European Conservatives & Reformists



ECR GROUP

WE ARE THE VOICE OF COMMON SENSE





We are the voice of common sense.



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FOREWORD



Since our foundation in 2009, we have been working hard for an EU that gets back to basics to deliver common sense solutions with citizens in mind.

We believe that at the heart of every decision made by the EU should be a simple question: would it add value for hard-working taxpayers across the Union that cannot be achieved by their national democracies working alone?

To achieve this, ECR MEPs focus their efforts on decentralisation, connecting people and business, promoting free and fair trade, and fostering a safe and secure Europe, among many other objectives.

Our efforts have delivered results, improving the lives of citizens across the EU every day, and we will continue promoting a wider agenda of long-term pan-European euro-realist reform. We will also carry on our hard work in securing a more flexible, open, and economically vibrant EU, offering citizens and taxpayers tangible benefits.

With your support and the continued efforts of our MEPs, we believe that an EU that respects the wishes of its citizens, spends taxpayers' money responsibly, and respects the sovereignty of its national governments is an EU that can build a stronger future that better serves its citizens.

ECR GROUP

Yours,
The ECR Group

What does the ECR Group stand for?

Since the creation of the ECR Group, its Members have been the voice of euro-realism in the European Parliament: calling for respect for the sovereignty of Europe's national democracies, the promotion of economic recovery and growth, less bureaucracy, more fiscal responsibility, controlled immigration, and equality for all member states.

We reject the centralising federalist agenda that says the only choice is between more Europe or no Europe. The ECR Group offers an alternative vision of a reformed European Union as a looser confederal association of nation-states who choose to work together in areas where they have common interests. The European Union should exist as a community of European states that respects the rights and legitimacy of each Member State.





The ECR Group knows that the only way to reinvigorate the Union, regain the confidence of voters, and provide solutions to the common challenges Europe faces today is by truly listening to the people of Europe. The EU needs to pay far greater attention to the opinions held by the citizens of Member States.

As many referendums have shown, the European Union has become too centralised, too ambitious, and too out of touch with ordinary citizens. In short, we believe the peoples of Europe want the European Union to do less and to do it better.

The ECR Group believes that one of the best ways of improving the lives of EU citizens on a day-to-day basis is to promote the creation of jobs and economic recovery. The EU should focus on reducing barriers within the Single Market, ensuring that consumer rights are upheld across all Member States, championing small and medium size businesses, and improving basic infrastructure – from the digital market to transport networks.

The right of European national democracies to exercise control over who may enter and leave their countries should be recognised.

What does the ECR Group stand for?

The European Union should focus on areas where it can add real value.

The principle of 'conferral' must be reasserted: this is the basic principle that the EU should only do things which the Member States have clearly asked it to. To achieve this, the role of national parliaments is essential and must be enhanced.

We support actions that address climate change – but in a measured and careful way that seeks to solve problems and not simply to export them. We believe changes should be planned realistically so our Member States can build clean and sustainable economies based on prosperity not poverty.

The European Union should not be a way to hide from the world and the global economy but a stage on which Member States can enhance their security and prosperity. The EU should therefore be outward looking, seeking partnerships with its international allies for the common good of all its Member States.



The EU is

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Member States – Democracies
Capitals – Cultures – Economies



The ECR Group occupies a unique space in Brussels politics: it is the only political group that opposes further centralisation and the creation of a European federal super-state while defending the positive gains that have been made since the 1950s. We offer a middle way between the extremes of more Europe and no Europe. We want to protect all that European cooperation has achieved by resisting a dangerous pincer movement of federalist and green extremists. Their obsession with centralising Europe and imposing more and more bureaucratic constraints – while marginalising the Member States – will inevitably result in weakening its economy and undermining its democratic and cultural foundations. But by putting Europe's national democracies back in the driving seat, we can build a Europe that will offer a platform for cooperation that will help promote European prosperity and security for generations to come.

How does the ECR Group envisage the future of Europe?

The European project is spinning out of control.

From the late 1950s to the 1990s, the political architecture of Europe was balanced. The European institutions had clear but limited powers that were subject to the direction of sovereign European democracies. As a result, the old European Community delivered a great deal of value.

A succession of rushed treaties from the Maastricht treaty in 1992 (Amsterdam in 1999, Nice in 2002 and Lisbon in 2009), however, has upset this balance, leading to a transfer of substantial political power to Brussels – power that is increasingly being used unchecked and without serious forms of accountability.

The drive for an 'ever closer union' is no longer an expression of hope for European citizens to work together; it has become a dogma to justify a centralised federal Europe, with less and less regard for the rights of its national democracies.
The ECR Group proposes a middle way between 'more Europe' and 'no Europe':
A new hope for Europe's Future.

