



Conference on
THE FUTURE OF
EUROPE

In Ten Proposals

Andalusia
for the future
of Europe



Conferencia
sobre el **Futuro**
de **Europa**



Junta de Andalucía
Consejería de la Presidencia, Interior,
Diálogo Social y Simplificación
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Introduction

On 10th March 2021, the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union signed the Joint Declaration on the Conference on the Future of Europe. This declaration opens the way for an unprecedented European macro-debate, aimed at enabling citizens from all corners of Europe to share their ideas and contribute their views to the future of Europe.

Andalusia was one of the first Spanish regions to participate in this debate, launching in June 2021 the initiative “Andalusia for the Future of Europe”. Thus, the Andalusian government carried out a citizen consultation and a wide range of activities around the whole region through the European Information Network of Andalusia in order to collect, develop and offer ideas and contributions to define our position on the future of Europe. Additionally, this initiative has also had an Advisory Council, composed of a group of experts from the Andalusian academia, who have analyzed the situation of Andalusia with regard to the issues proposed by the Conference.

During the last months, a thinktank of renowned Andalusian researchers, led by the University of Granada, has worked on the issues identified by the Conference on the Future of Europe that are more relevant for Andalusia, due to our geographical, social or economic situation, with the aim of drawing up proposals for the future of Europe under the Andalusian perspective.

The report “Andalusia for the Future of Europe - In Ten Proposals” brings together the ten main proposals resulting from this joint work, led by the Regional Government of Andalusia and which reflect Andalusia’s position on the Future of Europe. Ten proposals stemming from and connected with Andalusia’s reality and hopes for the future of the European Union.



I. TO STRENGTHEN THE ROLE OF THE REGIONS WITH LEGISLATIVE POWERS AS A REQUIREMENT FOR DEMOCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

The European regions which have legislative powers are democratically legitimised bodies with extensive competencies and play an essential role in the implementation of EU policies. In order to improve the democratic functioning of the European Union and its good governance, it is advisable to recognise the specific nature of these regions and to provide them with the appropriate participation channels, respecting the principles of subsidiarity, proportionality and adequacy of resources:

- a) The reform of the **Committee of the Regions**, as a representative body, adding a new chamber exclusively for the European regions with legislative powers. The Committee should be more widely and effectively included in the institutional system of checks and balances through a reinforcement of its interaction with the legislative bodies and its link with the work of the European Council.
- b) Recognition of the **right to bring actions before the Court of Justice of the European Union** to control the legality of the general acts which directly affect their own competences and which affect them in a qualified manner.
- c) The creation of a **European Fund for Democracy and Good Governance** for regional and local governments to encourage the implementation of reforms aimed at increasing the transparency, simplifying and streamlining the procedures, improving accountability, professionalising high-level public management and reinforcing the checks and balances, among others. In addition, this fund should also be used to strengthen civil society at all territorial levels of the Union.



II. THE UNION MUST OFFER A COMPREHENSIVE AND ADAPTED RESPONSE AT ITS SOUTHERN BORDER

The complexity of the Union's southern external border, which is Andalusia, needs an effective response that includes at least these three dimensions:

a) The European Union should legally recognise the specific situation of the **External Border Regions**, such as Andalusia, in the European policies of the area of freedom, security and justice, given the impact that migratory flows have on these regions and the fact that the implementation of these policies should be based on solidarity and a fair distribution of responsibilities, including their financing. The recognition of the external border region special category should trigger a specific information and consultation procedure to inform

the measures on migration, in particular for the development of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum. Additionally, these regions' specific needs should be integrated in the applicable financial instruments and in all issues that have a particular impact on the EU's external border regions.

b) The European Union should articulate an appropriate response to the unprecedented situation generated by the **Brexit**, causing the reinstatement of new external borders where they did not exist.



