

Voit

**NEW
POLITICS.
A NEW
EUROPE.**

Our programme for the

General elections 2023

FUTURE  MADE IN EUROPE

WE WANT TO SHAPE OUR FUTURE.

European. Democratic. Active.

A common Europe with a genuine parliamentary democracy, in which not individual heads of state and governments decide on the common future, but the directly elected parliament of all Europeans – and in the long term within a sovereign federal European Republic.

Climate-neutral. Entrepreneurial. Scientific.

A sustainable and generationally just market economy that sees opportunities instead of obstacles in decarbonisation, entrepreneurship and digitalisation. An economy that promotes structural and technological innovation and improves the lives of all people with a socially acceptable foundation.

We will make Luxembourg CO₂ neutral by 2035 and climate neutral by 2040. With a self-determined and science-based transformation with opportunities for everyone.

Self-determined. Solidary. Inclusive.

A society in which everyone can participate and live healthily. A community that provides education, a resilient health system and financial means to support in difficult life situations. A society with a strong social cohesion to tackle together the challenges of today and tomorrow, in the city and in the countryside. A society where plurality is recognised as normality. In which discrimination is fought and equal opportunities and participation for all are central.

It is time to finally take action. Instead of burying our heads in the sand, it is time to seize the opportunities we have today and tackle the challenges of this decade now.

Volt is stepping up to shape this transformation and bring a breath of fresh air to politics. Volt comes at the right time to shape our common future – also in the Chamber of Deputies in Luxembourg.

For new politics. For a new Europe.

WE ARE VOLT.

We exist because we are convinced that the great challenges of the 21st century can only be solved if Europe acts together. In a Europe where all people have the same opportunities to develop their full potential. A Europe that strives for the highest standards of human, social, ecological and technical development.

We are committed to this at all levels and are already represented in the European and Dutch parliaments, as well as in several cities and municipalities across Europe. Together with our European manifesto, this makes us the first truly pan-European party.

National parties and national politics are reaching their limits in finding solutions to the global challenges of our time. Volt is convinced: Luxembourg needs Europe and Europe needs Luxembourg. The future of the EU is also closely linked to the chamber election in Luxembourg. For it is the national governments that decide the future direction of the EU in the EU Council – the EU Parliament is not allowed to propose laws itself so far. So, Volt is also needed in Luxembourg – the European country par excellence.

Why us? Why now?

Volt stands for new policies that act together across borders and oppose nationalism and populism. We demand a reformed EU of the citizens. We are facing four major problems: the ecological crisis, social disintegration and the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the Russo-Ukrainian war. There is no better time than now to establish a new solution-oriented political force like Volt. The 2023 general election is therefore a unique opportunity to initiate a holistic transformation to reshape Luxembourg and Europe.

This is the programme with which Volt is running in the 2023 parliamentary elections in Luxembourg. We want to tackle the big problems of our time in a pragmatic and progressive way and become the voice of European unification in the Chamber of Deputies.

PREFACE

What exactly does Volt stand for in Luxembourg? We define ourselves on the one hand by our core values and on the other hand by our mission and goals for politics in Luxembourg.

Our three main missions for Luxembourg:

I PROMOTING EUROPE AND THE EU



Volt stands for Europe and Europe is not conceivable for us in any other way than with the European Union. In Luxembourg, too, we want to further strengthen the EU and its institutions in order to create an even more harmonious coexistence and an even closer connection with our neighbours. Luxembourg is the EU country par excellence, with 47% of its inhabitants being foreigners, 83% of whom come from the EU.

> We want to further promote the system of the European School as a model for all Luxembourgish public schools.

II EMPOWERING EVERY CITIZEN EQUALLY



Volt also stands for the empowerment of citizens, and by that we mean every citizen, regardless of gender, sexuality, nationality, religion or cultural identity. That's why we want to create even more tolerance in Luxembourg, which is characterised by its multiculturalism, and at the same time strengthen everyone's rights even more.

> We are in favour of a programme to introduce Luxembourgish parliamentary suffrage for EU citizens.

III COMMIT TO THE CLIMATE AND SCIENCE



Last but not least Volt wants to promote green policies with a focus on the development of new technologies. We want to make Luxembourg not only a pioneer in zero emissions, but also promote renewable energies, new technologies in aeronautics, good education and a scientific community that moves Luxembourg forward.

> Among other things, we demand the approval of autonomous electric vehicles and the exclusive promotion of renewable energies.

OUR CORE VALUES

European

- > We believe that a sustainable future in a globalized world should be addressed **at the level of the EU** but also locally. States must delegate their powers above and under them.
- > We value **citizen empowerment** and condemn the overpower of lobbies.
- > We are in favour of regulated **referendums** as an exceptional tool for important decisions that should be binding for the Parliament and we are in favour of a **more direct European democracy**.
- > We value **security, accountability, and transparency** of National and European Politics.
- > We believe in **equal rights for all European Citizens** and are in favour of a full-fledged European Citizenship.

Sustainable

- > We are in favour of **sustainable finance** that is liable.
- > We think **education, health systems and research** are the core sectors of every governmental policy for a sustainable society.
- > We value the **environment**; we care about **climate change** and the **preservation of ecosystems**.
- > We think **reliable** and **widely available public transportation** is a core element to our future.
- > We are in favour of **long-term investment** over short-term profits and want to ensure finance serves human growth instead of financial growth for financial growth's sake.

Pragmatic

- > We **disagree** with **sacrificing social progress** for economic growth.
- > We value the **transparency** of financial institutions.
- > We commit to an **ethical, inclusive approach** to technological development.
- > We think everyone should be able to find **housing** in Luxembourg at an **affordable price**.

OUR CORE VALUES

Progressive

- We condemn far right positions and we are in favour of a harmonised and inclusive **immigration**.
- We actively support access to **equitable rights** for every human being regardless of gender and sexual orientation and all initiatives that publicly condemn the infringement of equality.
- We are **in favour of a balance between progressivism and conserving cultural identity**.
- We support the preservation of **the Luxembourgish language** and important cultural **heritage** as long as freedom of expression and inclusiveness is offered equally to every resident.

Innovative

- We believe Luxembourg should lead by example **in the green transition**, guided by **scientific evidence**. We find it important that Luxembourg invests in a better quality of water and in renewable energy.
- We are always **open to progress** and believe in **political honesty** and reserve the right **to change our mind** based on the latest **scientific developments**.

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CHAPTER I

**Promoting
Europe and
the European
Union**

FUTURE  MADE IN EUROPE

PROMOTING EUROPE
AND THE EUROPEAN UNION



PROMOTING EUROPE AND THE EUROPEAN UNION



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1 EU REFORM¹

The EU is the most successful civilisational project since the Second World War and has enabled Europe's citizens to live in peace, freedom and prosperity. However, the partly outdated and entrenched political structures of the EU are increasingly reaching their limits in the face of current and future challenges. Volt is convinced that these challenges cannot be effectively met by doing it alone at national level, but only with stronger integration and more European democracy. For this reason, as a first step, we want to comprehensively reform and democratise the current structures of the EU. In the long term, a federal European republic based on a European constitution legitimised by the European citizens should emerge.

¹ All of Volt's policies on the EU and on reforming the EU as a whole can be found in the policy portfolio of Volt Europa: <https://www.volteuropa.org/policy-portfolio>

PROMOTING EUROPE AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

1.1 Reforming the EU institutions

Up to now, the EU has been a complex association of 27 states that only act in a European manner to the extent that it corresponds to their respective national interests. On the one hand, this is due to the fact that responsibility in certain policy areas still lies with the nation states, e.g. in development, foreign or defence policy. On the other hand, the unanimity principle repeatedly blocks important decisions by individual states. These factors weaken the European institutions' ability to act and ultimately harm the people who live in the EU.

The European Parliament is the most important democratic institution in the EU. However, it does not have the right to propose its own laws. Moreover, the EU budget has no tax revenue of its own and is almost entirely dependent on lump-sum payments from the member states. Moreover, the EU lacks the necessary instruments to effectively guarantee its fundamental values, such as democracy and the rule of law, in all member states. For these reasons, there is often mistrust and disinterest in the EU among the population, which is reflected, for example, in a comparatively low turnout in European elections.

Our goal is to make the EU more democratic, more capable of action and more credible. This requires substantial reforms of the European legislature and executive. In order to make the EU more democratic, the election to the European Parliament is to be regulated uniformly throughout Europe in the future. Veto rights are to be abolished and the principle of unanimity limited to exceptional cases, such as the admission of new candidate countries. The European Commission is to become a genuine parliamentary-controlled government with extended competences. At the same time, the EU is to become financially independent, above all by levying its own taxes. Human rights and the rule of law are to be enforced in all member states by means of effective protection and sanctions. The working methods and decision-making of the EU are also to be communicated more transparently and in greater detail.

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1. **We want to create a government capable of action and controlled by parliament that acts in the interest of the entire EU.** The European Commission, which today largely represents the executive of the EU, will be reduced in size. The commissioners should be appointed according to suitability and competence and no longer primarily according to national proportional representation, as is currently the case. The Commission is to receive an Economics and Finance Minister and a Foreign Minister, who will be equipped with far-reaching competences. The President of the Commission will be proposed and elected by the European Parliament. The European Council will be abolished in the long term.
2. **Volt advocates for a uniform European electoral law.** The current principle of degressive proportionality² contradicts the basic democratic principle of electoral equality and must therefore be replaced. A European electoral law regulates the division of the member states into constituencies of roughly equal population size by an electoral commission. With one of their two votes, the citizens elect representatives of the respective constituency and with the other vote, the list of a European party is elected. In this context, we are particularly committed to the establishment of genuine European parties. The current parties participating in the European elections are loose coalitions of national parties that often pursue different interests – we want to change this. In addition, we are pursuing uniform taxation and financing of parties via an EU party regulation.
3. **Volt strives for a uniform legislative procedure in the EU.** The European Parliament is to be given the right of initiative with which it can propose laws itself. Particularly urgent is the necessary abolition of the unanimity principle in favour of qualified majorities.

² Degressive proportionality describes the way in which the seats of the European Parliament are distributed among the individual member states. This depends on the population of the respective country (= proportional). However, the larger the population, the fewer MEPs per inhabitant a state receives (= degressive/declining). Degressive proportionality therefore prevents the equal representation of European citizens.

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- 4. We want to strengthen the financial autonomy of the EU.** To this end, the EU budget should be financed to a much greater extent from revenues which, although accruing in the member states, are generated by EU political action. In return, the flat-rate VAT and GDP-based payments of the member states can be reduced. In the medium and long term, the EU must be able to levy its own taxes, e.g. financial transaction or digital taxes.
- 5. We increase the transparency of the EU institutions, especially in the Council.** To this end, substantive positions as well as the corresponding supporting documents are to be made public already during the negotiation process in order to enable real democratic participation of European citizens. In the case of documents classified as confidential, decisions must in future be taken closer to EU law and an explanation given as to why they cannot be made public. The „informal dialogue“, the informal and often less transparent cooperation between the Commission, the Council and the Parliament, should be more focused on comprehensibly urgent and time-critical legislative projects.
- 6. We ensure compliance with and enforcement of the fundamental values of the EU as laid down in the Treaty on European Union (TEU).** The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights must apply without restriction to all Member States. To this end, we will work for the reform of the sanctions procedure under Article 7 of the TEU. The undermining of the procedure by individual member states will be prevented by the abolition of unanimity and the introduction of a qualified majority, as well as the addition of exclusion and suspension possibilities to the paragraphs. Furthermore, sanctions for any violation of the Union's values such as democracy and the rule of law will be implemented and enforced. As a fundamental part of the implementation, the competences of the EU anti-corruption authority (OLAF) and the European Public Prosecutor's Office will be expanded.

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1.2 European Republic

For a Europe that is truly capable of action, we need a distribution of competences according to the principle of subsidiarity: political solutions must be found at the level that is best able to do so. Education and infrastructure must fit local conditions, while foreign policy can and must only be uniform. However, this comes up against limits within the framework of today's European Union. Due to the full sovereignty of the nation states, any change in competences requires elaborate treaty changes that must be made by consensus. At the same time, every crisis shows again where more far-reaching competences of the EU would be urgently needed. Most recently, when negotiating the vaccine treaties, the EU had to secure the consent of the member states for every step in the negotiations. This shows: The member states are not managing to shape the European treaties in a way that gives the EU the necessary competences for an effective policy.

We can only overcome this constant inhibition of the EU by developing it into a federal European Republic. The European Republic is a federal state and is based on a European Constitution, which was adopted jointly by the European citizens. The European Constitution regulates the distribution of competences and can be amended and renewed by the European citizens or the institutions elected by them. Amendments can no longer be blocked by individual member states. It can also give the federal European Republic competences that only sovereign states have, such as financial and defence sovereignty.

With this step, we also want to achieve the full realisation of a European democracy. So far, the EU consists of 27 sovereign states, each running its own polity. We want to achieve the integration of these 27 populations into a European community. This step is voluntary for each nation. As Europeans, however, we already see ourselves as a political community of destiny and expressly want to promote this unification. Only together will we survive in this globalised world, which is dominated by so many conflicts.

The federal European Republic we seek is a parliamentary democracy with a Parliament elected by European citizens. The European Parliament in turn elects and controls the European government, which is led by a Prime Minister. In this way, we ensure that the federal European Republic always acts in the common interest of European citizens. The interests of

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the Member States are represented by a second chamber, the Upper House. Its representatives are elected by the parliaments or by the citizens of the Member States. In this way, we achieve that the interests of the respective Member States and their citizens are duly taken into account and that no “central state” distant from the citizens is created.

Parliament and the Upper House work together in the legislative process. Veto rights of individual member states are completely abolished. We want to ensure the constitutionality of legislation and administration through a European Constitutional Court. Human rights, democracy and the rule of law are guaranteed by the constitution, are binding on every member state and can be enforced in court at any time. The European President, elected directly or through a representative body, has mainly ceremonial powers and acts as an integrative figure for the unity of the federal European Republic.