Despite what Euro-federalists may claim, the alternative to further centralisation need not be a return to international anarchy.

We want to consider better ways of cooperation between our nations within a community of European states – to rebuild a European Union that is a looser confederal association of nation-states acting together only when necessary an alternative vision that will save Europe from the clutches of a federalist ideology.



The European Union should:

– **prioritise** the creation of jobs and prosperity;

– **support** our Member States in safeguarding their citizens and borders;

– **respect** the sovereignty of the Member States, abandoning the ‘one size fits all’ approach, and being more flexible in recognising the individual circumstances of each national democracy;

– **develop** realistically a competitive, sustainable economy that protects our environment without causing more unemployment or poverty;

– **do less and do it better** by improving its efficiency and effectiveness, by focusing on where it can add value for European citizens, by cutting bureaucracy and by working on what really matters to people;

– **be outward looking**, forging new economic and strategic ties across the globe for our security and prosperity.

Europe is a place where nations should nurture and protect their cultures and traditions; where freedom, sovereignty, and independence should be defended; and where individuals, families and communities should thrive.





We need to reassert the principle that our nation-states are the primary bearers of feelings of collective identity and solidarity. Our national democracies are the primary political entities in Europe and are the source of the Union's democratic legitimacy. They are not the subjects of the European Union; they should be its masters. They need to be put back in the driving seat.

The ECR Group wants the EU to offer added value for our businesses

An EU that connects its citizens and its Member States, allowing them to live, work and travel without unnecessary obstacles and bureaucracy is an EU that is delivering value for money.

The ECR Group is vitally aware that every cent that the EU spends is money out of the pockets of taxpayers. Therefore, the legislation we bring forward on transport, the single market, and consumer rights has to be effective and efficient, and offer something that national Governments alone cannot achieve. The ECR Group believes that one of the best ways of improving the lives of EU citizens on a day-to-day basis, is to:

– **reduce** barriers within the Single Market,

– **make** it easier to buy and sell goods and services within the EU, so we all have greater choice and better prices,

– **ensure** that consumer rights are upheld across all Member States so we can trust what we buy.

To help make sure all regions and parts of the EU can benefit from this stronger internal market, we support improving transport infrastructure and accessibility. It was the ECR Group that championed high quality transport links as being fundamental for Europe's economic activities and quality of life for citizens. Readily accessible and well-connected transport networks for both passenger and freight transport is at the heart of promoting economic, social, and territorial cohesion between Member States in the EU.



The ECR Group wants the EU to offer added value for our businesses

The ECR Group has led the way on common-sense policymaking, and in ensuring that the EU properly implements the competitiveness test, particularly for small and medium sized businesses, to avoid unnecessary red tape. The EU needs regulation that provides a level playing field for businesses while protecting consumers, without uneven implementation across the EU.

As part of our approach to nurturing economic growth and prosperity, discussing the opportunities and challenges of free trade is at the heart of ECR policies.

In principle the ECR Group supports opening the European market to non-EU products in order to get the best deals for our European consumers and creating new opportunities for our exporters. The ECR Group believes it is essential, however, that free trade and globalisation must benefit everyone, and so lawmakers must be mindful of the effects on wages, jobs, local industry and the future of the EU's economy when negotiating international trading agreements.

Such deals must be made carefully to ensure that the trading partnership is fair and that no sectors or regions are left behind. It is essential that we protect certain EU sectors from any shock effects. Therefore, we support opening our domestic markets to non-EU products in a limited and controlled way, while ensuring EU products have improved access to non-EU markets, for our most popular exports. We believe that the EU's free trade agreements must benefit consumers by offering them more choices, including in services, and greater mobility for company employees.



An EU which connects its citizens and its Member States, allowing them to live, work and travel without unnecessary obstacles and bureaucracy is an EU that is delivering added value.

The ECR Group strives for internal and external security



The ECR Group in the European Parliament has continuously been the voice of realism when it comes to enhancing Europe's internal and external security.

We believe that the expedient and thorough sharing of information between Member States' law enforcement authorities is essential in the fight against cross border crime, cybercrime, and terrorism. Keeping Europe's citizens safe from the threat of violence and criminality must be a priority for the European Union. We believe a more sustainable level of immigration to the EU needs to be achieved.

First and foremost, we need a migration system which respects the voice and wishes of its Member States and their citizens. For any EU migration system to be sustainable, it needs to have the full backing of all Member States and the people of Europe. The EU cannot continue to impose an immigration system which is backed by only a few of its Member States. A system of cooperation rather than compulsion must prevail.