Although the Gibraltar situation is not unique, its border entails certain elements of high political sensitivity, due to its indisputable relevance, in European and international security and geostrategic terms; and of high social sensitivity, due to the close social and economic ties between both sides of the border. This response requires the active and direct involvement of the local and regional stakeholders and, in particular, of the Junta de Andalucía.

c) The Union needs a realistic and effective **European Neighbourhood Policy** that ensures the stability and prosperity of our Union and guarantees seamless economic, social and cultural exchanges, as

well as cooperation in issues such as control of migratory movements and security and defence. As the Union's southern border, Andalusia needs this European Neighbourhood Policy to truly respond to the peculiarities of the **southern Mediterranean** and, at the same time, to offer cooperation frameworks that are sufficiently flexible to adapt to each area, as the New Agenda for the Mediterranean intends. The recognition of **regional European External Border Partnerships** between neighbouring regions, regardless of their EU membership, would facilitate that the peculiarities of each area can be duly channelled institutionally and the design of an **adapted Neighbourhood Agenda**.

III. A EUROPEAN PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY

The Covid-19 pandemic has shown that the European Union's competences in the field of public health can actually be extended in order to design a truly **European common health policy** based on a **European Health Agency** that coordinates the actions of the various competent national bodies:

a) The Union should be able to articulate a uniform and common response of its Member States to any **pandemic and serious cross-border threats** both within the Union and in the control of its external borders.

b) The new European Health Policy could aim at reducing **inequalities in health and its determinants, including health care services**, avoiding disparities in actions and resources, as well as promoting the digitisation, compatibility and complementarity of national health systems and fostering coordination

and common response mechanisms for the prevention and treatment of health problems.

d) The implementation of European programmes for **active and healthy ageing**, universal accessibility to information and services, as well as strategies to adapt our current health systems, based on assisting acute health problems, to a new approach that meets the social and health needs (chronicity and polymorbidity) derived from by the ageing of the European population.





IV. EUROPE RISING TO THE CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGE

The European Union, through its action, must lead the international movement to **combat climate change** and the transition to a green and environmentally friendly economy in which the **circular economy and the blue economy** must play a central role.

The fight against climate change goes beyond the purely environmental framework and should become a **cross-cutting principle** that inspires all EU policies, including conditionality in its external action. Thus, the backbone of the European legislation should include a **mechanism for monitoring and evaluating climate impact** and the EU budgets should also mainstream formulas that integrate the green perspective and indicators that evaluate the link between budgetary interventions and climate change, with the Junta de Andalucía's Green Budget being an example of good practice in this respect.

The EU policy to combat climate change, as a global common, **must put a definitive end to the "environmental anomaly"** which, pursuant to Article 192(4) TFEU, assigns its financing and implementation to national budgets.

Without prejudice to the recognition of national contributions and also

regional contributions, such as Andalusia's, to the fight against climate change and the transition to a circular economy, the European Union must, in accordance with the principle of adequacy of means, pay for its own policy. Putting an end to this anomaly is essential for Andalusia which the most valuable and vulnerable biodiversity hotspot in the EU, with the largest area of protected natural areas, and **the region most vulnerable to water scarcity**. In any case, the formulation of this policy must acknowledge the strategic role of regions such as Andalusia, which are particularly exposed to climate change.

In the fight against climate change, regions also have a decisive role to play in the development of a **sustainable mobility system**, which promotes less dependence on oil, less energy consumption and active mobility. Although there are relevant European and national policies in this field, it is often the regions that have the relevant competences in this area.



V. A STRONG UNION ADVOCATING ITS VALUES

Andalusia fully shares with the Union the **values** of human dignity, freedom, democracy, the rule of law, solidarity and the protection of equality, in particular gender equality; the fundamental rights of individuals and minorities, on which any legitimate exercise of power is based; as well as the importance of European culture and way of life for the functioning of democracy and social cohesion.