In case of conflict, European law takes precedence over national law, but we want to fundamentally preserve the identity of the current member states of the EU. They should retain competences that can be better exercised at the national level than at the European level. That is why we advocate strengthening the principle of subsidiarity. Furthermore, after the establishment of the European federal state, the member states can define themselves differently than today in the sense of a “Europe of the regions” in order to better reflect regional commonalities. Foreign, defence and monetary policy will be conducted exclusively at the European level. Through these measures, we enable the EU to master the current and future challenges in the interest of the European common good – the transformation towards climate neutrality, ensuring a social and open society and combating nationalism and extremism.

➤ **We want the citizens of Europe to jointly adopt a European Constitution and to unite in a European federal state, the federal European Republic.** This will happen through a joint act of will by the populations of all European states. For Luxembourg, this means that Article 49a of the Constitution can be amended in accordance with Article 114 (which determines amendments to the Constitution) to the extent that Luxembourg can join a federal European Republic in the future. The Luxembourg Constitution can continue to apply as the Constitution of a constituent state of this federal European Republic.

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- **We are open to a “coalition of the willing” in order to be able to take the necessary steps in parts of Europe more quickly.** In building a federal European republic, others can join later. The EU Treaties can be revised or supplemented in this respect. In the long term, it is our explicit goal that all European states and regions unite in a federal republic.
- **This step requires a debate of all European citizens that will determine the future. We are committed to holding this debate at all levels.** This can take place, for example, within the framework of the Conference on the Future of Europe (COFE). Volt will do its utmost to ensure that this debate is vigorously pursued in the European institutions.

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2 STRENGTHENING EUROPEAN COOPERATION

Regardless of the current and future institutional framework of the EU, there are many pressing challenges where more intensive European cooperation is imperative and needed quickly. In our view, this cooperation is greatly facilitated by, but not bound to, closer EU integration – in particular the fusion into a federal European Republic. For us, a more closely coordinated European approach is already possible and indispensable, especially with regard to financial markets and tax policy, internal European security, climate policy and diplomacy, foreign and defence policy, promotion of research and development, and health.

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2.1 Financial markets and coordinated tax policy

The lack of coordination in financial and tax policy in the EU is in need of reform in many respects. For example, the different tax systems and the lack of harmonisation of taxes within the EU lead to fragmentation, which runs counter to a genuine internal market and makes a common negotiating position in international negotiations more difficult.

At the same time, the persistence of double taxation of citizens and companies in cross-border business relations results in undue burdens and macroeconomic disadvantages. Furthermore, the lack of harmonisation of tax systems opens up undesirable tax loopholes. The insufficient coordination of tax administrations favours tax evasion; a problem that we must also and above all deal with in Luxembourg.

Moreover, the global financial crisis has also shown in the EU that the financial sector has distanced itself from its original purpose of supporting the real economy. With regard to its original tasks, such as the allocation of capital and risk, the provision of financial liquidity and the satisfaction of society's investment needs, we believe there is a need for action.

- **An EU Ministry of Economy and Finance is absolutely necessary.** This ministry would combine the functions of the European Commission for Economic and Monetary Affairs, the chair of the Euro Group and, in the future, the chair of the Board of Governors of the European Stability Mechanism (ESM), as proposed by the European Commission.
- **We support the introduction of an EU-wide financial transaction tax** on securities, derivatives and all forms of financial market betting.
- **We want to advance the implementation of the Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base (CCCTB) in Europe and thus with binding effect for Luxembourg.** Corresponding proposals of the Commission provide for a consolidated total profit to be calculated for groups based in the EU and then allocated in equal parts to wages, turnover, and statutory capital. All future legislative changes in tax law should be examined with regard to their compatibility with the CCCTB.
- **We are committed to the enforcement of an appropriate European taxation of digital companies.** In order to ensure value-added oriented taxation, Volt considers it necessary to introduce a European digital tax.

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- **We strive for a significant reduction of intra-European tax competition.** Due to the far-reaching encroachment on the tax sovereignty of the member states associated with this, a moderate minimum corporate tax rate of 15% is initially being sought.
- **We advocate decisive action against tax havens in Europe and in third countries.** In particular, the measures proposed by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Inclusive Framework on Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) should be implemented without delay and the tax-motivated use of letterbox companies should be stopped. Furthermore, citizens should be able to obtain information on the tax behaviour of companies in a transparent and comprehensible manner.
- **We want to strengthen the implementation and expansion of the international exchange of information between tax administrations to counter tax evasion.** Additional staff and technology, especially at the Federal Central Tax Office, are indispensable for this. Furthermore, transparency and information policy on the social necessity of taxes should be improved. Moreover, in view of the international financial flows, an independent European authority with Europe-wide investigative powers should be created in the fight against money laundering.

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2.2 Common Internal Security

Organised crime and terrorism do not stop at national borders. Cross-border crimes must be prevented and solved, but this is made difficult by an inconsistent and confusing set of rules on responsibilities and different recording systems. Europol can only act independently to a very limited extent, as it has no executive powers.

The abolition of stationary border controls at the internal borders of the 26 European states participating in the Schengen area has been temporarily and unilaterally suspended time and again (e.g. during the crisis of European refugee policy, the G20 summit, the European Football Championship or the COVID 19 pandemic), as the Schengen Agreement allows such exceptions. However, we want EU citizens to be able to move freely within the EU at all times. European communication and European cohesion must be strengthened for this purpose.

A prerequisite for the freedom of movement of people within the EU is a functioning protection of the EU's external borders. However, EU countries with an external border currently bear sole responsibility for border control and the joint EU border and coast guard agency, Frontex, is not resilient. Apart from that, Frontex is plagued with many scandals and we do not want to support the exploitation of resources for the military build-up of a kind of mercenary army. It has been shown that individual Member States are overwhelmed in protecting Europe's external borders in the event of serious crises, even despite Frontex's support. This results in humanitarian disasters that are incompatible with European values.

That's why we have to improve Frontex by providing Frontex with people, equipment and training. And not only sending money to these overwhelmed member states like Italy and Greece. Moreover it must be made easier for the European Parliament to hold Frontex accountable for its actions.

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Volt's vision for common internal security is a unified and effective European system that maintains the integrity of the EU's external borders while respecting European values, combating cross-border crime and ensuring the security and freedom of movement of EU citizens.

- **We want to expand Europol into a fully-fledged European police force.** This should be active above all in cross-border crimes in the areas of organised crime, combating terrorism, trafficking in human beings, money laundering and cybercrime. The EU Treaties will be extended to include a legal regulation on Europol's powers. Europol's regional offices will no longer be attached to national police forces, as is currently the case, but will be given executive autonomy. Criminal investigations can be initiated by the European Public Prosecutor's Office. Effective legal protection against Europol's measures will be guaranteed for all people. In addition, there is to be a parliamentary control committee for Europol, to which the responsible EU Commissioner is accountable. In future, searches that go beyond national borders will mainly be carried out by Europol.
- **Volt advocates that there should be no more stationary controls of internal borders within the Schengen area, not even random checks.** In the event of a crisis (e.g. during the COVID-19 pandemic), an area will be sealed off for the respective crisis area (in the COVID-19 case, the hotspot). This is done on a need-to-know basis, crossing current borders if necessary. Suspicion-based spot checks are carried out regardless of today's borders. As a sovereign member state, each country of course still has the right to control its borders, but it should not do so without consultation for the sake of European cohesion.
- **We want to make the EU exclusively responsible for the protection of the EU's external borders.** To this end, a new fully functional EU border protection agency must be created, with its own staff and independent of the current nation states. Frontex as well as all existing national border guards should be merged into this new organisation. It should also be responsible for the initial reception of refugees, be guided by the European Charter of Fundamental Rights and have to include it in its mission statement and compliance system. It will be controlled by the EU Parliament. Close cooperation with human rights organisations will be sought.

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➤ **We want the European Union to have a humane refugee policy and a sensible labour migration policy.** Cooperation and solidarity are important concepts for avoiding future problems. In doing so we are promoting our European identity by welcoming migrants in a civilized manner and providing them a future. There is no adult or child that should be trapped in a gloomy and desolate environment where life is in jeopardy, such as Camp Moria on the Greek island of Lesbos or camp Vucjak in Bosnia Herzegovina. In order to tackle this crisis, it is of utmost importance that we get new and enforceable agreements on the reception of refugees in the EU and on the distribution of the associated costs after the failure of the so-called Dublin Convention. Italy and Greece cannot on their own support all these incoming refugees. Volt also wants the improvement of the asylum procedures by providing social, legal and psychological assistance but more important than that Volt believes that the asylum seekers should have access to the labour market from day one, get language training and make everything possible so their acclimation goes well.

Moreover, in order to have a more effective labour migration Volt wants to implement a portal where migrant workers could see what suitable jobs are available in which countries. For example, in Luxembourg we have a shortage of people in sectors such as elderly care or education. This solution would be beneficial for everyone (the home country, host country and refugee himself) and it would protect both domestic and foreign workers from the negative consequences of economic migration. That's why we want to offer more opportunities for non-European migrants to obtain a temporary visa for our or another European member state country.

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2.3 Common foreign and defence policy

The USA and China are engaged in a strategic rivalry that also puts pressure on the Europeans and makes constructive international cooperation more difficult. For this reason, Europe must also strive for strategic autonomy. At present, however, there is no coordinated common foreign policy of the European states, as each government in the EU has a de facto right of veto. We want the European states to pursue a common, democratically legitimised foreign policy and to present a united front to the outside world.

On the one hand, China is an important economic partner; on the other hand, there are fundamental differences in values and standards. The human rights situation continues to be characterised by a systematic crackdown on critics and human rights defenders. China disregards international law in order to expand its territory and influence. This is particularly evident in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the South China Sea. Volt considers it illegitimate for governments to restrict human rights based on national sovereignty. There are also concerns about how China treats the environment and privacy. To this end, China uses trade practices that distort the level playing field and limit market access. We want to counter China's influence in Europe with Europe's own economic strategic autonomy. But it is particularly important for us that Europe uses its influence and opportunities to strongly support China towards a future where human rights are protected.

The United Nations is a cornerstone of the international system through its commitment to peaceful resolution of disputes, humanitarian assistance, development and global health. Currently, however, decisions in the Security Council are often blocked by the veto powers.

2.3.1 Foreign policy

We seek peaceful, constructive, and respectful EU cooperation with foreign states and their governments to address challenges of mutual interest, deepen cooperation and develop new opportunities. The success of our efforts to tackle the climate crisis and its consequences also depends crucially on international cooperation. Climate diplomacy in particular plays a crucial role here.

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- **We advocate that majority decisions be made possible and take place in the Council of the EU.** This is indispensable for a genuine European foreign policy. As a first step, Luxembourg should unilaterally renounce its right of veto. The European Parliament must be involved in foreign policy. Luxembourg's foreign policy should be subordinate to the EU's external action. The EU High Representative should present a strategy for a pan-European foreign policy. Europeans should have common positions in international organisations. We are in favour of the deeper foreign policy integration of individual states if this is open to all other states.
- **Volt also seeks to appoint a joint European Foreign Minister.** He would be responsible for security, cooperation, human rights, and sustainability in interaction with non-European business partners. This would allow the EU to react more quickly and efficiently, such as formulating an appropriate response to the fraudulent presidential elections in Belarus.
- **Volt wants Europe to use economic leverage, if necessary, to pressure the Chinese government to undertake domestic reforms and to ratify and comply with international human rights agreements.** The EU should therefore use its diplomatic and economic leverage to resist attempts by China or other states to undermine the universality of human rights. The security and rights of EU citizens abroad must be safeguarded. The export of technologies to China must be stopped if they can also be used militarily. Individuals and organisations that threaten the freedoms of Hong Kong people must be sanctioned. Extraditions of people to Hong Kong must be critically scrutinised and Hong Kong citizens should be offered easy opportunities to settle in Europe. We recognise the sovereignty of the people of Taiwan. We call on the EU to establish diplomatic relations with the Taiwanese government and support Taiwan's participation in international organisations.
- **Access of Chinese institutions and companies to the EU market may need to be restricted from the perspective of respecting fundamental and human rights.** In 5G cooperation with Chinese telecom companies, only short-term contracts should be signed. In Europe, the EU should make the operating licences of Chinese media companies, cultural institutions, and other organisations subject to reciprocity – including

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freedom of expression. The EU should speed up the implementation of the International Procurement Instrument (IPI) to prevent companies receiving foreign government subsidies from bidding on European tenders. By providing incentives for companies to invest in markets outside China, diversification of supply chains should be supported. Given China's enormous importance for effective global sustainability policy, Volt supports continued and expanded cooperation with China, especially in the areas of climate change, renewable energy, circular economy, sustainable mobility, and environmental technology.

- **Volt is committed to democratising the United Nations in order to give all people a voice at the global political level, to better solve planetary challenges and to achieve peaceful coexistence worldwide.** In the long term, we aim for a more effective and democratically legitimised UN Security Council by abolishing the veto power and permanent memberships in this body. Until then, we are pursuing pragmatic first steps, such as opening the body more to other countries and lifting the veto in cases of human rights violations and humanitarian emergencies. In addition to the General Assembly, which is composed of government representatives from the individual member states, we want to establish a democratically elected assembly (UNPA) consisting of directly elected representatives of citizens from all over the world. In the long term, this world parliament should adopt universally binding regulations according to the principle of subsidiarity. Volt advocates an increase in voluntary contributions to the United Nations and its organisations, funds, and programmes, with a particular focus on non-earmarked contributions. Furthermore, the entire EU should be represented at the UN by only one EU ambassador. To this end, France should hand over its permanent seat on the UN Security Council to the EU.

2.3.2 Defence policy

Luxembourg is surrounded by friends and allies, so no threat from our immediate neighbourhood is to be expected (apart from the fact that there is a defence alliance with France anyway). Moreover, the Luxembourg military, with just 800 soldiers, would not be in a position, either in terms of personnel or material, to stand on its own in a major conflict. In this respect, an independent national army is neither necessary nor

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sensible. In addition, the European states can no longer blindly rely on NATO to defend their territory. By pooling financial, personnel, logistical and intelligence resources, we want to make the defence of the entire EU far more efficient and considerably improve its quality through uniform equipment and better coordination – on the way to a European army.

