscal matters remain fully within the competence of Member States. The ECR also defended the principle of healthy tax competition between Member States in order to benefit the overall economic well-being of the EU. Despite a left-wing majority, the ECR managed to push through sensible, pro-market provisions in line with the interests of Member States.

The ECR has defended social policy as an exclusive competence of the Member States

The ECR consistently emphasises that social policy should be within the exclusive purview of Member States. In opposition to calls for a European regulation on minimum income, the ECR underscores that addressing poverty requires national strategies focused on fostering stable economic growth and investment – not a one-size-fits-nobody approach.

The ECR has scrutinised the European Central Bank's monetary policy

The ECR urged increased accountability for European Central Bank (ECB) monetary policy to ensure a stable euro and EU growth. Transparent assessments are crucial for necessary reforms. Recent pressure has led to more honest reports on the ECB's work, emphasising the need for measures to reduce inflation. While there is still a long way to go to make the euro work better, acknowledging the flaws in the system, both past and present, is an important step towards building a more stable economic future that promotes growth and employment. The ECR remains committed to holding the ECB and the EU accountable for euro policies.



The ECR has been fighting to reduce economic risk and a stable financial environment

Central Counterparties (CCPs) and Central Securities Depositories (CSDs) are little known but vital parts of our financial markets and can help create a more resilient and stable economic environment. Thanks to the ECR, they will be subject to stricter rules that will reduce risks. CCPs facilitate securities and derivatives transactions by interposing themselves between the seller and the buyer and providing guarantees that transactions can be completed. The ECR has worked hard to reduce the likelihood of CCP failure by introducing effective incentives for proper risk management and the maintenance of critical functions in the event of financial difficulties. This contributes to the preservation of financial stability and, most importantly, prevents taxpayers from bearing the costs associated with the restructuring or resolution of CCPs. The ECR was also responsible for updating the regulatory framework for central securities depositories (CSDs), the financial market infrastructures that ensure that securities are transferred to their rightful owners.

The ECR has supported the digital transformation of finance and making cryptocurrencies safer

The ECR worked hard to keep financial services legislation on track in an evolving digital world and to keep the EU at the forefront of innovation. In the regulatory framework for digital assets, including cryptocurrencies, the ECR pushed for an innovation-friendly regulation that refrains from proposing common tax rates for crypto-assets, while encouraging further digitalisation of EU Member States' tax administrations. The ECR sought to dilute overly restrictive approaches from other groups that would stifle innovation in the cryptocurrency and blockchain space. Throughout the regulation, the ECR supported the principle of technology neutrality and countered discrimination against certain technologies related to crypto-assets. In the Digital Operational Resilience Act (DORA), the ECR succeeded in significantly improving the text and making it fit for enforcement and future technological changes. The ECR's focus was on respecting the principle of proportionality, thereby enabling a resilient yet dynamic financial environment within the EU. The ECR has successfully steered a pilot scheme through Parliament that will enable the use of distributed ledger technology (DLT) to provide trading and settlement services for traditional financial instruments in crypto-asset format.

The ECR has made crypto trading safer

Led by the ECR, the Parliament has worked hard to establish a first set of rules to make cryptocurrencies safer for consumers and less attractive for criminals. Traceability of crypto asset transfers and a specific set of rules will help prevent money laundering. Any administrative burden on crypto companies and innovators will be more than offset by the fact that the EU will unify Europe's fragmented cryptocurrency market, which currently has 27 regulatory regimes.

