

A strategy for Europe to succeed in the 21st century

Technological and industrial sovereignty, together with the strong support of European citizens, are critical to addressing existential challenges

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The fragmentation of our societies calls for a profoundly new approach to public policies and civic engagement. We need concrete actions capable of reducing divisions so as to concentrate on our existential challenges: climate change, the explosion of inequalities, or growing tensions all around the world.

Technological and industrial sovereignty, together with the strong support of European citizens for these objectives, are critical to solving these challenges. Without naivety and if provided with political courage and bold execution capabilities, we see a real opportunity for Europe to once again become a forward-looking continent, a driving force for preserving our planet, and a place where the fruits of progress are shared fairly.

A strategy for success

The policy of small steps in the face of the climate threat is not working and frus-

trating everybody. The war in Ukraine gives an opportunity for a real energy revolution. Like Italy, we must call on everyone to lower their consumption, concentrate our efforts on energy efficiency and insulation, and not rush headlong into just building nuclear plants out of the 20th century, but create a much more decentralised energy model. We must ensure that the number of European roofs with solar energy is multiplied by 100, that obstacles to getting grid-connected are eliminated, and research efforts in storage, renewable energy without rare earths, small-scale nuclear energy or fusion are multiplied. The energy subsidies all over Europe, whose cost will explode, must be targeted at those who really need it, and not hide the fact that energy needs to be used with more care.

The European Union must profoundly transform the way it operates because it is

perceived as both essential in this dangerous world but at the same time cold, reactive and not proactive, and distant from citizens. In contrast to the evolution of the last 20 years towards an intergovernmental model within the European Council, there

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must be an opportunity for unparalleled democratic proximity, close work with civil society, and great agility: an end must be put to bureaucratisation, and to the permanent spreading of funds, which are a symbol of a lack of priority and therefore of real effectiveness (39,000 projects for the Horizon 2020 research programme). The silos between Directorates General as well as between industry and competition are intolerable, the excessive administrative hurdles

of their financial engagement, the total lack of visibility of any real impact of the considerable funds deployed, such as NextGen Europe, or a convention for the future of Europe that is out of touch with the ground, with just 60,000 participants out of a population of 450 million Europeans – all of this must be reformed from top to bottom or Europe will be drained of its breath. We need to move from a Europe of bold speeches to a

Europe of impact – a case in point being the total failure of our digital strategies thus far, as shown by the mere €3.4 billion in fines effectively paid by big tech companies in 20 years, compared to the €23.5 billion in fines imposed and the hundreds of billions in profits these companies have made. And the absence of any European company in the top 20 technology companies in the world.

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ily by allocating more billions to them, but by strengthening our capacity for foresight and experimentation in all directions so as to both prepare for and, primarily, influence the world of tomorrow, and create the future we choose. We need to free up energy by getting rid of calls for proposals, which are bureaucratic monsters that encourage bounty hunters rather than enticing the best to apply, we must leverage the agility of non-state actors to manage some of the public programs to allow for great efficiency, and establish simple and clear objectives to measure the impact of essential programmes like Horizon Europe, RE-PowerEU or NextGenEU.

We need to bring the word "recovery" into the 21st century: talking about "sectors" like the automotive, aeronautics, distribution, digital and health sectors does not take account of the fact that most of the biggest emerging sectors are now cross-sectoral: is Tesla a software or automotive company? Is Nvidia a microprocessor manufacturer or a future AI giant? The role of future ministers of research and technology, industry or ecology is not to stay on vertical value chains, with the risk of supporting outdated business models, but to use the opportunity presented by this major crisis to create wealth and jobs of the future. Provided that we truly listen to each other, European diversity must once again become an immense opportunity to better understand the complexity of the world – an emblematic example being the Baltic and Eastern Euro-

pean countries that saw the Russian threat coming but were largely ignored by larger countries like France or Germany.

The evaluation of policies is today a blind spot that feeds populism: we must not establish managerial indicators but clear and regularly evaluated societal objectives, allowing these policies to be stopped or modified if they do not fulfil their mission. In this sense, the DARPA methodology is extremely effective because it mobilises the best people, focuses on the societal objectives to be accomplished, and leaves total

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freedom concerning how to achieve them. What we need is a strategic and trusted public hand.

The definition of these objectives must be an occasion for a democratic revolution. Parliament and civil society must once again become central. Citizen consultations must be multiplied since they give an opportunity for debate, for the involvement of European and collective intelligence. And why not think about a reform that places the EU at the forefront of democratic innovation – digital and offline tools already exist, we just lack the imagination and the political will to fully harness them.

As the crucible of this democratic revolution, education must lie at the core of

our 7-year plans. With a knowledge-based civilisation that will make it the central tool for our future competitiveness, and an ever more unequal world, we have an opportunity to make our society one of the best trained in ethics, critical thinking and the scientific method. Bridges between the public and private sectors must be multiplied ensure diversity and experience, and professional and continuous education must be made standard.

More generally, we need to safeguard and concentrate certain budgets – education, research, defence – in order to take the long view and invent a democratic method that is not inferior to the advantage of 'carnivorous' states and organisations – authoritarian states or large technological platforms. This needs to be done without delay for the judiciary, whose slowness is a source of frustration in many EU countries, as well as for the implementation of European regulations. The method to be invented must address anticipation, long-term projection, and agility so as not to always be in a strategic surprise.

The State can and must be exemplary in its core missions, to better let energies express themselves and take care of those that acceleration leaves by the side of the road. Our humanism is a powerful inspiration, which must be given its full strength.

For all of this, we need strategic, transversal, geopolitical governments and a Commission able to give impetus to long-term choices without falling into the temptation

of interventionism or grand announcements without any impact. A Churchillian or Gaullist vision projected into the 21st century, embedded in deep human values but capable of making Europe as bold and strategic as the USA or China. An opportunity for European leaders to go down in history. ♦

The Joint European Disruptive Initiative (JEDI) is a European initiative for disruptive innovation, the European ARPA, whose mission is to place Europe in a leadership position in emerging and disruptive technologies.

To this end, JEDI is launching Grand-Challenges to push back the frontiers of science and innovation, with a radically new method based on purpose-driven research, maximum speed, a complete focus on excellence, interdisciplinarity and bold moonshot risk-taking. Driven by humanistic values, JEDI strives to solve the major societal challenges of our time (environment, health, digital, education, oceans, space) through innovation.

JEDI works for the common good, being is powered by over 4,600 technological and scientific leaders from academia, industry and deeptech start-ups in 29 countries across Europe and the world. Fully independent, JEDI is funded by committed foundations, corporations, individuals and public institutions.

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