- **Our strategic goal is a European army with uniform equipment under a European defence minister, in which the Luxembourg army will be absorbed.** In the short term, Luxembourg must work with the other EU states to realise the procurement of large-scale military equipment in a uniform European standard. This includes European standardisation that is compatible with NATO standards.
- **In the next legislative period, we want to expand existing bilateral/multilateral cooperation with other European nations, establish new cooperation with interested partners and advocate for uniform procurement processes.**
- To support a European army, **Luxembourg should at first increase their contribution to the required 2% NATO norm.** Indeed, during the 2014 summit all NATO members agreed to spend 2% of their GDPs on defence by 2025. Unfortunately, with only 0.55% of its GDPs contribution, Luxembourg is the black sheep compared to all other members. This goal is now unreachable, but the government should inform the NATO that it will not be able to reach it and ask for a new deadline by proposing a coherent action plan in order reach that goal this time. Nevertheless, it is also time to analyse carefully how much money NATO needs for our shared security in Europe. On that basis, we can then determine how much each member must contribute to specific areas of defence to achieve optimum cooperation. This 2% can then be adjusted if necessary.

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2.3.3 Common defence policy in Europe

Many cooperations of the Bundeswehr with armed forces of other nations have already proven successful. Examples of this include:

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- The German-Dutch Corps
- The merging and subordination of the German and Dutch short-range air defence under Dutch command; the Dutch medium-range air defence (PATRIOT) under German command
- The European Air Transport Command (EATC)

2.4 European Space Policy³

Mankind is only just beginning to exploit the potential, opportunities and resources of space. According to estimates by the European Space Agency (ESA), on average a return on investment of several euros can be expected from every euro invested there. Europe is a world leader in Earth observation, but lags behind the major space-faring nations in space exploration and space travel. We want the EU to become a world leader in space policy. The most important goals of our space policy include improving Earth observation and using this information to preserve our livelihoods, developing space-based energy sources such as solar energy and nuclear fusion, mining valuable matter and colonising the solar system. In doing so, the basic principles of sustainability must be preserved, the creation of space debris must be limited, space militarisation must be prevented and effective protection against the threat of asteroid impacts must be developed. Individual nations must be prevented from exploiting the opportunities of space for their own unilateral benefit.

- **We advocate the implementation of a space law that ensures that the use of the opportunities and resources of outer space is oriented towards the common good of humankind** and does not only unilaterally benefit individual nations. Space militarisation must be effectively curbed by this space law.

³ A more detailed version of Volt's space policy can be found in the policy portfolio of Volt Europa: <https://assets.volteuropa.org/2021-12/Volt%20Space%20Policy%20October%202021.pdf>

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- **We want to increase Europe's investments in space policy at all levels.** This includes basic research, space travel, Earth observation, the development of new resources and space colonisation. We want to establish a permanent research station on Mars as early as 2040. Furthermore, a defence concept against the threat of asteroid impacts must be developed and implemented.
- **We want to intensify the development and use of information from satellite-based Earth observation.** We want to achieve this by expanding the Copernicus programme – among other things for tracking and controlling greenhouse gas emissions.
- **We are committed to researching and developing the great potential of space-based solar energy and nuclear fusion.** In addition, the mining of resources such as the platinum contained in asteroids should also be explored.
- **Volt considers it particularly urgent to develop a sustainable strategy for limiting the space debris caused by mankind.** To this end, we propose the establishment of independent authorities with far-reaching competences and the conclusion of binding treaties under international law.

2.5 Common health policy

The COVID 19 pandemic is exposing issues that European citizens would otherwise have become aware of slowly or not at all. A common approach to vaccine licensing and procurement has proven useful and shows how much all EU citizens can benefit from a union in healthcare. What is missing, however, is a common EU authority with a mandate to monitor the amount of vaccine production capacity worldwide in order to avoid supply bottlenecks and to address weaknesses in supply chains in a timely manner – unlike in the US, for example.

The current European civil protection system is also dependent on contributions from the states. The EU does not have its own reserves. Due to the outsourcing of production outside the EU, supply shortages of medicines, medical products and protective equipment have worsened.

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In addition, there is no uniform European crisis management. In the attempt to contain the virus, nation states acted alone instead of coordinating measures at the European level. Due to climate change, there will be increasing problems with pandemics and infectious diseases in the future.

The current EU Commission has also recognised that there must be cooperation in European health policy. It has announced plans to strengthen the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the European Medicines Agency (EMA), to create an EU Agency for Health Emergency Preparedness and Response (HERA) and to implement a Medicines Strategy for Europe. At the moment, however, these plans focus only on the prevention of health crises and have yet to be fleshed out.

Volt welcomes this as a short-term solution. However, as Volt is basically aiming for an equalisation of living standards in all EU member states pending the long-term realisation of the vision of a federal European republic, we are striving for a comprehensive solution: a common European health policy. This includes common crisis prevention and response in case of health emergencies, as well as a harmonised health care system and the corresponding structure in health insurance, so that every EU citizen receives the same health care and the respective access to a European system. We also want to ensure a sustainable, appropriate and safe supply of medicines to the EU population at affordable prices.

➤ **In the short term, we want to achieve cooperative collaboration between the EU member states instead of national solo efforts.**

This includes joint stockpiling of medical equipment for at least three to six months in order to prevent supply bottlenecks. In addition, we want to introduce a European supply certificate for free hospital capacities in order to be able to transfer patients between countries in case of shortages. Furthermore, we want to achieve the establishment of a Europe-wide warning system for disasters and health emergencies and to improve the information of EU citizens about the European Health Insurance Card and the benefits to which they are entitled in other EU countries.

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- **We are committed to a European preventive health strategy in the medium term. This includes the elaboration of a European consensus on a common drug policy to be implemented in all EU Member States.** Volt wants to move towards a different system in which, based on thorough research, we authorise the possession, trafficking and production of certain drugs under certain conditions. This has two significant advantages. The pressure on enforcement decreases, and as a society, we can invest better in prevention and information. Also, legalising drugs does not lead to more drug use, but it does ensure better control of use.
- In addition, a **European digital infrastructure in the health sector is to be established**, which will enable the cross-border care of patients. A first important step has already been taken with eHDSI (eHealth Infrastructure).
- **In the long term, we want to ensure universal coverage and access to health care for all European citizens.** This means that there should be unrestricted medical care for every EU citizen in every EU country with the European health insurance card. In addition, European guidelines (based on benchmarking and best-in-class performance) for waiting times, diagnoses and treatments are to be developed to improve and ensure the quality of health care. Continuous optimisation of coordination and cooperation between public institutions, healthcare providers and market participants is also urgently needed.

The **Franco-German bilateral agreement** that allows residents of the Saar and Moselle region to visit each other's hospitals free of charge and without authorisation.

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3 TRULY EUROPEAN EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

Education lays the foundation for a society based on solidarity, a living democracy and thus for our common future. For this reason, it plays a decisive role in overcoming major societal challenges, such as social inequality, the rapidly changing world of work or combating the climate crisis. In this respect, education is the cornerstone of our future and must be at the forefront of a sustainable state – from pre-school to higher education and vocational training. Good education is characterised by being freedom-loving and supporting students intellectually in their learning. Immanuel Kant already expressed this at the beginning of the 19th century as follows:

“THIS IS THE EDUCATION OF A PERSONAL CHARACTER, OF A FREE BEING, WHO IS ABLE TO MAINTAIN HIMSELF, AND TO TAKE HIS PROPER PLACE IN SOCIETY, KEEPING AT THE SAME TIME A PROPER SENSE OF HIS OWN INDIVIDUALITY.”⁴

⁴ Kant, I. (1803). Kant on Education (*Über Pädagogik*). (A. Churton, Transl.) Boston: D.C. Heath and Co. (1900). p. 30

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One of the greatest challenges is to reduce the disadvantaging influence of social background on educational success and to individualise pupils' biographies. The state also bears responsibility for education, as it is a task for society as a whole. We want to face up to this responsibility with this section of the programme.

We are rethinking education – in a way that is true to life, scientifically sound, equitable and inclusive. That is why we want to invest in future-oriented, holistic education and reform the education sector. In this way, with the help of individualised, multi-professional and practice-oriented guidance, learners will become responsible, committed citizens who actively master the challenges of our time and help shape the future.

3.1 European school model for primary and secondary in Luxembourg

Luxembourgish society is characterized by a high proportion of foreigners (47,1% of the population are foreigners) mainly from other European member states (80,8% of the foreigners are EU citizens), and a relatively high mobility, i.e. fluctuation, of the population as a whole.⁵ As a result, the school population is very heterogeneous, with students speaking different languages at home and increasingly moving to other places in the Union during their school life. Moreover, many students will – after school – study in other cities across Europe.

The traditional Luxembourgish public school is no longer suited to this situation, which explains that over the last two decades the offer of schools has increased substantially. Private schools (mainly English and French) have opened, and even the public school system has been diversified by the creation of International, British, francophone and German-Luxembourgish education options.

⁵ STATEC (2022): Luxembourg in figures 2022. Luxembourg: Imprimerie Centrale. p. 11 <https://statistiques.public.lu/en/publications/series/luxembourg-en-chiffres/2022/luxembourg-en-chiffres-2022.html>

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But the most interesting development in our view is the establishment of **public European Schools**. These are officially called **accredited** European Schools and follow the same curricula as the traditional European School, first created in 1957 and mainly serving children of staff from European Institutions. The first **accredited European school** in Luxembourg was the International School of Differdange and Esch (EIDE) in 2016 followed by the same type of school in Clervaux (Lycée Edward Steichen), Mondorf-les-Bains (EIMLB) and Junglinster (Lënster Lycée). Two others have opened in 2021 and 2022 respectively: Mersch (EIMAB) and Luxembourg-City (EIGT).

Volt Luxembourg deeply regrets that these European Public Schools leading to the European Baccalaureate are called “International Schools” since this creates a confusion with the International Schools, whose curricula are different and deliver an International Baccalaureate.

Volt greets the diversification of schools in the country. However, the access to the European Public Schools is limited to a small fraction of the school population, most children only being able to enrol in the traditional Luxembourgish school system. This creates **inequality** in access to a diversified education and does not serve a cohesive society.

Volt therefore is in favour of a massive rollout of the European School system nationwide, with the aim of eventually entirely replacing the traditional Luxembourgish school system. As explained below – and confirmed by the very high demand on the existing European Public Schools – European Schools are ideally suited for Luxembourg: it provides language flexibility, allows mobility within the European Union, and delivers a truly multicultural education promoting European values to pupils living in the heart of Europe.

The “traditional” European Schools are official educational establishments controlled jointly by the governments of the Member States of the European Union. They are legally regarded as public institutions in all these countries. The mission of the European Schools is to provide a multilingual and multicultural education for **nursery, primary and secondary level pupils**. There are (as of 2022) 13 traditional European Schools (Alicante, Brussels I (Uccle + Berkendael), Brussels II (Woluwé), Brussels III (Ixelles), Brussels IV (Laeken), Frankfurt am Main, Mol, Bergen, Karlsruhe, Munich, Varese, Luxembourg I & Luxembourg II), in six countries (Belgium,

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Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Spain and Luxembourg), with a total of about 28,000 pupils on roll. They are aimed primarily at children of staff of the European institutions.

Compared to the traditional European Schools, **accredited** European Schools are relatively recent. They are schools which offer a European education that meets the pedagogical requirements laid down for the European Schools but **within the framework of the national school networks** of the Member States. Accredited European Schools are thus outside the legal, administrative, and financial framework to which the European Schools are compulsorily subject. Since 2005, based on the recommendations from the European Parliament, the European Schools have opened their curricula and the European Baccalaureate to national schools. All accredited European schools are linked to the European Schools system by an Accreditation Agreement. The administration and the funding of an accredited European school are the responsibility of the school's host Member State.

There are currently 20 Accredited schools, across 13 EU member states and 4 in the process of Accreditation (as of 2021). 10 have already experienced at least one Baccalaureate session. Most schools offer 2 or 3 language sections and, across the 21 schools which are currently open, the following language sections exist: **EN** (21) **FR** (13), **DE** (7), **IT** (3), **DK** (1), **EL** (1), **ES** (1), **FI** (1), **NL** (1), **PL** (1) **SI** (1) **SV** (1). Of the 21 schools currently operating (20 accredited and 1 in the process of accreditation): 18 have a nursery school; 20 have a primary school (although not all schools cover all the primary year groups yet); 21 have a secondary school (although not all schools cover all the secondary year groups yet). More detailed information about European Schools is available at www.eursec.eu.

Volt advocates that European primary schools should be massively increased (as to one day replace the national primary school system as a whole) and European secondary schools as an alternative to the *lycée classique* should be the standard education for every child in Luxembourg. Every child, regardless of interests and abilities, should start in the European system ideally from their first year of primary school (Nursery) and imperatively in their seventh school year (7^e). A switch to a *lycée général*, which offers vocational and craft training, is then envisaged from the fourth year of secondary school (4^e).

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3.1.1 Why we like the European school system of accredited schools

1. A common programme makes for a common goal – it unites Europe.

- The diversity of school systems within Europe creates not only competition (which in general there is nothing wrong with), but above all inequality and confusion. Each country within the EU has its own educational concept, its own school career and its own final exams. Although the Bologna Process has already brought much more transparency, unity is far from being achieved. This is also shown, for example, by the results of the regular PISA studies⁶, which could not be more divergent.
- To counteract this, European schools are promoting a joint programme that further strengthens the EU and also makes diplomas equivalent – regardless of where the degree was obtained. This sends a strong signal both within the EU and internationally and could make European degrees much more valuable and comparable abroad.

2. A common programme makes sure that everyone is guaranteed the same education, no matter where in Europe.

- If we have a common school programme that is the same in every European country, we also have greater equality of opportunity. Because in the European school system no country offers a better education just because of its location, it does not matter for children whether they go to school in Finland, Latvia, Poland, France, Luxembourg, Spain or Croatia, for example. The same education is available to everyone.

