

Macron seeks far-reaching EU overhaul

By [Eric Maurice](#)

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French president Emmanuel Macron laid out an overhaul of the EU on Tuesday (26 September) to make it more integrated, more democratic, and more competitive.



"Look at our times, face up to it, and you'll see you have no choice," Macron told other EU leaders. (Photo: elysee.fr)

Calling on EU leaders to take positions

In a speech of more than 100 minutes at Paris Sorbonne university, which included many historical and literary references, Macron delivered a vision that is likely to stir debate among EU leaders, whom he called on to take positions.

"Look at our times, face up to it, and you'll see you have no choice," he told EU leaders and European people.

"You have one simple choice: to leave a little more space at each election to nationalists, to those who hate Europe ... Or to take your responsibilities by taking all the risks, each in his country," he said.

Common democratic values, single market, eurozone with own minister, budget, taxes

He laid out a vision of the EU in 2024 that is based on "common democratic values" as well as a "simpler, more protective" single market.

This EU would include a more integrated eurozone with its own budget managed by a finance minister who would be held responsible by a eurozone parliament.

The budget would be funded by a tax on internet companies - which France is currently pushing - a "green tax", and a future corporation tax that would be harmonised.

Smaller Commission, trans-national lists to Parliament

The European Commission would be reduced to 15 members and half the members of the European Parliament would be elected through trans-national lists as soon as 2019.

Common defence, intelligence, prosecutor, migration and integration, fight on terrorism

Macron also proposed a common defence budget, with a "common doctrine" and a "common intervention force" by 2020.

He proposed a "European intelligence academy" and a European prosecutor to fight terrorism.

He said that the EU should have a common agency to manage asylum requests and centralise interconnected databases and biometric IDs.

The EU would have, at the same time, a common policy to train and integrate migrants.

Artificial intelligence, new agency for innovation

Macron proposed a new EU agency for innovation - there is already one in Budapest - in order to invest in "new fields of research" like artificial intelligence.

Another trade prosecutor

He also proposed that another European trade prosecutor would "punish without delay" any unfair practices.

"We cannot afford [not] to keep the same policies, the same habits, the same procedures, the same budget," Macron told his audience.

A sovereign, united and democratic Europe

"The only way to ensure our future is to rebuild a sovereign, united and democratic Europe", he said.

Multi-speed Europe, group for the rebuilding of Europe, "democratic conventions"

Macron signaled that he was ready to push forward without all member states.

He said that he wanted the EU to launch a "group for the rebuilding of Europe" that would include countries that are willing to move forward and would work with EU institutions.

The group would be tasked with setting up a roadmap for Europe from now to summer 2018. A series of "democratic conventions" would take place in the meantime to allow citizens to contribute to the elaboration of the roadmap.

"Europe is already with multi-speed, so let's not be afraid to say it and make it happen," he said, in a reference to member states who refused more integration while fearing to be left behind.

"New partnership" with Germany, innovation agency, integrating completely

He also proposed a "new partnership" to Germany, with a new Franco-German treaty next January, when the two countries celebrate the 55th anniversary of the Elysee Treaty that sealed their close cooperation.

He said that he wanted France and Germany to give a "common and concrete impetus" to the EU.

"Why not start together an innovation agency? Why not integrate our market completely by 2024, by applying the same rules to our companies, from business law to bankruptcy law?" he asked.

"Audacity and sense of history", no mutualisation of debts

Two days after German elections that oblige the chancellor to build a difficult coalition with the liberals and the Greens, Macron said he was sure that Angela Merkel will choose "audacity and the sense of history" rather than "timidity".

He tried to reassure Germany by insisting that a eurozone budget would not be used to "mutualise debts".

Beyond institutional changes, the French president insisted that the EU needed projects and proposed several initiatives.

Carbon tax, energy market

He said that the EU should create a "carbon tax" at EU borders while setting a "consistent minimum price [for carbon] within the European borders". He insisted on the need for a "real European energy market".

Financial transaction tax, development in Africa

He also revived the idea of a tax on financial transactions - an idea that is currently stuck in discussion between member states - to finance EU development policy in Africa.

He argued that the EU needed a "partnership" with Africa, "otherwise others will do it".

Rethinking common agricultural policy, protecting against world markets

He also said that the EU should rethink its common agricultural policy - of which France is one of the main beneficiaries - in order to protect itself against changes on world markets and to "give more flexibility" to regions to adapt.

Social and fiscal convergence, against lower tax rates

He defended the idea of a "social and fiscal convergence" between member states by setting criteria that member states would have to respect, or they would lose EU funds.

"We cannot have structural funds that finance lower tax rates," he argued

European education system

Macron, who was speaking to an audience of French and foreign students, insisted on European cultural heritage and the need to develop a European education system.

"The Europe of multilingualism is a chance," he said.

He said that by 2024, all European students should speak at least two languages and that half of Europeans under 25 - students and apprentices alike - should have spent at least six months in another country.

He also proposed to launch a "Sorbonne process" to create European universities and develop the harmonisation and recognition of diplomas in the secondary education system.



All European students should speak at least two languages by 2024, Macron said. (Photo: Valentina Pop)

No red lines

In order to win support for his ideas, the French leaders said that he would be ready to "show the example", for instance by renouncing having a EU commissioner.

"I don't have red lines, only horizons," he said.