



# New Energy For Europe.

**European Election Manifesto 2024**

—English Version—

**D66**



# Introduction

In June of this year, we will choose a new European Parliament for the next five years. If it's up to D66, at the end of that period the European Union will be greener, more prosperous, and safer than ever before. Europeans will be healthier, because nature is recovering and everyone has access to healthcare, education, and decent work. Europe will be the continent that generates more energy than it consumes. Around the world, Europe will contribute to livability, prosperity, and democracy. Together, the armed forces will ensure peace on the continent and in its immediate region. In the year 2029, the EU will not only be larger, but more close-knit. The voice of European voters will be heard through a strong, democratic administration. In 2029, people will know what they're voting for: a European Parliament that – in the heart of a democratic union – is working on a safe and livable future for every European.

These are some big ambitions to realize in five years. But they are within reach for a Union that can build on the power of almost half a billion Europeans. The EU has already shown it is capable of making a difference. Through joint investments in a vaccine against COVID-19 and a recovery program for the economic aftermath. Through uniting against the Russian invasion in Ukraine. Together, we hosted millions of Ukrainian refugees and, in record time, made sure we no longer relied on Russian gas. Through solidarity and collaboration, the EU tackles any problem that comes its way.

The Europe we believe in exists: a Europe capable of big things. We have seen that we can exceed our own expectations, when our European institutions are given the freedom to make it happen. And that's reassuring, because Europe is not doing as well as it was during the previous elections. Our region is increasingly unstable, and a war is raging on our own continent in Ukraine. Europe is still wealthy and continues to have a high standard of living, but the United States and China in particular are getting ahead of us – both economically and technologically. We have become increasingly dependent on both countries. As a result, the EU's ability to exert geopolitical influence has diminished. And the Union itself needs work, too. The authoritarian leaders of several countries have shown that democracy and the rule of law can be broken. Their political friends are rising up all across Europe. That means we need to stand up, with conviction, to fight for our fundamental rights and freedoms.

The EU has proven time and time again that they can change these negative developments. Not only by working together, but by working together more closely. It is about time that Europe takes another step forward. That's why we're repealing national veto's that only serve to protect authoritarian leaders and undermine our strength. We will become more effective instead of dependent on the lowest common denominator of the current 27 member states. Either we have the power of influence together, or we are on our own and powerless. A united Europe makes us all stronger, while a divided Europe is geopolitically out of control.

Our Union not only relies on member states, but on people. That's why we're increasing the power of citizens, with the European Parliament at the center of the European democracy. For a Europe in which your vote as a European truly counts. Our Parliament will decisively and independently hold the European Commission accountable. The European budget will grow along with our ambitions and be adjusted to match the challenges we're facing. What we stand for is a stronger and united Europe. The kind of Europe that is not just an economic superpower, but also a green, technological, and democratic superpower.

We will put our united strengths to work to create a fair, green, and innovative European society. D66 wants to secure and strengthen the added value of Europe as an independent geopolitical player. As a democratic stronghold, where social security comes with a free market as well as countervailing power against multinationals with too much power. We want Europe to be the best and cleanest place to live, a place where we invest in education and mobility – because that's what leads to freedom. We want the EU to have a positive influence on a world that we are an integral part of. The better off the world is, the better off we are. We are committed to our ideal of a world free of war, dictatorships, hunger, poverty, and the consequences of climate change.

We have it in us to make sure future generations will also be able to enjoy the benefits of a European collaboration. The work begins now: building toward prosperity and well-being in a clean world, democratically and in freedom. Our ideal for Europe.

Fleur Gräper-van Koolwijk

# A solid foundation

## What we see

Europe, that's us. D66 is committed to a democratic Europe, in which citizens have a voice on every level: from their local community to national and European policy. Because it is up to us to shape Europe. A democratic rule of law and respect for human rights are the foundation for that. In Europe, citizens have equal rights and a voice in democracy. A chance to make the best of life in freedom and safety. That's the Europe D66 works for every single day.

Governments in member states like Hungary are steadily eroding democracy and the rule of law, while the rest of Europe watches it happen. Authoritarian leaders propagate hate and sow discord in order to stay in power, threatening the LGBTQIA+ community, the safety of migrants, the respect for human rights and free public debate, among other things. Meanwhile, corruption, cross-border crime and terrorism continue to pose a threat to our safety.

## What we want

To make sure Europe is free, just, and democratic, we need a strong foundation. We have a choice to shape our own future by strengthening the European democracy, the rule of law and our fundamental rights. To do this, we are giving the European Parliament the rights of a true representational government, making sure citizens directly participate and young people and future generations have access to positions of power. National ministers and government leaders will be held accountable by their national governments for what they agree to in Brussels. We will provide the EU with the tools to protect our rule of law and community of values against authoritarian governments and criminals. Member states who continuously flout the rules will lose the right to vote and can no longer take part in the decision-making process.