3. Accredited schools are open to everyone and free of charge (in Luxembourg).

- Accredited European Schools offer an enormous advantage over traditional European Schools. They are open to all, there are no admission criteria, and, above all, they are free. They are therefore available to every child, without exclusion. Their integration into Luxembourg is also much easier, as the state still has financial and administrative power over the schools (e.g. in terms of hiring teachers, expansion, etc.). Only with a massive rollout of the schools though, will every child also have access to these free schools.

⁶ See www.oecd.org/pisa/ for more information on the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment.

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4. The experts who work out the programme can be the elites from all over Europe.

- The European Schools' programme is determined and controlled by a board of different inspectors. Each subject has its own inspector (e.g. Luxembourg is currently responsible for Biology). As the number of European Schools increases, this structure will be further adapted and enlarged, but the principle will remain the same: each country will find its representation and thus the best possible bodies from all European countries will compose this programme. As the pool of experts is much larger, the programme can also become better.
- One must bear in mind that an intra-European exchange means that knowledge from all corners can flow into education. The intellectual exchange is much greater! For example, research results from Oslo can be compared with statistics from Sicily, while at the same time scientists from Lisbon, Sofia or Hamburg are working on an integrative and mature programme. Everyone is acting in their own interest: Because a better programme for Europe means a better programme for their own children and students.

5. Moving between countries is made easier for kids.

- One of the biggest problems that many children and young people face in today's global society is that of constant change. Our society is much more variable than it was ten or twenty years ago. People move around more often and change jobs more frequently than ten years ago. This was already confirmed by a study from 2014, which showed that the average employment relationship of people under 30 years of age has shortened by 22 per cent.⁷ No one is hit harder by this constant change of location than children. For them it means adapting to new surroundings, new cultural conditions, while at the same time turning their entire circle of friends upside down and trying to find their feet in a country they don't know, in a language they don't speak yet. If the school system also has to be completely rethought, it is a real disaster, especially for our youngest citizens. This is countered by the European system, which at least makes this aspect easier for children and allows them a seamless transition from one European country to another without jeopardising their school career.

⁷ Rhein, T., & Stüber, H. (February 2014). Beschäftigungsdauer im Zeitvergleich. (IAB der Bundesagentur für Arbeit, Publ.) IAB Kurzbericht(3). <http://doku.iab.de/kurzber/2014/kb0314.pdf>

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- This, of course, also provides emotional support and can be of enormous importance, especially for children and teenagers. Thus, European schools make life easier for all parents whose location is uncertain and who may have to move.

6. Languages are promoted strongly (enforcing integration and understanding between the peoples of Europe)

- The European School System is originally based on the Luxembourg school system. There are reasons for this. Because no other country is actually as multilingual as Luxembourg. Nowhere else in Europe do people speak so many languages, nowhere else do you learn so many foreign languages already at school. According to Eurostat, Luxembourg is at the top in terms of foreign language learning, with 100% of all pupils learning at least two foreign languages.⁸
- And that's a good thing! Because language learning promotes integration and communication within a state. Not only that, but language is also a means of communicating culture and tradition: only those who speak many languages can properly empathise with other people and cultures. In our opinion, it is important to continue to see language acquisition as the first priority, as it prevents cultural barriers from arising in the first place and leads to a more harmonious coexistence.
- Since many European schools are known as "International Schools" in this country, one might mistakenly assume that they are English-only schools. This is not true. There are (at least in Luxembourg) three possible vehicular languages: German, French and English. This means that, in principle, all subsidiary subjects are taught in this language, which also serves as the first language subject (L1). Pupils then choose a second and third language, L2 and L3, which can, however, be different from the vehicular languages – e.g. in Differdange/Esch there is Portuguese as a possible school subject. However – and this is almost exactly the same in the Luxembourg school system – from the fourth year of secondary school (4^e) onwards, the vehicular language of some subsidiary subjects such as history or geography is taught in the second-choice language. This supports the development of the L2, which we as Volt welcome.

⁸ Eurostat: Foreign language learning statistics. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Foreign_language_learning_statistics

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7. No country has to give up their language/heritage

- Those who fear that European schools will lead to education becoming more globalised and that local conditions such as traditions, culture, festivals or even language will be lost as a result are mistaken. The European school model offers a choice of religious or ethics education, in which cultural realities are addressed, and political education, in which the topic of Europe is always emphasised. Here you get to know and appreciate yourself and others.
- At the same time, the accredited European schools in Luxembourg already include Luxembourgish as a compulsory subject. This does not count as one of the learned languages (L1-L4), but is mandatory as an additional subject for everyone. This allows all pupils in the European school system to integrate in everyday life in Luxembourg and at the same time every pupil has at least one common language. Luxembourgish acts here as a link between the different language sections and is thus clearly promoted. A local feature that can of course also be different in other European Schools in Europe – so it is easy to see that cultural specificities can be integrated into this system without any problems.

8. It can be easier and less costly for local governments, since a lot of the work is outsourced.

- Let's face it: the education portfolio is one of the biggest, most difficult but also most important in the state. Like every ministry, it tends to get a new minister and thus a new leader after a legislative period with a new government. In our opinion, the same mistake is being made in Luxembourg as in many other European countries: the department is completely underestimated in its complexity and scope. The worst thing for education is a constant change of direction (which one may have to endure with a new minister every 5 years). This is mainly to the detriment of the students, who spend a good 13 years in school, 7 of them in secondary school. So everyone experiences changes in the system at first hand.
- A European school system, which is centrally controlled in terms of the programme, has the advantage that a radical change in the programme cannot happen overnight. It is more stable, which gives pupils more security and also makes performance more comparable.

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- It also makes the job of every education minister in the country easier, as they have one less thing to worry about. At most, they have to justify their programme ideas to the EU.
- Finally, some costs could be saved, as many areas that had to be taken care of until now would be eliminated. This energy can be used to tackle other things and problems in a more focused way (such as teacher recruitment criteria, the expansion of psychological support, the digital classroom, etc.).

3.1.2 What we want to *change* and how we want to implement the European school model

- a) **The big issue: Vocational training and vocational qualifications are not yet provided for in the European School model**

Vocational training in the *lycée général*

1. The biggest hurdle that follows in a national implementation of the European School model as a standard model is the problem that European Schools (at least so far) are considered academic institutions of education with the aim of further education in a tertiary school (university, technical college, etc.) and thus come closest to a *lycée classique*. At the same time, however, this overlooks the *lycée général*, which on the one hand offers vocational training and at the same time catches pupils for whom a career in academia does not apply (currently known as the “vocational preparation stage” or “*voie de préparation*”). Most pupils in Luxembourg go to such a *lycée général*; in 2020, of all pupils in the first year of secondary education, 49.5% were in the *enseignement secondaire général* (ESG) and a good 11.7% were in the *voie de préparation de l’enseignement secondaire général*, according to the national education report.⁹ This means that over 60% of all pupils would not fit into a classical school system such as the European system currently is.

⁹ LUCET, & SCRIPT (Publ.). (2021). Nationaler Bildungsbericht. Luxemburg 2021. Esch-sur-Alzette: Université du Luxembourg. p. 30 <https://bildungsbericht.lu/>

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2. For this reason, the *lycée général* must be maintained, but the *lycée classique* can be completely replaced by the European School.

However, we propose the following changes if the European School model is implemented as the standard model:

- The period in which all pupils, regardless of their competence, will or objective, are taught together in a single school system should continue after primary school. We think that a two- or three-year common education in a European Secondary School makes sense.

Why?

- Currently, Luxembourg's *lycée général* is chaotic to say the least. Especially with the new promotion criteria introduced in 2019/2020 in the lower grades (7^e-5^e), which have become increasingly lax, pupils lack support and clarity. With poor grades here, many are pushed into vocational education (because chosen sections, where vocational education, among other qualifications, starts, begin in the fourth year of secondary school, on 4^e), but for which they are then not nearly qualified enough. A more demanding education in the compulsory and orientation years would address the problem that the craft sector in Luxembourg has been complaining about for a long time: In a European school, pupils would be better educated after completing their *cycle inférieur* and the handicrafts would be revalued at the same time. We think that a more demanding and common programme for (almost) all pupils will be more stimulating for many pupils and will raise the general level of education.

What do you have to look out for in such an implementation?

- First of all, it must be taken into account that there must continue to be a *voie de préparation* (VP) for pupils with learning difficulties – in our proposal, only the *voie d'orientation* (VO) of the ESG would be omitted. It must be said that the lack of a classical “voie de préparation” is already known to some European schools. The very young École Internationale Mersch Anne Beffort (EIMAB) already offers a “voie de préparation internationale (VPi)” because of this. This school path, which provides for vocational training, corresponds to the classic Luxembourg school system of VP, with the difference that here one receives

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classes in German, French, or Portuguese (realistically, these are the languages most commonly encountered by the target group). A special feature of EIMAB in the first secondary level is that mathematics and general culture will be taught in the vehicular language whereas workshops and physical education are taught in Luxembourgish. We support this system.

- After that, attention must be paid above all to the instances accompanying education and the structure of the school. This means that there must be significantly more pedagogical and psychological support in the first years of secondary school. We call for the employment of even more qualified psychologists in schools, who can identify problems early and support pupils better. We also call for a strengthening of the teaching staff in the form of smaller class quotas – this would not least benefit the pupils. Fewer pupils in a class means that the teacher can respond better to each individual pupil (internal differentiation), while at the same time increasing pupils' concentration and reducing their stress. Smaller classes lead to better performance as well as fewer class repetitions.¹⁰
- Of course, both are costly. More highly trained staff are needed, larger structures require more complex organisation, one would need more classrooms, ergo more schools, and so on. But in our eyes, every cent invested in a good system is valuable and important, because **education should be the top priority in every state!**

¹⁰ Bach, M., & Sievert, S. (May 30, 2018). Kleinere Grundschulklassen können zu besseren Leistungen von SchülerInnen führen. DIW Wochenbericht(22). doi:10.18723/diw_wb:2018-22-1

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b) Some other issues that need to be addressed when implementing.

- An important point in the introduction of more and more European Schools will be the issue of teaching staff. Unfortunately, it is currently the case that in most European Schools in Luxembourg, less than 50% of the teaching staff are civil servants. At the same time, this means that more than half are employed as “*chargé de cours*” or “*chargé d’éducation*” – a position that should really only exist temporarily to compensate for a short-term shortage of trained staff (because the conditions to become a civil servant teacher are much higher and more complex). The reasons for this imbalance are manifold. On the one hand, the schools say that the different recruitment conditions in European schools would mostly not allow them to recruit so many Luxembourg civil servants. We doubt this statement. On the other hand, civil servants cost much more money – this seems to be more likely a reason for recruiting more “substitute teachers”. But in our opinion this clearly leads to less quality teaching, because it is tantamount to privatisation. When “chargés” are hired, the line-up of teaching staff is much more flexible and in a constant state of flux. At the same time, teachers feel less obliged to perform well because they can, in principle, change more quickly. Moreover, the lower level of training also suggests that teaching cannot be of the same quality. Therefore, we demand a change here as well and **more civil servant teachers in European Schools!**
- We are also aware that there are still no studies on accredited European Schools that give us information on graduation rates and learning success. But we do not see this as a cause for concern for the time being, as any new system has to prove itself first. We are confident.
- Another point to consider is the fact that the possible costs for changes to the system are also unclear so far. How large the expenses will ultimately be and how much each state itself and the EU as a whole will have to spend on new implementations remains unclear. Nevertheless, at this point we can only reiterate what has already been said: Education should be the top priority, also in terms of expenditure!

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3.2 General problems in schools that need to be addressed

The following problems still arise, independent of the implementation of the European School System.

3.2.1 Reducing the number of pupils per class

The structure of school classes is far from good. For one thing, the quota of pupils per class is far too high. At secondary level, the Ministry of Education provides for a maximum of 30 pupils per class. Classes between 25 and 29 pupils are often the rule. This, however, is incredibly bad for good teaching.

- We therefore demand a drastic reduction of the quota to **a maximum of 20 pupils per class.**

The heterogeneity of the classes is currently also suboptimal. By this we mean the heterogeneous composition of different levels of competence in a school class. In our opinion, the social inclusion of weaker and stronger pupils in a class is good in principle, but too many different capacities make for far more inefficient teaching. The problem is obvious: if the levels within a class are more similar, the teacher has an easier time teaching a common programme to all at the same time. Internal differentiation is necessary either way, but if a class is too heterogeneous, this becomes an almost impossible Herculean task. We see this especially in the *Lycée général* in the *cycle inférieur*, where students from a “*cours de base*” and a “*cours avancé*” sit in the same class. As a result, the strong students are not supported enough, and the weaker ones cannot keep up. This does not help anyone.

- We therefore demand that a clearer distinction be made in order to **create more homogeneous classes**, which can then be taught more uniformly.

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3.2.2 Making the teaching profession more attractive

The Ministry of Education in Luxembourg is facing a paradox: although it is a humanistic profession with good pay, the public image of teaching is rather poor and loaded with prejudices. There is an unprecedented shortage of teaching staff, even if it does not look like it at first glance (more *chargé de cours/d'éducation* and lateral entrants are being recruited than ever before). How can this be changed?

The ministry and the school directors have to realise again that it is the teachers themselves who bear the greatest responsibility for the academic development of the children. Expectations have changed radically today: In most cases, it is the parents who make the demands on the school and it is no longer the school that makes the demands on the students.

➤ **We therefore demand that new thinking space be created** in general, so **that teachers can once again have the support of their direct superiors** and their public image is improved.

And of course, the ministry should talk more with the unions and involve them more in important decisions. The trade unions are made up of people who work in the field, who know what is going on and who know exactly what is important. They stand up for themselves and their colleagues. So far, however, they are only marginally involved, mostly under public pressure and usually only asked for their opinion afterwards, long after a project has been implemented.

➤ That's why we at Volt **demand** that there be more **compulsory consultation with the unions** and that they have a voice in important decisions in the education system.

3.2.3 Better and more care institutions

Parents have some problems to contend within the "*Maisons relais*" and the "*Crèches*".

➤ In densely populated areas, parents often have to register their child in a crèche before birth in order to get a place. If there is still no better paid and longer leave for parents and single parents, **every child must be guaranteed a place in a crèche** – just as they are guaranteed a place at school.