In the face of threats such as the rise of populism and extremism, ideological polarisation, misinformation and new risks associated with the digitalisation of the public sphere, the one and only response for the Union is to strengthen the mechanisms for **promoting, monitoring and ensuring** respect:

- a) **Promotion** of values and fostering of a culture of the rule of law must be articulated through ambitious programmes involving the government levels closest to the citizen and civil society stakeholders, in line with the principle of subsidiarity.
- b) The **preventive** cycle should be oriented towards early warning mechanisms linked, where appropriate, to the initiation of infringement and cross-compliance procedures.
- c) The **sanctioning mechanism** of Article 7 TEU should be reformed by eliminating the unanimous decision and restoring the full jurisdiction of the Court of Justice.



VI. A NEW ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND TERRITORIAL COHESION POLICY FOR THE UNION

The model of **economic, social and territorial cohesion**, which has been the hallmark of the European Union for more than three decades, must be adapted to the new global context. The economic recovery from the Covid crisis and the transition to a digital and green economy, including the need to achieve the highest degree of energy independence, have changed the basic terms on which European cohesion policy operates. These factors have a different impact on the various regions and territories of the Union and can potentially exacerbate existing inequalities. Therefore, in order to ensure an effective and efficient cohesion policy, without jeopardising the high standards of ex ante and ex post control, it is necessary to **make the use of structural funds more flexible** in order to cover the needs of the transition to a digital and green economy and to **strengthen the participation of regional authorities** in its formulation and implementation.

Furthermore, the success of the transition to a green and digital economy led by the European Union will depend on the good management of European programmes and funds and their effectiveness for businesses and workers. For this reason, it is essential to take decisive action to simplify and streamline the bureaucratic and processing burden on the final beneficiaries. This administrative simplification is perfectly feasible without undermining the proper management of the funds and their financial supervision.

The Union, through the Cohesion Policy, needs a plan to improve strategic peripheral infrastructures, such as the Mediterranean rail corridor. Precisely because these areas are particularly vulnerable to negative effects, the **global gateway** should not be developed to the detriment of the economic structure of neighbouring peripheral regions or of European nodes that are strategic in global competitiveness, such as the Algeciras Port.

VII. A UNION OF ACTIVE CITIZENS WITH EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The stagnation of the rights envisaged in the citizenship statute, the difficulty of extending them and the modest results of the remaining measures aimed at building an active European citizenship perpetuate the traditional disaffection of citizens with regard to the Union, with the consequent decline in its legitimisation. This scenario is likely to worsen as a result of the digitalisation of the public sphere and the subsequent risks of misinformation, polarisation and **manipulation**. In the face of these challenges, the Union must move forward in three directions:



a) The Union must **strengthen its citizenship status**, adding the **principle of equal opportunities** to the non-discrimination principle in Article 19 TFEU, in line with common values and the European acquis for the protection of vulnerable groups. This amendment should entail the necessary increase in powers to tackle the root causes of citizens' disaffection, particularly among youth.

b) The Union should **ensure that citizens can participate fully in an open and secure digital public space**. To this end, the Union must implement a **lifelong digital learning programme to** ensure that all citizens acquire basic digital skills, by introducing them into the relevant

education cycles and by implementing specific actions aimed at the elderly **and people with disabilities**, where necessary, to prevent their exclusion. This reinforcement of citizens' digital skills must be accompanied by **strict regulatory and promotional measures to ensure that the digital public space is transparent, accessible, plural and safe** from internal and external interference and manipulation, whether public, private or both

c) The Union must promote a vigorous, plural and competitive audiovisual and media sector as a guarantee of a well-functioning democratic system. Citizens' participation in public debate and access to information in the digital world depend on this.



VIII. A GREEN, DIGITAL, STRONG AND SOCIALLY JUST EUROPE FOR EUROPE'S PERIPHERAL REGIONS

The Union's pursuit of a solid and socially just green and digital economy requires special attention to be paid to its effects on peripheral European regions such as Andalusia, which have great potential for economic development, but which sometimes also have serious vulnerabilities. The Cohesion Policy must be the instrument that enables these weaknesses to be overcome.