Instead, the EU should focus on getting the basics right. The ECR Group believes a more sustainable level of immigration to the EU can be achieved if we:

– **provide** more support for Member States to protect the EU's external border
,
– **increase** the rate of returns for failed asylum seekers to their country of origin,

– **combat** abuse of the EU's asylum system,

– **strengthen** the role of FRONTEX,

– **adopt** EU wide measures which have the backing of all Member States,

– and **continue** to work with third countries to reach cooperation agreements preventing migrants from making the life-endangering journey across the Mediterranean to the EU.



Protecting the global environment at a cost we can afford

It is right for the EU and its global partners to tackle issues such as climate change, recycling, waste, emissions and pollution, food quality and food security, but the EU needs to adopt sensible and sustainable solutions that do not place unnecessary and costly burdens on businesses and particular Member States.



In protecting the global environment, we must aim to secure sustainable prosperity, not perpetual poverty.

The burden must not fall disproportionately on some Member States. Rather than setting increasingly unrealistic targets that will never be fulfilled or properly implemented, the ECR Group endorses an ambitious, incremental, and sensible approach that all Member States can support.



Improving the Union's Efficiency and Effectiveness

Increasing democratic accountability and transparency are objectives at the heart of the ECR Group's agenda for guaranteeing reform of the European Union.



Without increased transparency and accountability of the EU's institutions, agencies, budget and policies, then public faith and trust in the EU will continue to be eroded.

The ECR Group believes in asking the difficult questions and ensuring that the European Commission is held to account for its implementation of the European budget. If the EU is to have deep and meaningful reform in order to function better for its citizens, then Brussels and its politicians need first to identify what isn't working, critically evaluating existing programmes, and acknowledge what has previously gone wrong. Only then can we build a better, stronger future for the EU.



Driving economic growth across the world

By using EU money to encourage private enterprise and economic growth within developing nations around the world, the EU is reducing poverty, creating future trading partners, and helping to support democratic stability and human rights in the process.

The ground-breaking idea of using private enterprise to help reduce poverty around the world was an idea put forward by the ECR Group.

The ECR Group is proud that we have pushed the European Commission to move away from short-term solutions and handouts, and instead move towards a system that helps countries and communities to build long-lasting, stronger economies and industries.

By using this fund to provide money for private enterprises in developing countries, we are helping grow innovation in developing nations, giving people their dignity back through work, and addressing a root cause of mass migration to the EU – poverty.

Only then can we build a better, stronger future for the EU.





Protecting democracy and religious freedom around the world

The ECR Group's efforts to create a global facing EU extends beyond just trading with nations across the world, but looks towards creating a freer, more democratic world for all.

The ECR Group has placed the plight of persecuted Christians prominently on the EU foreign policy agenda. Around the world the persecution of Christians is on the rise. More than any other group, Christians are a target of religious violence. A long ignored situation by EU foreign policy, ECR Group Members were among those who pressed for more action. We will continue to fight for more action to help those who are persecuted for their faith.



Protecting freedom and human dignity are at the heart of ECR Group's foreign policy aims.

Protecting freedom and human dignity are at the heart of the ECR Group's foreign policy aims. The ECR Group continues to ensure that the human rights agenda of the European Parliament respects national interests and maximises the collective power of the EU as a whole when it comes to ensuring third countries fulfil their international obligations. We champion the efforts of all those across the globe who are fighting for freedom.

The ECR Group believes that the EU does not need a centralised foreign policy to bring attention to pressing international issues and to have an impact upon human rights violations.



The Prague Declaration

Conscious of the urgent need to reform the EU on the basis of Eurorealism, Openness, Accountability and Democracy, in a way that respects the sovereignty of our nations and concentrates on economic recovery, growth and competitiveness, the European Conservatives and Reformists Group shares the following principles:

- Free enterprise, free and fair trade and competition, minimal regulation, lower taxation, and small government as the ultimate catalysts for individual freedom and personal and national prosperity.
- Freedom of the individual, more personal responsibility and greater democratic accountability.
- Sustainable, clean energy supply with an emphasis on energy security.
- The importance of the family as the bedrock of society.
- The sovereign integrity of the nation state, opposition to EU federalism and a renewed respect for true subsidiarity.
- The overriding value of the transatlantic security relationship in a revitalised NATO, and support for young democracies across Europe.
- Effectively controlled immigration and an end to abuse of asylum procedures.
- Efficient and modern public services and sensitivity to the needs of both rural and urban communities.
- An end to waste and excessive bureaucracy and a commitment to greater transparency and probity in the EU institutions and use of EU funds.
- Respect and equitable treatment for all EU countries, new and old, large and small.


SENAT



All Member States treated equally.




Doing less,
but better.

OUR **SOCIAL MEDIA**

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The **EU** is 27