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- If parents lose their jobs and suddenly become **unemployed, the children lose their right to a place in a day care centre or a crèche**. This is **outrageous**, because it makes it even more difficult for job seekers to look for a new one. It should be the other way round: Those concerned **should get financial support!**
- As far as the **day-care centres (*Maison relais*)** are concerned, they need to **cooperate much better with the schools** and collaborative structures need to be created. Often it is still the case that they are separate institutions that neither communicate nor work with each other. A mesh of homework help, relaxation opportunities, teacher-caregiver talks, and organisational gateways would help enormously those children who cannot immediately benefit from the support of their parents after school. It also seems important to mention here that the “homework help” already introduced does not really live up to its name, as the educators working in the day-care centres are not trained to do so and are not currently entitled or obliged to help. Only rooms and times are provided for children who need to do their homework – no help is currently offered. This strengthens our demand that the day-care centres finally have to work more closely with the schools and that teachers also have to work in the day-care centres in order to be able to help the children in this way.

3.2.4 More extracurricular personal at school

Schools are becoming more complex and larger, the demands on teachers have increased enormously over the last 20 years, as has the diversity and number of students. In this context, the support structures in schools are lagging behind.

- Firstly, **infirmaries with trained staff**, i.e., trained nurses, should be made **compulsory** in both primary and secondary schools. Where there are students, there is also a get-together; where there is a get-together, there are injuries. Since not every parent can always pick up their children immediately from school and take them to a doctor, and even an emergency doctor sometimes takes a long time to be there in an acute case, it is all the more important that every school has a sickroom with specialised staff who can already provide first aid.

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- Secondly, significantly **more psychologists** would have to be employed, especially in primary schools, who can deal with children who are displaying behavioural problems. Teachers do not have the training to deal specifically with psychological problem cases and also do not have the time and the possibility to deal with each child individually in detail. This makes it all the more important to hire trained professionals who can guarantee psychological care for primary school children. The psychologists, together with the teachers and educators, should provide the best possible guidance for each child. Only in this way can the transition to secondary school run smoothly.
- We also call for **greater social inclusion**: In the 1970s, special schools were dismantled in Finland and a “Part Time Special Education System” was established. The proportion of children who received part-time support from a special educator increased significantly, because in Finland every child in mainstream schools (up to grade 9) is offered the possibility of special educational support without the need for a diagnosis as in Luxembourg. This eliminates the labelling-resource dilemma. In addition, the majority of special educational resources are used preventively in the first four years to avoid potential problems. The result: 18% of Finnish first graders receive this “non-binding” special educational support. We would like to see this system for all schools in Europe!

Best Practice
from Finland

3.2.5 Free & healthy school meals

School children already have access to free textbooks and many free services in schools (e.g. use of libraries, homework help, psychological support, free fruit, etc.). Volt welcomes this. However, there is still an injustice when it comes to meals in school canteens. At the moment, the state contributes a large part of the cost of food to the students, so food is already relatively cheap. At the same time, pupils whose parents have too low an income get the food in the canteens completely free of charge. In principle, we think this is a good initiative, but we question the effort and the consequences of this measure. After all, only very few pupils can benefit from free food at all, and only a small proportion of them actually benefit from it in the end.

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The reasons for this are complex: it involves work, it costs a mental effort to request this reimbursement and it could also create social pressure if one pupil does not have to pay anything while the other does. At the same time, we wonder whether the cost-benefit calculation was made when this measure was enacted. We suspect that it is similar to public transport: The money that comes in through the students' contributions does not justify the effort of managing all this through card systems and bureaucracy.

It would therefore be simpler, probably less costly and fairer if **every pupil had the right to one free lunch per day in the school canteen**. This would also provide an incentive to eat there: The state can determine the offer here and thus has an eye on what pupils eat (the offer must of course be healthy, balanced but at the same time diverse and adapted to children). This can therefore also have a positive influence on the eating habits of the pupils.

And as already mentioned, the state must of course also ensure that the food offered corresponds to a **healthy** and climate-friendly diet. To this end, vegetarian and vegan options must be offered, and fast food, sugary soda (such as cola, etc.) must be banned from schools. The state must also act as a symbolic role model here, even if young people are free to eat unhealthy outside of school.

3.2.6 Secondary schools to start only at 9 a.m.

For most pupils in Luxembourg (and in Europe in general), the first lesson starts punctually at eight o'clock in the morning. Depending on the school, it can also ring half an hour earlier or later. (the Lycée Michel Lucius is the latest school in Luxembourg to start at 8.30 a.m.) This has not changed for about 150 years.

The problem is that millions of schoolchildren all over Europe struggle to get out of bed early in the morning – just like every working person; but studies show time and again that **teenagers have a different sleep rhythm** than adults.

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Basically, a distinction is made between early risers and late risers, but during puberty the rhythm shifts backwards, so that early risers also prefer to sleep longer.¹¹ This phenomenon can be observed all over the world.¹²

For most young people, between eight and ten hours of sleep is healthy. But most of them don't get that. Researchers at the University of Marburg have found out that most young people do not sleep enough and even suffer from permanent sleep deprivation.¹³ One reason for this is the early start of school.

An American study also showed that adolescents go to bed later and later during puberty.¹⁴ Teenagers therefore only fall asleep after 11 pm and wake up in the morning with a sleep deficit. Strict parents could now simply send their children to bed earlier. But it is also a fact that young people cannot fall asleep earlier at all. It contradicts their natural and inner rhythm.

Sleep researchers are certain: a later start to school would be good for all pupils holistically. Seattle has already reacted: since 2016, the high schools there have started just under an hour later – at 8:45 am. From a scientific point of view, this is a compromise. However, a recent study shows that tenth graders in Seattle sleep an average of 34 minutes more at night.¹⁵

Apart from more sleep that the pupils would get by starting school later, another aspect would also be important: traffic. School transport by bus and car accounts for a large proportion of traffic before 8 a.m. – especially in densely populated towns and villages such as Luxembourg City or Esch-sur-Alzette; this correlates with normal work traffic. If schools did not start until 9, this traffic would be shifted to the back and our roads would be relieved. Everyone would be able to get around better.

Therefore, it seems quite clear to us: we demand that secondary schools start at 9 a.m. only, so that the pupils are helped and we accommodate their biorhythms.

¹¹ Roenneberg, Till et al. (29. December 2004). A marker for the end of adolescence. *Current Biology*, 14(24). doi:10.1016/j.cub.2004.11.039

¹² Hagenauer, M., Perryman, J., Lee, T., & Carskadon, M. (17. June 2009). *Adolescent Changes in the Homeostatic and Circadian Regulation of Sleep*. *Developmental Neuroscience*, 31, 276–284. doi:10.1159/000216538

¹³ Betz, M., Cassel, W., & Köhler, U. (2012). *Schlafgewohnheiten und Gesundheit bei Jugendlichen und jungen Erwachsenen – Auswirkungen von Schlafdefizit auf Leistungsfähigkeit und Wohlbefinden*. *Deutsche Medizinische Wochenschrift*, 137(A28). doi:10.1055/s-0032-1323191

¹⁴ Crowley, S., Acebo, C., & Carskadon, M. (September 2007). *Sleep, circadian rhythms, and delayed phase in adolescence*. *Sleep Medicine*, 8(6), 602-612. doi:10.1016/j.sleep.2006.12.002

¹⁵ Dunster, G. et al. (12. December 2018). *Sleepmore in Seattle: Later school start times are associated with more sleep and better performance in high school students*. *Science Advances*, 4(12). doi:10.1126/sciadv.aau6200

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3.2.7 Home and consumer knowledge

The subject “hem- och konsumentkunskap” (home and consumer knowledge) is mandatory from middle years until high school in both public schools and private schools but is regarded as one of the smallest subjects in the Swedish school system. For many decades the subject was only called “hemkunskap” and had a strong focus on the traditional common tasks of a home family and practical cooking and cleaning. After the 2011 Swedish school reform, the curriculum have been restructured with more focus on the topics of health, economy and environment which includes consumer economics as well as consumer awareness.¹⁶

Best Practice
from Sweden

Volt believes that all pupils from Europe should benefit from this “home and consumer courses”. These courses are really intended to prepare students to either enter working life or prepare them for higher education (which is a period of time where students often take their independence, and we want them to be prepared the best before that time arrives). A Swedish paper¹⁷ on this shows that John Dewey¹⁸ is again invoked here to promote the practicality of the school. The aim of these efforts in this school subject is to promote the social development of the pupils and to impart knowledge to them according to their abilities and level of knowledge. John Dewey emphasises the following here: “Skill and information about materials, tools, and laws of energy are acquired while activities are carried on for their own sake. The fact that they are socially representative gives a quality to the skill and knowledge gained which makes them transferable to out-of-school situations.”¹⁹

¹⁶ Højjer K., Hjalmskog K. & Fjellström C. (2014). *The Role of Food Selection in Swedish Home Economics: The Educational Visions and Cultural Meaning*. Ecology of Food and Nutrition, 53. doi:10.1080/03670244.2013.870072

¹⁷ Hansson, I. (2014). *The students’ own planned lessons in home and consumer studies. The assignment for taking part in planning of the lessons*. URN:nbn:se:kau:diva-31535 (p. 6)

¹⁸ John Dewey (1859-1952) was an important American philosopher and reform educator. Not only his famous “laboratory school” or his principle of “learning by doing”, many modern educational approaches – such as open teaching, project method, discovery learning – ultimately go back to him.

¹⁹ Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and Education. An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*. New York: The Macmillan Company. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Democracy_and_Education (p. 241)

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Typically, these lectures would consist of some theory but mainly of practice. Here's what we envision: Home and consumer knowledge should be taught from the first year of primary school in analogy to the "Life & Society" (*Vie et société*) subject (in the European school system it could be integrated into the subject "Discovery of the world") In the practical subject or practical part the following things, among others, are then taught in as practical a way as possible:

- laundry
- safety within the home
- paying bills and taxes
- cooking classes
- woodwork class
- sustainability
- economy (how to open a bank account, how to save money efficiently, how does a credit card work? etc.)²⁰

Volt considers practical education to be as important as theoretical education, which is why space must be made for such activities in school.

3.3 Joint promotion of research and development

3.3.1 European research

While China and the USA are pushing ahead with strategic projects with strong financial resources, this is happening in Europe in a much less targeted and coordinated way, even if sufficient funds are available overall. The important step of industrialisation is often not sufficiently taken into account, and so many approaches are terminated after the development phase. These are the main reasons why Europe's innovative strength is dwindling in a global comparison. Our goal is a more efficient and effective use of funds for the targeted promotion of new technologies up to industrialisation. Central to this is the establishment of a European agency for advanced research.

²⁰ These activities already correspond to what Dewey considers important at the beginning of the 20th century: "Outdoor excursions, gardening, cooking, sewing, printing, book-binding, weaving, painting, drawing, singing, dramatization, story-telling, reading and writing" (Dewey, *ibid.* p. 230)

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- **It should harmonise the various funding programmes at European level** (e.g. those of the European Innovation Council EIC or the German Federal Agency for Leap Innovations SPRIN-D).
- **It should set up and manage ambitious projects with a focus on promoting and harnessing new technologies.**
- **It should award sub-projects via European calls for tenders**, so that the researching companies are supported while observing market economy principles.

3.3.2 Free Software

Free software and open standards are among the central pillars of our modern, digitised society. E-mail services, web servers and modern secure methods for encryption are based on open source technologies. But open technologies also play an important role in the protection of democracy and freedom of the press: the „Tor network“ enables journalists, whistle-blowers and regime critics worldwide to access the internet as anonymously as possible. Ensuring the further development of Free and Open Source Software (FLOSS) is in the interest of free and democratic states. Open source software gives citizens and journalists access to systems used by the government. In addition to transparency, this also benefits security. Unfortunately, there is a lack of programmes across Europe to secure such open technologies in the long term. Volt wants to ensure that open technologies and standards, which are essential for the internet, our digital infrastructure and civil society, are further developed in the long term. Secure funding is particularly important to guarantee a healthy (open source) ecosystem in the long term and thus a free and secure internet.

- **In the short term, Volt advocates the establishment of a state-financed fund in Luxembourg that is as independent as possible and that promotes the further development of open standards and Free and Open Source Software (FLOSS) in the long term.** The conditions for funding should ensure that projects are supported that make an important contribution to the free internet or help people worldwide to circumvent censorship and surveillance. The fund, modelled on the US Open Technology Fund, is to receive an annual funding volume in the low double-digit millions.

CHAPTER II

Empowering

every

citizen

equally

FUTURE  MADE IN EUROPE

EMPOWERING EVERY
CITIZEN EQUALLY



EMPOWERING EVERY CITIZEN EQUALLY



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4 REFORMING THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM

The pillar of any democracy is the right to vote. Through elections, a voter expresses his needs, his vision for the future. In a representative democracy, it is therefore incumbent on the elected to respect the will of the voters. However, we have been in a crisis of the electoral system for several decades. On the one hand, the electoral system has not been adapted to modern conditions and its complex system promotes a lack of transparency and unbalanced voting. Apart from the fact that even the system of elections in Luxembourg promotes populism in a certain way, at the same time an enormously large part of the population is not entitled to vote at all. This also seems to be a problem if Luxembourg still sees itself as a democratic state. Because if the people (demos) are no longer represented, they no longer rule (kratos).

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4.1 A different voting system

4.1.1 A single constituency

The current electoral system of the parliamentary elections in Luxembourg with its four constituencies (“Walbezierk”) disadvantages smaller parties and does not adequately represent the electorate. The division of the 60 parliamentary seats into four constituencies (north 9, east 7, centre 21, south 23 – measured by population,) makes sense in theory, as one would think that anybody in Luxembourg, no matter where he lives, would be adequately represented in parliament.