The ECR has helped combat money laundering

The ECR contributed to the establishment of an EU authority to combat money laundering and terrorist financing. The ECR 's approach was to fight money laundering without interfering with national tax policies. The ECR defended the interests of national supervisors and supported wording that respected the diversity of legal traditions and tax systems in the Member States, in order to limit the anti-money-laundering authority's (AMLA) far-reaching powers and bring them into line with the principle of subsidiarity and





EU IN THE WORLD

We have been a vocal player in EU enlargement and at the forefront of geopolitical change

The ECR has been supporting the people of Belarus

The ECR has been a strong supporter of pro-democracy forces in Belarus, initiating resolutions, organising public hearings and events both inside and outside the European Parliament. Our members are in constant contact with the office of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya and all activists who oppose dictator Lukashenka. The ECR supports the fight of a free Belarusian regiment in Ukraine against the Russian occupation. The ECR is a strong critic of Lukashenka, who has persecuted and imprisoned thousands of innocent men and women. During the artificial migration crisis instigated by Lukashenka and Putin, in which thousands of people were pushed towards the Polish, Lithuanian and Latvian borders, the ECR managed to win broad support from other European Parliament members in condemning such actions.

The ECR has helped to secure the Eastern Partnership countries (Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova)

The ECR led the call for increased support to Eastern Partnership Countries (Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova), advocating for political, financial, and military aid. Through reports in AFET and SEDE Committees, the ECR initiated reforms in operational planning, enhanced NATO cooperation, and successfully redistributed European Peace Facility budgets for lethal aid to Ukraine and regional partners. The ECR also played a role in strengthening national joint training evaluation centres between the European Union Military Staff and Eastern Partnership countries.

The ECR has been supporting young democracies

The ECR put forward a resolution emphasising the values of NATO and support for young democracies in Europe. It highlighted that the accession of Eastern and Central European countries to the EU and NATO marked their return to the family of free democratic nations. The resolution underscored that the European peace and integration project remains incomplete until all countries pursuing European reforms, including Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia, become full EU members, ensuring a whole, free, united, and peaceful Europe.

The ECR has championed religious freedom

The ECR has been actively promoting the fundamental right to freedom of religion or belief. We initiated a report on the 'Persecution of minorities based on religion or belief,' adopted with strong support. The ECR also urged the European Commission to appoint a much-needed new Special Representative for promoting freedom of religion or belief outside the EU. Additionally, we organised events spotlighting the state of religious freedom in various countries worldwide.





The ECR has supported the strengthening of EU-NATO cooperation

The ECR consistently champions enhanced EU-NATO cooperation, backing NATO enlargement and upholding NATO as the primary security force in Europe. Initiatives led by the ECR, including involvement in the NATO Reflection Group, contributed to shaping a new NATO Strategic Concept for adoption in 2022. The ECR also spearheaded international forums with senior NATO officials, focusing on Ukraine's future and Euro-Atlantic security reform. As the European Parliament's most active supporter of NATO, the ECR remains dedicated to strengthening the alliance.

The ECR has worked to maintain strong relations with the United States

Despite facing pressure from other groups to downgrade relations, the ECR has consistently maintained strong ties with the US, especially during the Trump presidency. The ECR supports a renewed transatlantic trade and investment partnership, advocates for enhanced cooperation in security and technology (specifically in AI and quantum computing), and stands out as the leading voice in the European Parliament calling for closer coordination in foreign policy to counter hostile states like Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea.

The ECR has supported a deepening of EU-UK relations

Due to its long-standing positive relationship with the British Conservative Party, the ECR has remained a leading advocate in the European Parliament for a close strategic, military and economic relationship with the UK post-Brexit. The ECR has consistently reflected this in Parliamentary reports and has organised various international conferences and delegations to promote the continued growth of the EU-UK partnership.

The ECR has promoted partnership with Taiwan

Since the ECR's inception, it has always advocated for closer relations with Taiwan. We hold the standing rapporteurship on EU-Taiwan relations, a position created for the first time in the Parliament's history with the ECR's support. We have successfully steered a recommendation on deepening political ties with Taiwan, which was adopted with an overwhelming majority. We have also invited Taiwanese experts into committee meetings, including during discussions on countering hostile propaganda, where Taiwan has very valuable experience.