The transition to a green and digital economy inevitably entails an identical transition to green and digital jobs, which the EU must facilitate and support.

Training and reskilling workers and self-employed in the digital and professional skills and competences of the jobs of the future must be a priority of the European employment policy. This priority is crucial in peripheral regions which suffer from high unemployment and which, due to the type of employment generated by their economic structure, need specific support and more intensive action for the professional reorientation of workers and entrepreneurs.

In particular, the EU should set up a **European Green and Digital Transition Fund for SMEs** to support the digitisation of their production and commercial processes, protected by high-level cybersecurity, as well as the adaptation of agriculture, tourism and agri-food SMEs to environmental sustainability and climate neutrality standards. This action would promote their internationalisation and would help to attract investment, especially for peripheral regions such as Andalusia, with a business fabric mostly made up of small and medium-sized enterprises and with an economic structure largely based on tourism and the agri-food industries, which are going through greater difficulties in their digital and ecological transition.

IX. A EUROPEAN UNION THAT CARES FOR TO ITS FUTURE GENERATIONS

The future of Europe and the Union rests on its young people. Consequently, the European Union must pay particular attention to the needs of young people in its policy-making, with the aim of getting closer to Europe's youth and of being at the forefront of their interests.

The European Union should have the necessary tools to prevent young people's disaffection with the European project, such as a deeper knowledge of the Union's historical and cultural heritage.

Beyond the European Year of Youth in 2022, decisive and cross-cutting action is essential to mainstream this perspective in all EU policies. Thus, at least with regard to the main measures, European legislation should include a **generational impact assessment and monitoring mechanism** to evaluate the effects of its measures on young people.

Youth unemployment, the delay and precariousness of young people's entry into the labour market, postpones and hampers their life plans. This is a dysfunction that the Union must tackle through decisive and effective action within the framework of coordinating the economic and employment policies of the Member States. The creation of a **European youth unemployment insurance** that would make the Union's contribution conditional on the implementation of active youth employment policies by Member States would make a decisive contribution to reducing this problem, especially in those regions where it is most acute.





X. A STRONG AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY AS A GUARANTEE FOR THE FUTURE

The instability of world agricultural markets as a consequence of past economic crises, the growing effects of climate change, the Covid-19 pandemic itself or the Russian military aggression against Ukraine, have shown that the European agricultural and rural development policies still play a vital strategic role for the future of the Union. The European Union must take **urgent action to support and finance these two policies** in order to promote a balanced and fair economic recovery (“leaving no one behind”) and a green transition, given the environmental importance of agricultural and forestry management and the structuring of the territory. To this end, the Union should:

a) **Legally formalise** the political commitment to mainstream the rural perspective in the formulation of EU policies so that the territorial impact assessment of any European measure, as well as its national and regional implementation, identifies the special needs of rural areas (*rural proofing*).

b) Ensure that the agricultural industry has sufficient means to achieve **high standards of environmental sustainability**. It is essential to take a strong lead in this area at the international level to avoid that the environmental compliance within the EU entails that the EU agricultural industry is threatened by external

competitors that operate with lower environmental sustainability standards.

c) Strengthen the strategic areas of agriculture, mobility and transport, digital connectivity and high-value sectors such as renewable energies and rural tourism. To this end, it is necessary, firstly, to recognise the **diversity** of rural realities and the consequent need for **flexibility** in the formulation of European policies and the **recognition of the**

main responsibility of regional authorities, which are closer to and more aware of their specific features. Secondly, this diversity and flexibility require **actions to coordinate European policies** with an impact on rural areas, resulting in simpler implementing rules for European funds and state aid in rural areas, improvements in the way they are combined, and a shift to a multi-fund model that ensures the integration of rural areas into all policies.



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