However, this brings with it some problems:

1. The candidates standing for election do not have to live in that constituency, the voters do. This can lead to the fact that perhaps the appropriate interests are not represented in parliament after all.
2. This electoral system makes it incredibly difficult for smaller parties to gain a foothold in Luxembourg, as they may not be able to reach the whole country. Four lists must be filled with people to actually be decently electable. This in turn leads to many small parties not contesting in all constituencies in the first place and thus not being able to be elected by everyone.
3. Furthermore, the regional districts have an influence on the final result. Since only seven MPs are elected in the east, there is in fact a blocking clause. Accordingly, a party must achieve about ten per cent in the smallest constituency to have a chance of winning a remaining mandate. The electoral districts and the allocation of seats according to the D’Hondt method therefore disadvantage smaller parties and can lead to distorted election results.
4. If lists are filled, one problem arises that is already familiar from municipal elections: Many people on these lists do not really want to be elected but are pure “list fillers”.
5. In some cases, it may be possible that people cannot vote for their favourite candidate because he is not on their ballot. In a country with only about 600k inhabitants and only 60 seats in parliament, this seems undemocratic.

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6. The idea that an “Éislecker” (someone from the North) cannot represent the interests of a “Minettsdapp” (someone from the South) seems more than outdated in today’s globalised world and cosmopolitical Luxembourg. A parliamentarian is anyway obliged to respect the interests of all citizens equally.

We believe that a more representative and democratic electoral system is possible. Therefore, we advocate a reform of the electoral system with **only one constituency** and a more representative electoral system that allows for a more democratic competition between political parties.

The advantages of a single constituency

1. Small parties could be elected by everyone, regardless of the voter’s place of residence. This makes for a more democratic process.
2. List fillers would be less imperative, as you can reach more voters with fewer people. This makes for a more transparent and honest election.
3. The paradox of candidates no longer living in the constituency would be eliminated.
4. Anyone could vote for anyone and thus ultimately determine all seats in parliament, which would also be much more democratic.
5. The electoral system would become much less complex and thus more transparent.

4.1.2 Consideration of alternative electoral system

The current electoral system in Luxembourg is proportional representation with lists of candidates, in which seats are allocated as closely as possible to the proportion in which they were voted for. However, this electoral system has some weaknesses. Apart from the fact that, although proportionate, it may be unfair to form coalitions (e.g. that the party with the most votes does not necessarily have to be in the government formation), the possibility of panachage also gives voters too many election results in which the actual will of the voter is not reflected. Finally, the current panachage system with candidate lists can lead to further paradoxes (such as an elected candidate not accepting the election but the party retaining the votes, or the party appointing completely different candidates to move into parliament and/or government).

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Last but not least, we are disturbed by a political system in which faces are elected instead of programmes. Although parties ultimately govern and parties move into parliament (non-partisans can only be elected in municipal elections in a few majoritarian municipalities), people ultimately have to vote for individuals.

Therefore, we would support an electoral system that only allows list voting (already over 60% of voters have a tendency to vote for lists rather than individual candidates)²¹ and at the same time corresponds to a different selection system. For example, the **Ranked Pairs System**²² would be a possibility, although studies are needed to look in detail at the implications of such a system for Luxembourg.

Volt therefore supports calls for a new electoral system, taking into account the latest research, to establish as fair and programme-centred a system as possible in Luxembourg (and possibly Europe).

²¹ Reporter.lu highlighted the problems of Panachage and mentions the voting statistics: Schmit, L. (October 31, 2018): *Das Panaschieren muss ein Ende haben*. From Reporter.lu: <https://www.reporter.lu/kommentar-das-panaschieren-muss-ein-ende-haben/>

²² If there is one candidate that voters prefer over all others in a pairwise comparison, Ranked Pairs ensures that this candidate wins. Ranked Pairs solves the Condorcet paradox by disregarding the pair with the lowest number of winning votes in the ranking in the case of circular arguments.

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4.2 Voting rights for foreigners

We recognise that the four freedoms granted with the establishment of the European single market meant that European citizens would move and settle in countries other than their country of origin. Thirty years later, some 15 million EU citizens have done so.²³ Their numbers are increasing, which is slowly changing the foundations of our democracies, because these citizens are excluded from voting in some elections in their country of residence, e.g., here in Luxembourg.

Luxembourg is one of the most diverse countries in the European Union and in the world. Due to its openness and its attractiveness, many people come here to work and settle down. People from 170 nations live in Luxembourg and the diverse society, the multilingualism and the welcoming culture attract many international investors and multinational companies. We are proud of Luxembourg's openness and its diversity. This diversity is mirrored in the composition of Luxembourg's society. Today, almost half of the population does not have Luxembourgish nationality: 47,1 % of the population are foreigners, mainly from other European member states (80,8 % of the foreigners are EU citizens).²⁴

However, this diversity comes with a caveat: A big part of the population is not represented in the current political system. The right to vote is historically attached to Luxembourgish nationality. Even though many of the foreigners are well integrated and have been living in the country for decades, they have no possibility to express their preferences and their will in elections. They pay their taxes but cannot influence how their taxes are spent. Moreover, it is deeply undemocratic that only half of the population has the possibility to influence political decision-making by participating in the parliamentary elections. Consequently, we want to enable those currently disenfranchised to effectively express their views and interests by giving them the possibility to vote.

²³ Eurostat: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Archive:EU_citizens_living_in_another_Member_State_-_statistical_overview&direction=next&oldid=541173

²⁴ STATEC (2022): Luxembourg in figures 2022. Luxembourg: Imprimerie Centrale. p. 11 <https://statistiques.public.lu/en/publications/series/luxembourg-en-chiffres/2022/luxembourg-en-chiffres-2022.html>

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4.2.1 What benefits will come with it?

First and foremost, it is a democratic necessity to enable large parts of the population to participate in free and fair elections. Political decisions in a democracy are supposed to represent the will of a large part of the population. By systematically excluding half of the population and not giving them the right to vote, political decisions cannot escape a strong bias, as they only represent a small part of the population.

Second, the right to vote would encourage the integration of foreigners living in Luxembourg. Giving people the possibility to vote gives them an incentive to become involved in political life and to spark their interest in national politics. Further, people who have the possibility to vote, feel less alienated and it helps them to identify with the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

Finally, Luxembourg is and has always been one of the most avid supporters of the European Union. There are few countries which have profited more from European integration than the Grand Duchy. Luxembourg would be a pioneer in giving other Europeans the right to vote in national elections and it would show that we cherish our European friends and partners, demonstrating the European spirit which all of us experience in our daily lives. Moreover, Volt Europa also advocates on the European level to give EU citizens the possibility to vote in the country that they live in.

It should also be mentioned that the idea of granting universal suffrage to foreigners is not a new concept in Europe. For example, the French constitution of 24 June 1793²⁵, which unfortunately never came into force, contained the right to vote for foreigners. It declared:

“Article 4. – Any person born and domiciled in France, aged twenty-one, any foreigner aged twenty-one, who, domiciled in France for one year, lives there by his work, or acquires property, or marries a French woman, or adopts a child, or nurses an old man, any foreigner finally who will be judged by the Legislative Body to have deserved well of Humanity, shall be admitted to the exercise of the Rights of French citizenship.”

²⁵ This was the first republican constitution in France. It is considered to be extremely democratic, but it never came into force. Instead, from autumn 1793 to summer 1794, the Committee of Public Safety (French: *Comité de salut public*) exercised a bloody reign of terror (French: *la grande Terreur*). Consultable on the site of the official French Constitutional Council: <https://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/les-constitutions-dans-l-histoire/constitution-du-24-juin-1793>

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(French: *“Tout homme né et domicilié en France, âgé de vingt et un ans accomplis ; – Tout étranger âgé de vingt et un ans accomplis, qui, domicilié en France depuis une année – Y vit de son travail – Ou acquiert une propriété – Ou épouse une Française – Ou adopte un enfant – Ou nourrit un vieillard ; – Tout étranger enfin, qui sera jugé par le Corps législatif avoir bien mérité de l’humanité – Est admis à l’exercice des Droits de citoyen français.”*)

It should be noted that this passage did not only speak of municipal elections, but of universal suffrage. Nearly 250 years later, we are still not there.

4.2.2 Our Proposal

For the above reasons, we want to give the right to vote to foreigners fulfilling the set of criteria detailed below.

To be eligible to vote in legislative elections, foreign nationals must:

- Be a **citizen of an EU member state**
- **Have lived in Luxembourg** for at least **one election cycle** (5 years), without interruption.
 - After this period of 5 years, foreign residents can register at their local commune to participate in the next legislative elections. This must be done 4 months prior to the election date.

Once eligible and registered, certain conditions apply:

- Foreigners **will have the same obligations** as Luxembourgish nationals. As voting is compulsory in Luxembourg, foreigners who register to vote will also be subject to possible fines if they then do not participate in the elections.
- Once foreigners leave the Grand Duchy and take up residence in a different country, their right to vote expires. Should they move back to Luxembourg following their departure, they will again be required to live here for the period of 5 years, to prevent the issue of “cherry picking”.

EMPOWERING EVERY CITIZEN EQUALLY

But what about...

1 *Language?*

- “All the debates and much of the discussions of the parties are conducted in Luxembourgish. Therefore, foreigners without a grasp of the Luxembourgish language will be unable to effectively inform themselves.”
 - As foreigners would be required to register, we can assume that those who do will indeed be interested in Luxembourgish politics, and thus able to stay informed.
 - Luxembourg has a broad and multilingual media landscape, with numerous francophone, germanophone and anglophone outlets all reporting on matters of importance in Luxembourg. This allows foreigners to stay informed regardless of their grasp of Luxembourgish.
 - Parties looking to take advantage of an expanded foreign electorate would likely start communicating in several languages (as already done by Volt Luxembourg). This will further decrease the barriers to entry for non-native speakers.
 - Municipal and European Parliament elections already allow foreigners to vote without requiring an understanding of Luxembourgish to do so.
 - The publication of parliamentary debates in all of the official languages (for example by the administrative service of the parliament) can be made mandatory.
 - Another solution could be to publish the recordings of debates (which are available on the parliament’s website) with automatic subtitles.
- “This will undermine Luxembourgish both as the lingua franca in politics and as a popular vernacular in Luxembourg.”
 - Luxembourgish can and will remain the working language in parliamentary discussions and debates, due to the aforementioned possibility of translation. Furthermore, many of the “questions parlementaires” are already presented in French and German, not just in Luxembourgish.
 - While we recognise the importance of promoting the use of Luxembourgish, we do not find that this should be done in connection to the right to vote. Instead, as we explain in our section on education, we believe that the best way to promote Luxembourgish is to implement it more firmly into our schools’ curricula.

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2 *Nationality?*

- “Foreigners will lose the incentive to take on the Luxembourgish nationality and thereby will not integrate as well as if they took on the nationality.”
 - The right to vote is just one of several benefits that come with Luxembourgish nationality, the rest of which will continue to provide sufficient incentives to obtain it.
 - Abstaining from Luxembourgish nationality does not prevent individuals from integrating, just as obtaining it cannot guarantee effective integration. Many people without Luxembourgish nationality are still well-integrated.
 - Registering to vote will be an option for foreigners, not an obligation. As mentioned earlier, those who choose to register can therefore be assumed to be identifying with the country and planning to stay here.
 - The right to vote promotes integration since foreigners would have a way to decide what future they want for the country.
- “They vote for laws that don’t really apply to them since they don’t have the nationality. They can vote for laws in their home country which apply to them.”
 - People who live here must accept Luxembourgish laws as they are. Every Luxembourger would also be judged under a different law if he committed a crime in a different country.

3 *Fairness?*

- “We give them the right to vote in Luxembourg, but they don’t give us the right to vote in their home country. This seems unfair.”
 - We should push for the right to vote for EU citizens in every European country and make it a policy for the European Parliament. Volt believes in **equal rights for all European Citizens**, and we are in favour of a full-fledged **European Citizenship**.
- “For Luxembourgish citizens voting would remain compulsory, while it would only remain an option for foreigners.”
 - Our proposal gives foreigners the right to vote if they fulfil the criteria, though at first, they would indeed not be obliged to vote. However, once they register, they would have the same obligations as Luxembourgish citizens. They could get fined if they do not cast their vote in the elections as long as they reside here in Luxembourg.

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5 HIGHER QUALITY OF LIFE & SOCIAL JUSTICE

The quality of life in Luxembourg and Europe is quite high compared to the rest of the world. But we still see some potential for improvement. People are overworked, can't always get involved in politics and are also afraid of rising crime. At the same time, many measures that are taken are not characterised by solidarity. Volt is committed to a better quality of life for every citizen, while at the same time placing social justice as a top priority.

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5.1 Work time reduction

In Luxembourg, weekly working hours are slightly more than the legal 40 hours on average. Women and men working full-time spend most of their day at work.

Reducing working hours has two major positive effects: First, it can increase productivity, as a Japanese study shows.²⁶ Secondly, studies suggest “that the reduction of working hours with retained salary could be an effective workplace intervention for the improvement of employees’ well-being, especially regarding stress and sleep”²⁷.

Therefore we demand **pilot projects for the reduction of weekly working hours without loss of pay!**

- There is no reduction in unpaid work without a reduction in paid work time. Women and men need more time to organise equal care for unpaid work in the domestic sphere.
- Reducing paid working time also helps to redistribute work more evenly and to combat unemployment.
- Reducing the time spent in paid work allows more time for personal commitments, activism and watching children grow up.
- Reducing working time also means reducing the long list of things that need to be done and thought about.
- But we also want people to continue to enjoy the freedom to organise their work and, for example, to be able to work more if they want to. Overtime must continue to be possible.

Volt is watching closely the implementation and the tests carried out in Portugal around the “4 workdays week” in order to implement it in Luxembourg if the test are being conclusive and are indeed enhancing productivity and mental health.

²⁶ Shangguan, R., Devaro, J., & Owan, H. (May 2021). *Enhancing Team Productivity through Shorter Working Hours: Evidence from the Great Recession*. RIETI Discussion Paper Series 21-E-040. <https://www.rieti.go.jp/en/publications/summary/21050007.html>

²⁷ Savatteri, A., Gualano, M., Catozzi, D., Rousset, S., Boietti, E., Bert, F., & Siliquini, R. (1. April 2022). *How the reduction of working hours could influence health outcomes: a systematic review of published studies*. *BMJ Open*, 12(4). doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2021-051131

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5.2 Measures to increase safety: Prevention over reaction

Volt is aware that crime is a problem in a free state and that more and more people feel less safe. Densely populated areas with major transport hubs such as a main railway station certainly always pose some risk of criminal activity. But we also have to recognise that it is very difficult to separate cause and effect, as well as to collect statistics on crime in general that are meaningful. Many criminal acts are not reported, thus not recorded, or in some cases are not even considered a crime under current law – this includes, in particular, threatening situations in which women may find themselves on their way home in the evening.

