



Emergency resolution

Resolution adopted at the EPP Congress,
Helsinki (Finland), 7–8 November 2018



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Protecting EU Values and Safeguarding Democracy

Next year the European Union will hold elections for the European Parliament. Our political family must strive to increase citizens' trust in our institutions. In recent years, the EU has experienced many challenges, much like our Member States and their respective democracies. After the Second World War, Christian Democrats were at the forefront fighting to establish liberal democracy in a secure Europe — based on our Judeo-Christian democratic ideas and values, the rule of law, a multiparty system and a strong civil society with independent media, the freedom of religion, expression and association. Today, these fundamental values and principles are being challenged in an unprecedented manner. Populist and nationalist extremism, disinformation, discrimination and undermining of the rule of law pose the greatest threat to freedom and democracy that Europe has experienced since the fall of the Iron Curtain. Therefore, as the leading political force in Europe, it is important that we defend our values — as pointed out in the party's political platform — and to extend the following message to Europe's citizens:

- We stress that the European Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are essential elements of a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail. Full respect for these principles is the basic condition for building citizens' trust in the Union. They are central to the Treaties on the European Union signed by all Member States at the moment of their accession.
- We call on all EPP members and associations to respect, protect and promote these principles and values.
- We are convinced that without a strong European Union and strong EU institutions, the common good cannot be achieved and our core values cannot be implemented. We reaffirm our commitment to democracy, the rule of law and the social market economy. Populism and nationalism are incompatible with progress, democracy and the rule of law.
- We are strongly concerned by increasing restrictions on constitutional systems, the independence of the judiciary, the fight against corruption, freedom of media and civil society in several Member States.
- We underline that the way in which the rule of law is implemented in the Member States plays a key role in ensuring mutual trust among Member States and their legal systems and is vital to maintaining an area of freedom, security and justice without internal borders.

- We stress that an independent judiciary is an essential precondition for membership of the EU. Justice cannot be arbitrary or confused with the dictatorship of the majority. Independent courts are the basis of mutual trust between our Member States and our judicial systems.
- We stress that the Council of Europe remains the bedrock of human rights, democracy and the rule of law for all of Europe. We must ensure the further democratisation of the Council of Europe and prevent any attempts to destroy it.
- We are convinced that corruption poses a serious threat to the rule of law, democracy, human rights and social justice. It hinders economic development and endangers the stability of democratic institutions and the moral foundations of society. Transparency, accountability, electoral integrity, effective prosecutions, fair trials and the presence of independent media and civil society are crucial elements in tackling corruption.
- We insist that a vibrant civil society plays a vital role in a fully-fledged democracy. Non-governmental organisations must be allowed to operate for humanitarian goals without fear of punishment. They should be treated equally by governments and legislatures, regardless of their political orientation, so long as their activities remain within the boundaries of the rule of law.
- We emphasise that academic freedom is a cornerstone of democracy. Governments should protect it at all times.
- We are strongly concerned by the intimidation and murder of journalists. The lack of an independent media, insufficient transparency of media ownership and unbalanced media coverage in some Member States are further sources of concern.
- We underline that disinformation, populist attacks, pressure generated by online media and misuse of the digital revolution have seriously threatened traditional media. The democratisation of information brought by the internet is not a substitute for quality journalism. We believe that serious journalism, which is essential for a democracy, requires a protective legal and institutional environment.
- We call on EPP members to guarantee the functioning of the democratic institutions in their respective countries, on questions related to constitutional justice, separation of power, law and the judiciary, electoral legislation, human rights issues and the rights of minorities.
- We emphasise that the EU institutions should play a key role in measuring progress and monitoring compliance with the fundamental values of the European Union. A lively, constructive debate on the functioning of EU institutions is welcome and will have positive effects on citizens' trust in EU institutions. But EU Member State governments should refrain from spinning conspiracy theories and launching all-out attacks against the European Commission or the European Parliament, as well as against European cooperation as a whole.