Denmark's priorities for the next European Commission

The EU is facing the greatest geopolitical challenges in the history of the Union, not least in light of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. In an uncertain world, we need a strong and resolute EU standing increasingly in its own right. A Union capable and willing of more – and a Union which can quickly and effectively translate its visions into results to avoid losing its foothold in an intensified global competition.

The EU must be more robust, more competitive and more capable of defending and promoting European interests and positions of strength. The EU needs to be better equipped to address challenges across EU Member States more effectively. Ambitious climate targets, significantly more renewable energy and circular economy will contribute to ensuring the green transition, increased energy independence and competitiveness. More strategic trade and industrial policies are needed to strengthen the EU's security of supply and geopolitical relevance. In the context of intensified strategic and technological competition as well as the digital transition, the EU must be assertive and reduce critical dependencies, develop its economic, industrial and technological base, protect critical infrastructure and shape global norms and rules for emerging technologies. With regards to artificial intelligence and quantum technologies, common EU rules as well as research and development projects are required to support innovation in Europe while at the same time protecting citizens and ensuring responsible development and use. Europe must strengthen democratic control of the services of the tech-industry so it takes responsibility for the consequences of its business models for the safety and well-being of children and young people. Free and fair movement within the European Union must be ensured based on decent working conditions as well as respect for well-functioning labour market models. The EU needs strong external borders and must work towards a new asylum system. The EU must use its economic strength, diplomacy, capacity building and technical assistance to build reliable and long-term partnerships, in particular with the Global South, to promote its interests globally.

Enlargement must make the EU stronger. Consequently, we must strengthen the EU's competitiveness and resilience *and* our ties with our neighbouring countries. We should not lower the bar for accession but ensure the necessary support in order for countries to become ready for membership. The EU must continue its political, financial, humanitarian and military support for Ukraine – in the long term and across sectoral policies. At the same time, the EU must also prepare itself for enlargement. This will require reforms and new thinking.

In an uncertain world, Denmark will work to strengthen the EU, both *externally* and *internally*. *Externally*, it is essential for the EU to strengthen its tools and its ability to use these tools strategically. *Internally*, the EU must promote its competitiveness, develop its own capacities, maintain a sound economic policy and become more robust and resilient, not least in order to be ready for enlargement.

A stronger EU *externally*

The EU must assume more responsibility for its own security and deepen cooperation within security and defence policies, thereby strengthening European and transatlantic security.

- The *resilience of the EU defence industry should be strengthened* by increasing production capacity through long-term and strategic investments. To this end, Denmark supports the proposal to appoint a Commissioner for Defence, responsible for inter alia strengthening the EU's defence industry.

- Cooperation with the Ukrainian defence industry must be reinforced with a particular focus on *integrating Ukraine into EU defence-industrial programmes* such as EDF, EDIRPA and EDIP.

The EU's geopolitical impact must be enhanced through equal partnerships, strategic trade policy and increased coordination of EU policy tools.

- The Commission's Global Gateway project on *green corridors for maritime transport*, supported by Denmark, should be implemented with broad ownership across the Commission, Member States, the private sector and partner countries.

- The internal organisation of the Commission should support the coordination of internal and external policies, including through the appointment of a *Commissioner for Global Gateway*.

The EU's external borders must be reinforced while ensuring long-term solutions in neighbouring regions. We should work towards a new European asylum system that ensures EU control with arrivals and removes incentives for irregular migration.

- The EU must strengthen cooperation with countries of origin and transit as well as develop *new partnerships with third countries* in accordance with the EU's international commitments. Inspiration could be drawn from the 1:1 model of the EU-Turkey Agreement as well as the EU's comprehensive partnership with Tunisia.

- "*Place of safety arrangements*" where migrants rescued at sea can be brought to safety in third countries should be established.

A stronger EU *internally*

To bolster long-term competitiveness, including the EU's role in the technologies of tomorrow, we must reduce burdens and barriers for European businesses and increase access to green energy. EU decision-making should be based on solid analyses, including more transparency about consequences and costs of Union legislation.

- EU industrial policy must rest on long-term and large-scale financing tools to mobilise private investments. The Capital Markets Union must be deepened, and a *guarantee instrument through the EIB* should increase the financing of green and innovative technologies such as wind, where appropriate, in cooperation with national financing instruments.

- The EU should promote *automatic business reporting* and make new EU legislation "digital by default". Furthermore, an efficient use of the European Digital Identity Wallet could be expanded as a common solution for digital identity across borders and sectoral legislation.

- There is a need for increased attention to better regulation, impact assessments and implementation. A *dedicated Commissioner* is needed to ensure that Commission impact assessments thoroughly and consistently assess the consequences of EU legislation for national budgets and businesses as well as socio-economic consequences. At the same time, the EU must develop a *green calculator* to ensure that costs and consequences of the green transition are better reflected.

An ambitious green transition will contribute to making the EU better positioned in strategic competition with increased energy security as well as better growth opportunities for the EU's industry.

- An EU 2040 climate target of at least 90 percent should be achieved by modernising and strengthening the climate policy architecture. An *EU emission trading system for agriculture* should be introduced together with

a regulatory framework that promotes cost-effective reduction efforts as well as technology development, such as CCS and green hydrogen.

- The EU must engage massively in the *development of renewable energy at sea* and *strengthen European energy infrastructure,* allowing the North Sea to become the green power plant of Europe. This will require, among other things, joint EU investments in infrastructure.

- The EU must adopt a *Circular Economy Act* based on a comprehensive revision of the Waste Framework Directive.

A successful enlargement of the EU with continued support for ambitious and joint European solutions requires stronger tools to safeguard cohesion, common values, democracy and respect for the rule of law. Big tech should be obliged to take greater responsibility for the democratic dialogue online.

- The link between the EU's fundamental values and principles and the EU budget should be strengthened and apply to EU spending more broadly through the *use of the conditionality tools* built into NextGenerationEU.

- The big tech industry must be made more responsible for protecting minors against exposure to harmful and illegal content online. This requires stronger *enforcement and effective implementation of EU legislation* as well as new initiatives, including *effective tools for age verification* to ensure that minors are only exposed to age-appropriate content.