Finally, one must also be aware that our enlightened world also entails that more crimes are solved and disseminated through the media. This can lead to an availability heuristic, in which one overestimates the actual probability of becoming a victim of a criminal act.

And yet: Even if it were the case that crime would objectively increase and offences would increase, there is, in our opinion, no simple solution to this problem. In our view, crime is a systemic problem that has multiple causes. One of the main causes is poverty, a lack of contentment and a general low level of prosperity of the population.

In this discussion, one has to get to the root of the problem and understand why crime occurs in the first place. It only arises when people are so badly off that they grasp at the last straw and try to achieve their prosperity by illegal means. Robberies, acts of violence or public nuisances are no longer prevalent when people have a roof over their heads and the state is also supporting the most disadvantaged among us. Children and young people are the most vulnerable group, as they run the greatest risk of falling into a spiral of crime in their development towards maturity, which lasts a lifetime and is difficult to get out of.

We also deeply condemn the fact that criminality also promotes racist thinking. When foreigners become criminals in a state, it is also because neither their state of origin nor anyone else cares enough. If the conditions in Luxembourg are so good that foreigners can also be fully satisfied, crime will also decrease here.

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- That is why we clearly **oppose measures that propose simple solutions such as systematically increasing the police force or camera surveillance.**

We rather think that **security can be acquired most effectively by means of social measures.** We rather think that **security can be acquired most effectively by means of social measures.**

5.2.1 Compulsory military/civilian service as possible prevention

At the same time, we believe that the transition period after school to university or work can be a difficult time for young people to go off track and become delinquent. It is precisely that time of emotional insecurity and instability that poses the greatest risk of turning away from the family, reaching for drugs and going off the rails. To counteract this, military or civilian service, for example, can be both a character-building and socialising activity that can have a meaningful effect. It can, under certain circumstances, prevent unstable characters from becoming maladjusted and delinquent and gives them the necessary support. A general duty also raises awareness for society – in this respect, community service is a particularly valuable activity that makes people aware of the urgency of a social state.

- That is why we also **support ideas around the reintroduction of compulsory military service** and/or civilian service. The elaboration must take place on the basis of **pilot projects.**

5.2.2 Special training for parents

The best place to start prevention is with the children and adolescents. In this context, however, the household and the parental home also play a major role. Volt takes a very critical view of the current development of society, in which criminal youths often come from problematic homes. In order to prevent this from happening, it would be possible to better educate parents and also inform them about current dangers, risks and prevention. The rapid development of modern technologies and frequently changing laws mean that many parents may feel overwhelmed and thus not sufficiently informed.

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One way to address this would be to offer optional, special training for parents, but with a special child allowance that is provided as an incentive, so to speak, for attending. We are thinking of similar initiatives that already exist now from the state, such as the birth grant of almost 1800 €, which you only get if you do preliminary examinations and regular doctor's visits with the newborn.

Therefore, in order to promote the training of parents and thus the prevention of child and juvenile delinquency, we demand:

- There should be special trainings for parents regarding juvenile delinquency, drug use, mental health, etc., offered by the state (e.g. by the police, psychologists, social workers, etc.). These are directly linked to the issuance of certain subsidies; it is conceivable that part of the child benefit will only be paid out if a parent has demonstrably attended such a training.

5.3 Modulation of fines

In the interest of greater social justice and especially in the case of serious offences, income-related modulation of fines should also be introduced. (As in Finland, Norway, Switzerland or the UK in various forms.)

a) Why?

Because fines have the purpose of punishing the offender and deterring future offences. Unfortunately, fixed fines are the worst way to do this and are socially not only unjust but downright discriminatory. This is because fixed fines hit people with lower salaries much harder and people with higher salaries are not deterred by them. It is, so to speak, a free pass for breaking the rules. In order for fines to have their original effect, i.e. to deter rule-breaking, the amount of the fine should be adjusted to income.

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b) How should the amount of the fine be calculated?

Finnish fines for speeding: In Finland, fines for speeding are linked to income. There is a “daily rate” system, which is calculated based on a traffic offender’s disposable daily income. As a rule, the daily income is divided by two. A similar regulation in Luxembourg, or in Europe as a whole, is advocated by Volt.

Best Practice
from Finland

5.4 Empowering citizens by making municipal budget available to the community

Volt wants to strengthen the power of the people and thus make some of the money from municipalities available to residents. As it is the case in Antwerp and Paris for example.

In Luxembourg it is the city of Dudelange which has set up the first participatory budget in 2022. It has thus become the first municipality in Luxembourg to adopt the participatory budget. Through the participatory budget, residents will have the possibility to propose and vote – both on the internet and on paper – concrete projects up to a percentage of the city’s investment budget that is defined by the College of Aldermen. This is part of citizen education and participation as citizens are directly involved in the process and are encouraged to be better informed about the functioning of the municipal budget.

➤ **Volt is in favour of citizen’s budgets** and will follow the results of this pilot project closely.

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6 EQUAL RIGHTS FOR EVERYBODY

In a free and democratic state, everyone must be able to exercise their rights. However, minorities often risk being ignored in the process, and so there are always cases where not everyone is given equal consideration. The rights of people must not be restricted because of their skin colour, religion, sexuality, gender, or disability. We are committed to strengthening the rights of everyone in Luxembourg and throughout Europe.

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6.1 Parental leave for everyone

In Luxembourg, parental leave regulation has remained stuck on the traditional family model and heterosexual parenting roles.

As a result, gay and lesbian, non-binary and/or trans partners are completely excluded from certain rights. The so-called “paternity leave”, complementary to the maternity leave after the birth of a child, is only 10 days and only available to a male partner. The more inclusive parental leave can only be applied on expiry of the maternity leave, i.e. three months after the birth of the child.

It is furthermore the case that single parents are likewise disadvantaged. If one partner decides to leave the other shortly after the birth of the child, the one with the baby and custody is still only entitled to a one-time parental leave of 6 months. In the case of a couple, everyone is entitled to this time and the still very young child can in this case enjoy 12 months of full attention from one parent, whereas in the case of single parents, the child often already has to go to a day care centre after 6 months.

We want to enable all parents to:

- invest equally in the upbringing and care of children;
- allow the person who has given birth to recover and take care of themselves;
- have equal access to childbirth leave for same-sex families;
- to be able to look after their child as flexibly as possible and to be as free as possible in organising their parental leave;
- not be penalised in the world of work, for greater economic equality between partners;
- have the opportunity as a single parent to benefit from the full 12 months of parental leave that a new born child is entitled to.

Therefore, we want:

- **to replace the 10-day “paternity leave” with a 3-month full-time, full-paid birth leave open to all.**
- **to give single parents the right to 12 months parental leave.**
- **to make parental leave even more flexible and do away with the strict two times six months rule.**

6.2 Include the right to abortion in the constitution

Unfortunately, conservative tendencies can be observed in more and more countries around the world, which has a major impact on women's rights. In June 2022, the US Supreme Court overturned the landmark 1973 "Roe v. Wade" ruling. With the decision of the constitutional judges, states can now largely or even completely ban abortions. Conservative-ruled states immediately took action. In Europe, too, voices have been heard for some time again opposing women's abortion rights. In 2003, Croatia amended its abortion law and since then doctors have had the right to refuse the procedure on grounds of conscience. For this reason, more and more Croatian women now travel to Slovenia to have abortions in the neighbouring country. In November 2020, Poland also tightened its abortion laws, which were already considered very strict: Abortions in the case of malformations are now considered illegal.

We at Volt are watching these activities with horror. Women have long fought for these rights, which they are now suddenly being asked to give up. Not to mention the fact that strict bans are giving rise to illegal practices that put the lives of aborting women at great risk (both for medical and economic reasons).

The right to abortion is one of the fundamental rights of every woman and pregnant person.

We do not want to risk that with a sudden change of government, this fundamental right can suddenly disappear. Therefore, **we demand that the right to abortion be included in the Luxembourg constitution** (we believe it should be in every European constitution). Our proposal would add a sentence to Article 12 on individual freedom:

- No one shall be deprived of the right to a voluntary termination of pregnancy, and no one shall be deprived of the right to a voluntary termination of pregnancy with a maximum exercise period of less than 12 weeks' gestation. ("Nul ne saurait se voir dépourvu du droit à l'interruption volontaire de grossesse et nul ne peut être privé du droit à l'interruption volontaire de grossesse avec un délai maximal d'exercice inférieur à 12 semaines de grossesse.")



6.3 Strengthening LGBTQIA+ rights

Volt stands up for the rights of all. No one should be discriminated against because of their sexuality, gender or religion. We demand more rights for the LGBTQIA+ community in particular.

- Gay men are not allowed to donate blood. This regulation is based on homophobic prejudices from the 1980s and urgently needs to be changed!
 - **We demand that sexual orientation, sex and gender should no longer play a role in blood transfusions.**
- Although there is no practice of conversion therapy, it is not formally banned in Luxembourg. The EU decided in 2018 to support bans in this regard and Luxembourg must follow suit! Such a law would be very simple and straightforward.
 - **We therefore call for a ban on conversion therapy** in Luxembourg and in the EU!
- Unfortunately, many intersex children still undergo unnecessary surgery on their genitals before they reach the age of two, even though there is no medical need for it. This extreme intervention in the life of a person who is still so young can have severe consequences for the rest of their lives.
 - **That is why we demand that it be banned, that intersex newborns are operated on their genitals without medical necessity.**
- The state still thinks in binary terms and holds on to the dichotomous gender order – we see this in the fact that the gender indication on the identity card can only ever be selected as either male or female and also official forms as well as surveys by STATEC are always done with the obsessive specification of a male or female gender. This is clearly discriminatory for non-binary or intersex people, but has the further enormous consequence that awareness of intersexuality is not raised. As a result, parents also have to choose one of the two genders existing in the authorities completely arbitrarily when an intersex child is born.



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- **We demand that the indication "other" becomes possible on all official documents.**
- When those who can give birth are referred to as "mothers" or when there is talk of "paternity leave", even though the parent who does not give birth does not have to be male, then marginalised groups of the population are systematically made invisible.
 - **We therefore call for a neutral wording in the law:** "birthing person" (Fr.: "personne accouchante", Ger.: "Gebärende Person").
- A legal basis must be created so that lesbian mothers do not have to adopt their own children. Especially when, for example, in vitro fertilisation is used to combine the genetic material of both mothers.
 - **We therefore call for parenthood to acquire a different status** and for it to be possible to define who will be designated as a parent even before birth.

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7 CARE AND WELL-BEING

In addition to social justice and a high quality of life, the sense of well-being in a state also needs to be right. This includes having contact points that are always ready to help you when you need it, and in addition to criminal safety, knowing how to deal with certain issues is also part of the sense of well-being. Especially in terms of digital well-being, Luxembourg, but also the whole of Europe, still has a lot of catching up to do, because the internet is still seen as a space that is too free of rights. We want to remedy this and offer people the necessary security and comfort they deserve.

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7.1 Welcome Desks for new inhabitants

A Welcome Desk is designed to offer personalised services and advice to newcomers. Relevant information is collected by the Welcome Desk's linguistically and culturally trained staff, condensed and then put into a comprehensible and descriptive form (checklists, process descriptions, etc.).

Volt also supports a volunteer buddy system coordinated by the Welcome Desk to be offered: Citizens who have been living in Luxembourg for many years should be available to the newcomers as contact persons for questions that are not primarily the responsibility of the Welcome Desk (culture, sports, etc.). We would like to create a database of volunteer city patrons (buddies) in all neighbourhoods and districts. These buddies can then contact the newly arrived citizens if they want to get more information or find someone with whom they can engage in leisure activities etc.

All existing official procedures and processes remain unchanged, but the departments concerned are relieved and an intercultural exchange is made possible.

The Expat Welcome Desk in Brussels and the Expat Service Desk in Düsseldorf support all foreign workers by providing advice on topics such as housing, taxes, transport and childcare.²⁸

Best Practice
from *Belgium & Germany*

7.2 Internet regulation and empowerment of citizens in the digital sphere beyond the Digital Services Act (DSA)

So far, internet platforms that offer and share pornographic or illegal content have been little regulated. As a result, the protection of minors is not guaranteed, illegal content can be gathered, and even private videos are shamelessly shared without major tracking – to the chagrin of the aggrieved without much hope for improvement.

This must change as a matter of urgency. This has now happened more or less at the European level by means of the Digital Services Act (DSA).²⁹ But by no means is everything provided for in it, which is why we demand the following.

²⁸ <https://www.commissioner.brussels/en/i-am-an-expat> ; <https://www.expatservicedesk.de/en.html>

²⁹ Read more on the European Union website: <https://europa.eu/BRRHWF>

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7.2.1 Regulating porn platforms

Porn platforms must finally be obliged to take serious action against the abuse of nude images on their channels and additionally ensure the protection of minors. There are three key points in the provisions of the DSA:

- Every person who uploads content must provide information about their identity.
- Trained moderators are to keep an eye on all content and intervene in critical cases.
- Separate reporting channels for misuse material should make reporting and removal easier and faster.

However, we also demand that there be a **better system for monitoring the protection of minors**. The current situation is catastrophic (clicking a button that supposedly confirms the person is over 18 is enough for most platforms). Here we would have to think about systems where adult content stays behind a better barrier. **Self-deleting scans of the identity card** or similar documents are conceivable. (Similar to how it already works today at cigarette machines). Other systems that preserve internet anonymity are also possible: For example, software tools can be used to give parents the option of controlling devices via a youth protection app, so that, if possible, all questionable content must first be activated or permitted by a parent or guardian (such apps already exist for video game consoles, but would also be conceivable in general for all internet-enabled devices such as tablets, laptops, smartphones, etc.).