The ECR has stood with Israel

The ECR played a vital role in strengthening EU-Israel relations by incorporating Israel's perspective into European Parliament resolutions, condemning terrorism, and ensuring no EU funds go to Palestinian entities linked to terrorist organisations. Notably, the ECR halted EU funding to the Islamic University in Gaza due to its ties with the EU-listed terror group Hamas. The ECR has also championed closer ties between Israel and Arab neighbours, hosting the first European Parliament event with ambassadors from Israel, the UAE, and Bahrain after the Abraham Accords. Following Hamas' attack on Israel in October 2023, the ECR was the first political group to express solidarity through a visit to Israel in support of the Jewish people.

The ECR has been supporting Iran's democratic opposition

The ECR has consistently advocated for a stronger EU stance on Iran, condemning its nuclear and ballistic missile programs, human rights violations, state-sponsored terrorism, and hostage diplomacy. In response to nationwide protests in 2019, the ECR led a resolution condemning the regime's violent crackdown. The ECR also initiated actions supporting women's rights, urging the EU to designate the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terror group, and calling for sanctions against Iranian leaders. Recognising the ECR's support for the Iranian diaspora and democratic opposition, HRH Prince Reza Pahlavi visited the European Parliament at the ECR's invitation.

The ECR has exposed the true face of the Cuban regime

The ECR has strongly condemned the Cuban communist regime's human rights abuses. In September 2021, we led the adoption of a Parliament resolution calling on the EU to activate the suspension clause of the EU-Cuba Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement (PDCA) due to repeated human rights violations. We called for sanctions against those responsible, the release of prisoners exercising fundamental rights and an end to violence, persecution and attacks on peaceful demonstrators. The ECR continues its efforts to support those persecuted by the regime and calls for an immediate halt to EU financial aid that could reach the Cuban regime.









The ECR has been at the forefront of forging closer ties with Latin America

The ECR set up the Eurolat Policy Group to provide a new perspective on EU-Ibero-American relations and to address the challenges of cooperation with the European Parliament. The Policy Group highlighted the threat of narco-communism and dictatorships in Ibero-America and forged transatlantic cooperation and alliances with ECR member parties and various interest groups. This strategy helped the ECR outperform other European groups focused on defending freedom, the rule of law, and democracy, while condemning human rights abuses. The policy group exposed the growing influence of China, Russia and Iran in the region, especially after conflicts such as Russia's aggression against Ukraine. The Iberosphere Summit, organised by the ECR, reflects the success in building alliances with various institutions in Ibero-America, bringing together prominent leaders to defend fundamental principles such as freedom, national sovereignty, life, family, and the rule of law.

The ECR has monitored the erosion of fundamental rights in Hong Kong

The ECR has been heavily involved in an unofficial Hong Kong Watch group set up after China's introduction of the National Security Law. The group closely monitors the accelerating erosion of democracy, fundamental rights, and the rule of law in the Special Administrative Region and organises regular meetings with exiles, the EU delegation in Hong Kong, and other experts. The Watch Group brings together like-minded MEPs from across the political spectrum to coordinate action in support of the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong.

The ECR has improved food security in developing countries

A report on food security led by the ECR provided policy recommendations to eradicate hunger and malnutrition in developing countries. Emphasising the link between humanitarian aid, development aid, and peacebuilding, we advocated mitigating the risks of crises and managing their consequences. The report addressed the impact of conflicts and the Covid-19 pandemic on poverty and food insecurity, highlighting the need for affordable healthy foods. The ECR stressed the importance of increasing small farmers' incomes, promoting access to markets, securing land ownership, and enhancing technology and innovation access. The report will contribute to the EU's efforts in addressing global food insecurity and malnutrition.

The ECR has been hosting the ECR Africa Summit

The ECR regularly hosts the ECR Africa Summit, a successful event exploring policy options for a stronger Europe-Africa relationship. The discussions shed light on global actors' influence on Africa and EU-Africa policy. The consensus is that the EU needs to send a strong signal to China and Russia as they pursue their own geopolitical interests which impact the sovereignty of African nations and European security.

BRINGING COMMON SENSE BACK




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