Working on a free, just, and democratic future requires an ambitious budget. The European budget has to become a mature instrument, with its own resources and regular monitoring and adjustments. While we currently spend 300 billion euros on our mutual agriculture policy, D66 wants to make sure that money is also spent on a green, digital, and social future. Member states should have the opportunity to make the necessary investments in the climate transition, sustainable agriculture and in strong social services, like education and healthcare. We will strengthen the European budget by taxing cross-border activities together. And here, too, we will strengthen democracy: the European Parliament will have an annual vote on both the European revenues and expenses.

## What we'll do

- Create a strong European Parliament. In the next European elections, you'll also be able to vote for a candidate from a different country.
- Repeal the veto right to make the European Union more effective.

- Protect the democratic rule of law in every member state. Countries that don't uphold these values will face serious consequences.
- Strengthen Europol, Eurojust and European Public Prosecution so we can effectively deal with cross-border crime and terrorism together.
- Create a new European anti-discrimination strategy that takes into account all forms of discrimination and unequal treatment. We will strengthen the position of fundamental human rights.
- Work on a modern and ambitious European budget for a green, digital, and social future.

# The big transitions

## What we see

When we go to the polls at the beginning of June, less than half the year has gone by. But by then, we will already have passed the annual Earth Overshoot Day: the day on which we have taken more of the planet than it is able to give. The effects of climate change are undeniable, whether it's forest fires, droughts, heat waves or floods. Despite all that, it's proving hard to make the necessary changes. Letting go of a system that has brought many of us limitless prosperity is painful. But delaying those changes even further will cost society dearly. D66 is not afraid to make the necessary choices, for a system in which the economy and the environment are not mutually exclusive. In which innovation – both technological and social – and green entrepreneurship will be the driving forces behind sustainability. In which the impact on nature and society are the top priority. In which our focus is on the prosperity and well-being of all. The EU is essential in achieving those goals.

Around the world, countries are competing to prepare for the future. The United States and China are spending billions on tomorrow's economy and preparations for increasing climate change and shortages. The developments are going at the speed of light: electric cars, computer chips, sustainable industrial infrastructure. The EU can not afford to remain stuck in the past, especially in these uncertain times. Fortunately, the opportunities are still there for the taking – for now. But that does mean member states need to work together.

## What we want

The scale of the transitions we are facing can only be achieved at the European level. And we need to aim higher. The Green Deal has shown that the European Union can make miracles happen, but only if we work together and continue to focus on what we have in common instead of our differences. The green transition offers plenty of opportunities, but only if it is just and social. If those who are stronger carry heavier loads. If people in vulnerable positions are supported. If we invest structurally and strategically, support innovative, green entrepreneurs, and see diversity for what it is: a competitive advantage. If we create clear European rules and fair pricing, making sure polluters pay up, and recycling is profitable. If green is the standard, and we're all able to participate.

The fight to achieve a green, innovative European future is inextricably tied to the digital transition. The development of digital technology and artificial intelligence is going unbelievably fast. D66 wants to grab every opportunity new technology offers. Artificial intelligence can contribute to sustainable agriculture, increased biodiversity, and a faster generation of green energy. But the digital transition also has the potential to make the climate crisis worse, because of the large amounts of water and energy required in developing technology. That's why we believe climate neutrality should be a central focus.

The digital transition will only be a success if it is fair. That's why D66 wants a digital future in which freedom, equality and democracy are more important than the profits of Big Tech. We will increase the digital connection within Europe and make sure everyone can participate in its digital future. We will call for an end to the trade in personal information and stand up against social media's addictive algorithms. We will redistribute the revenue of Big Tech by taxing their profits. Together with the innovative power of the commercial sector, we will build a resilient digital economy in which we utilize the creativity of startups and scaleups. How the EU will shape its digital transition will also help determine the future of its global position. It is D66's ambition that the European Union will be a leader in the development of fair, equitable and sustainable artificial intelligence by 2035.

### **What we'll do**

- Ensure Europe is climate neutral by 2040 and climate positive by 2050. The use of fossil fuels will be prohibited by 2045.
- Help businesses navigate the climate transition, by creating a European fund to encourage the production of green and circular products.
- Restore ecosystems in Europe. By 2030, at least 30 percent of all areas – both on land and in water – will be restored. In 2050, every ecosystem across Europe will be in good shape.
- Make internet access a human right. To be a full member of society and be able to freely voice your opinion, internet access is essential.
- Work toward climate neutrality in agriculture by 2040. EU funding for agriculture will be explicitly used to accelerate the transition to sustainability. A thriving landscape, livable countryside and biodiversity are central to this ambition.
- Create a high-speed rail network between all major European urban regions and invest in international rail connections.

# Prosperity, for everyone

## What we see

The freedom to make a good life. That's what the EU and its member states promise their citizens. To be able to earn a good income, with decent and stable work. To be able to plan for the future, by going back to school, for example. To live in a Europe that provides a foundation for a dignified life. No matter where you live, who you are, or where you're from.

Right now, that promise has not been fulfilled for everyone. For a long time, rising collective prosperity meant everyone benefited. But for the past fifteen years or so, that has no longer been the case. Our increasing wealth has been unevenly distributed. Inequality in social rights and exclusion have led to a life of uncertainty for many Europeans. Social inequality in Europe has increased, especially since the last financial crisis: the income and wealth gaps within and between countries, regions and groups in the labor market have only grown. Around one in five Europeans live in poverty – that's almost 100 million people. And one in ten Europeans with a job can't make ends meet. Practically trained personnel and less productive companies no longer fit in with a fast-changing labor market. And while many member states deal with labor market shortages, not everyone has the same access to training and education. At the same time, years of austerity measures have weakened public services across Europe.

## What we want

The EU is more than an economic union. D66 wants everyone to benefit from European collaboration and socio-economic progress to improve all of our lives. To create a more social EU, Europe has to play a bigger role in the social domain, enabling every member state to provide decent public services and social security. We need joint commitments and investments to increase social equality, to make sure the EU does not just protect the economy but offers security to those in need. With a strong European focus on social rights, Europe can invest in its member states' labor markets, childcare and vocational education. European social rights and regulations serve as protection for decent pay and working conditions for workers across Europe, even when they (temporarily) work in a different member state. In times of crisis, a European fund will support national security systems, to make sure nobody is left behind. Because, after all, we are one family.

## What we'll do

- Reinsure national social security systems within the EU, so we can protect people in times of crisis.
- Create a modern and reformed cohesion policy that decreases disparities across regions throughout the Union and strengthens innovation, sustainability, and inclusion.



- Act against the powerful pharmaceutical industry and invest in European production to guarantee affordable and available medicine and medical devices.
- Invest in the cultural heritage of Europe and protection of the rich diversity of art and culture.
- Implement a mandatory minimum for internship allowances throughout the EU.

# Safer and stronger, together

## What we see

Europe has always been a symbol for freedom, democracy, and safety. We stand up for human rights and fair trade, based on a belief that our similarities are more important than our differences. That belief has faced some challenges these past few years. Freedom is not a given, and we are far from economic independence. For too long, Europe has relied on Russia for energy, on China for raw materials, and on the United States for safety.

In this world filled with uncertainty, our values are more important than ever. By consistently prioritizing them, we are working to create a world that is prosperous and safe for everyone. That's why it is of the utmost importance that Europe once again becomes an influential voice in the world. Only then are we able to effectively address problems like climate change and human rights violations. But the EU needs the tools to do so in an effective and decisive manner. Only then can Europe truly use its influence.

## What we want

For D66, open strategic autonomy is essential to Europe's foreign and defense policy. This means that the EU and its member states need to be self-sufficient in critical areas, like defense. But also, that Europe is able to rise to the challenges of our times – digitalization and climate change – without having to rely on authoritarian countries. This does not mean that Europe will withdraw from the world. Trade and international cooperation remain important to the well-being and prosperity of Europe and can contribute to a sustainable and fair world. It means that Europe chooses a consistent foreign policy, in which human rights and international treaties are always the starting point.

Over the past 80 years, Europe has grown from a collaboration between 6 countries into a Union of 27 member states. Expanding the EU has proven to be the most successful way to promote democratic values and increase the well-being and prosperity of every European. Both existing member states and newly admitted members have benefited. Further expansion will strengthen the Union's geopolitical position, reinforce democratic progress in candidate states, and increase widespread prosperity.

To guarantee our safety and freedom it is essential that we extensively collaborate when it comes to security and defense. For too long, we have been dependent on third parties for our safety, while Russia threatens the peace in our continent. For D66, that means investing in our own defenses and being able to take care of ourselves. That's why we need binding agreements on

strengthening the European defensive power, uniting the European defense market, and creating a collective European defense within NATO. As Europeans, we can not afford to be naive and should be prepared for attacks, both cyber and physical, from Russia or other autocratic regimes. A Europe that is able to defend itself is the best guarantee for the safety of the Netherlands.

Being a guardian of freedom and democracy also means being willing to act as a safe haven for those fleeing war or violence. It requires a humane refugee policy, a stable and robust reception chain with a fair distribution among member states, and more safe routes.

As an economic bloc, we will form fair and sustainable trade agreements to encourage prosperity, well-being, and employment opportunities in Europe and beyond. With a united European voice, we will act against territorial aggression, oppression of minorities, and human rights violations around the world. And to avoid being blackmailed by other countries, we will invest in crucial European industries and innovation.

### **What we'll do**

- Repeal the veto right and work on securing a permanent seat for the EU in the UN Security Council. Europe will speak as one as often as possible, consistently conveying the importance of human rights and international treaties.
- Offer candidate countries to join step by step. With an observer status, candidates can already be involved in European decision-making while their enthusiasm to work on necessary reforms as articulated in the Copenhagen criteria is encouraged.
- Work toward a European Defense Union by expanding our collaboration, daring to specialize and jointly invest in research, innovation, and a European defense industry.
- Make International Corporate Social Responsibility the norm for every European company, so that human rights, working conditions, animal welfare and a clean environment are also taken into account internationally. In this way, our business model as a trading country will become future proof.
- Create a humane asylum and migration policy, in which we have increased control of migration by introducing – among other things – safe and legal escape routes to Europe.