Especially people who are affected by so-called **revenge porn, deep-fakes** and other forms of **image-based violence** must be given more opportunities to defend themselves against it. Women are particularly affected by this kind of image-based sexual abuse.

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However, those affected still have no right to complain to the platform if hateful content against them has not been removed. So, if a platform refuses to delete hate speech, revenge porn, a defamation or even a death threat, those affected do not have the right to file a complaint directly with the platform. They are also not given the option of out-of-court dispute resolution. This right is only granted to users who want to complain about content that may have been wrongly deleted by platforms.

This is not only incomprehensible, but also unfair! This detail creates a two-tier system between users. Moreover, millions of people who are affected by hate comments and fake news are left in the lurch. We therefore demand that **those affected be guaranteed unconditional protection and be given the opportunity to defend themselves against such injustice!**

7.2.2 Power to the Users: Affected persons must be able to turn to authorities to have orders issued

The DSA includes demands for more rights for users in its regulations. This primarily concerns those people who are personally affected by illegal online content. It should become possible for those affected to turn to the authorities and actively obtain orders against online platforms in order to eliminate illegal content from the world. An example: If a user is attacked online with death threats or racist incitement and a platform ignores her report and request for deletion, this person should be able to turn to the authorities and request removal through this channel.

However, the DSA does not provide for a contact point.

- We therefore call for a specific, European digital contact point where those affected can report and thus complain as simply and centrally as possible.

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7.2.3 Open the black box: There should be more transparency about risks & impacts

Online platforms currently shield all information around content moderation and the algorithms on which their systems are based. The platform *HateAid*, together with *PeopleVsBigTech*, an international coalition of civil society organisations, has argued that it is not justified to make this a trade secret.³⁰ After all, since the handling of content of all kinds can have a significant impact on the well-being of users worldwide, it is important to gain insight into the mechanisms of platforms and, if necessary, to regulate them. This is all the more explosive in light of Frances Haugen's revelations with the Facebook files. As a former Meta employee, she revealed that the company uses certain algorithms to preferentially disseminate hateful content in order to make profits.

For the European Parliament, transparency is therefore the key word. The risks to public safety, health, fundamental rights and a number of other areas must be critically assessed by very large online platforms. Much might have been prevented if such measures had been introduced earlier. For example, there might be countless fewer teenagers suffering from mental health problems due to the negative effects of Instagram.

- We therefore demand that **information on how the content moderation of a platform works be made visible in a legally regulated manner.**

7.2.4 Access to platform data also for NGOs

It was not only AlgorithmWatch, which had to shut down its Instagram monitoring project to avoid risking a Facebook lawsuit, that suffered from big tech's caginess in the past. Other organisations also shied away from accessing their data for fear of possible charges by big platforms.³¹ The DSA is now raising hopes that this could soon change. The European Parliament's regulations stipulate that not only researchers, but also certain civil society organisations should have access to platform data. We support this.

³⁰ HateAid gGmbH (20 January 2022): *Gemischte Bilanz zum Digital Services Act: Historische Schritte gegen bildbasierte sexualisierte Gewalt auf Pornoplattformen, aber Versagen bei Stärkung der Betroffenen von Hass im Netz*. <https://hateaid.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/220120-PM-EP-Beschluss.pdf>

³¹ Kayser-Bril, Nicolas (13 August 2021): *AlgorithmWatch forced to shut down Instagram monitoring project after threats from Facebook*. From AlgorithmWatch: <https://algorithmwatch.org/en/instagram-research-shut-down-by-facebook/>

7.3 Age-appropriate living: multi-generation housing estates

The proportion of older people in Europe is growing. Thanks to advancing medical knowledge, a larger health sector and better health education, people in Luxembourg are also living longer and the proportion of people of retirement age is growing steadily. In 2001, for example, the proportion of Luxembourgers of retirement age was 13.9%, but in 2019 it is already 19.8%. Of those over 60, only 10% are still working.³²

Retirement is an inevitable future for everyone. So, while most are looking forward to their retirement age in principle, our old-age provision – especially as far as the housing situation is concerned – is not looking good.

Regardless of how rich or poor you are, one thing is obvious: only a few of us will be able to manage our own homes and living spaces independently forever. And apart from the fact that not everyone can afford a good retirement home and that one could criticise many things about them, there is a structural mental problem with the way our retirement homes are set up.

The very fact that people of advanced age are literally banished from the rest of society by retirement homes should give everyone pause for thought. For people, however, it can sometimes be one of the worst experiences of their lives, which can cause, among other things, a rapid deterioration in their mental and thus also physical condition. Of course, this is also partly due to our individualised society, where it is no longer common for several generations to live under one roof. Therefore, only very few senior citizens can rely on their children or grandchildren with great regularity and are dependent on retirement homes.

But here now are some reasons why our retirement homes are structurally bad and harmful to mental health:

³² STATEC: Les personnes âgées (2011):
<https://statistiques.public.lu/fr/publications/series/RP-2011---Premiers-resultats/2013/rp11-29-13.html>
 STATEC Regards N° 19/2019 – Plus de 120 000 seniors au Luxembourg:
<https://statistiques.public.lu/fr/publications/series/regards/2019/19-19.html>

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- When older people have (almost) only older people as company, their interactions become less demanding as their horizon of experiences is reduced. Less demanding means that the interactions become more one-sided, sparse and ultimately more superficial.
- The same reason is also responsible for possible depression: if you only have older people around you and only make friends with them, they are more likely to die. It is a fact that it makes people depressed when their friends die around them. And it is a fact that this is part of the everyday life of a retirement home.
- People who go to a nursing home usually give up a lot of autonomy and memories. For one thing, few retirement homes even allow you to take furniture or other memories with you. On the other hand, many retirement homes are built in such a way that you only have one "room" (if it is a single room at all) and consequently have much less free space, less privacy and fewer opportunities to shape your life according to your own wishes. Retirement homes often maintain large routines with fixed mealtimes and visiting times. In other words, all the achievements of autonomous living that one has worked for all one's life are now suddenly given up again at retirement age. It seems paradoxical and can be depressing.
- Finally, the pathological understaffing of retirement homes also causes problems. Fewer staff means fewer people to take care of you, to maintain everything and to be attentive to problems. In addition, poor working conditions lead to greater turnover and thus less commitment among those who work there. All this has a negative impact on the experience of being a senior in a retirement home.

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It is therefore urgent that these structures are overhauled and that government investment in them is increased. Because good old-age care should not be regulated by the private market but belongs to the fundamental rights of every citizen and must be regulated (at least to a large extent) by the state.

That is why we, as Volt, demand the building of state and the support of private multi-generational settlements!

7.3.1 What are multi-generational housing estates and why are they a better model for age-appropriate housing than retirement homes?

Multigenerational houses or settlements are special projects for seniors 55 and older, where older people and younger people live together in a very free environment, thus benefiting from each other, allowing to be autonomous, promoting interactions and friendships, and ultimately also reducing costs (e.g., for care staff).

In the Netherlands, there are already some projects that have implemented such concepts³³ and the state promotes age-appropriate housing for entrepreneurs.³⁴ We want to follow the example and not only have state subsidies, but also complete state building projects!

Best Practice
from *The Netherlands*

7.3.2 We imagine the following ideal scenario for multi-generational housing:

Instead of a single block of flats, entire streets and housing estates are built for the purpose of age-appropriate housing. It should be a combination of simple, autonomous housing for the elderly, old people's homes, social housing and support for young families. In these settlements, which were built especially for this purpose, there are several flat blocks containing flats that are specially adapted to the needs of senior citizens, but also of families.

³³ There is, for example, the Knarrenhof (<https://knarrenhof.nl/>), which is a large courtyard with living facilities for older and younger people between 19 and 109 years of age. The project is growing and more such small settlements are planned.

³⁴ The Dutch government's information page on subsidies and government support: <https://www.volkshuisvestingnederland.nl/onderwerpen/programma-wonen-en-zorg-voor-ouderen/ondernemen-in-kleinschalige-woonprojecten>

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Flats for senior citizens come in two different versions:

On the one hand, the in and of itself autonomous flat, which only contains a few extras such as an emergency telephone, specially adapted bathrooms, etc., but where the design of the rooms and the layout of the flat is completely free.

On the other hand, the much smaller and more adapted flats for older people with serious illnesses such as dementia or more severe physical impairments. Here, nursing staff would also be included, who would take care of these people, like in a retirement home.

In addition to the fact that most of the housing goes to older people, incentives must also be created for younger people and especially families to move into these settlements. Ideally, there should be spacious flats at an affordable price for low-income families who are dependent on state aid. The idea behind this is that families can also live there for longer periods of time and that friendships and communities can form in these settlements that can benefit from each other.

For this purpose, however, more things still have to follow than just housing. In order for these to be communal settlements, communal places and spaces must be created as meeting points (e.g., libraries, workspaces, play spaces, communal dining rooms, etc.). In addition, businesses such as small corner shops, but also day-care centres and pharmacies can also set up in these smaller settlements.

All this would contribute to a sense of community and would strengthen the mental health of the elderly, while at the same time young people would benefit from the wisdom of the elderly and the sense of community. Finally, it is our society's obligation towards the third age to include those in the active working generations and not to banish them to a retirement home on the outskirts of the city.

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7.4 Empowering senior citizens

While there are many initiatives and seniors' clubs that play an important role in accompanying older people in their daily lives, once one retires from working life, the offer of lifelong learning becomes less and less.

Although statistics show that Luxembourg citizens are well connected and frequent users of digital services, there is still a need to increase the offer of professional training, especially in relation to digitalisation and new technologies. Acquiring digital skills can help older people stay longer in the workforce, maintain a healthy lifestyle and reduce the risk of social isolation.

The ageing of the population, the increasing number of people living alone and the growing use of digital technologies for communication have led many to believe that loneliness is on the rise.

The importance of loneliness for individual well-being and social cohesion should not be underestimated. The mortality risk of loneliness is comparable to that of obesity and smoking. Persistent loneliness is also associated with unhealthy behaviours, mental health problems and poor cognitive performance. Lonely people also give more pessimistic assessments and feel more threatened by life situations than their „non-lonely“ counterparts.

After retirement, lifelong learning has a central role to play in promoting well-being and quality of life. An example of this is Beesecure's Silversurfer initiative, which lacks funding to reach its target groups.

Volt therefore proposes to increase **BeeSecure's budget to be allocated to the Silversurfer initiative**. This will enable a nationwide strategy to empower all seniors to use new technologies safely and offer them a way out of loneliness.

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8 HOUSING ISSUES

Luxembourg's property prices have been rising for decades and so far there is no end in sight. It is a fact that fewer and fewer Luxembourgers can afford to own a home in their own country. Flats and houses are now so expensive throughout the country that living has almost become a luxury. This is of course an absolute catastrophe, since decent housing is one of the basic needs of every human being! The causes of the housing crisis are manifold and complex, so there are no simple and clear solutions. However, we think that many social measures can regulate the problem and we believe that everyone who works in Luxembourg should also be able to afford a flat here.

8.1 Social rental management to combat the problem of the many vacant flats

The problem with some vacant flats is that the owners do not want to make the effort to rent out their flat (because they speculate on a profitable sale or something similar). A solution to this can be social rental management, where an accredited organisation (such as Life asbl or 28 others³⁵) looks after an owner's property and searches for residents according to social criteria while guaranteeing the rent.

This is because it is often a cost-benefit consideration for landlords whether to rent out their flat, as the bureaucratic and organisational effort is high, while income (for rich owners) does not play a major role. By forcing them through certain laws to give the rental to a non-profit organisation, they would get paid for their flat and would not have to worry about the organisation. Until the owner has found his own tenant or buyer, the non-profit organisation takes care of it (so that the flat does not stand empty). Of course, socially appropriate notice periods must be observed.

8.2 Creating the right to affordable housing for all

Access to decent and affordable housing is a fundamental right, which must be guaranteed to all without discrimination. Housing is an amplifier of inequalities in Luxembourg.

We want to:

- Recognise the **right to adequate and affordable housing** as a fundamental right and **enshrine it in the constitution**.
- **Guarantee equal access to affordable housing** for all without discrimination on the basis of gender and all the grounds set out in Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.
- **Invest in the construction and development of affordable housing**, accessible to people and households with modest incomes.
- **Bring forward the urgent construction of social housing** needed in the medium term.
- **Offer more flats and houses with the concept of emphyteutic rent** in communes.

³⁵ On the page of Logement.lu:
<https://logement.public.lu/fr/proprietaire/logement-location/gestion-locative-sociale.html>

8.3 Key measures to combat the housing problem in Luxembourg

8.3.1 Helping tenants with their rents

In order to help the tenants with their rents we want to make a determined amount of the tenant's rent tax-deductible. This fixed amount would correspond to the maximum amount of loan costs that a homeowner can deduct from tax under current tax law.

The aim of this measure is to make things fairer, by not penalising residents that cannot obtain a loan and thus are not able to benefit from the current legislation.³⁶

8.3.2 Significantly more and denser social housing

Whether university students, families on moderate incomes or single people: It has become increasingly difficult for everyone to afford a flat in Luxembourg. It seems obvious and yet it has to be stressed again and again in Luxembourg: There is currently not enough affordable housing available, and the only truly simple solution is to build significantly more social housing.

Social housing comes in different varieties. From housing to help people off the street, housing for people on low incomes, to social contracts such as leasehold, which makes it possible to also buy affordable housing and not just rent it. Either way, urgent and quick action is needed. The location of social housing can be flexible and does not have to be around the centre of the capital. Such housing is also needed in the south, east, north and west of the country.

Finally, the quality of living must not suffer, which is why a system with residential residences must become a kind of suburb at the same time. This also ensures an economic balance if economic incentives are also created around social housing. See also our concept on multi-generation housing estates.

Therefore, we demand:

³⁶ The form 100F of the tax return must then be amended accordingly. This could for example be assimilated to a permanent charge.

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- **that significantly more social housing is built** and that the proportion is at least tripled.
- **that more dense housing is built** in order to adequately accommodate as many people and families as possible.
- **that suburban-like housing complexes are built**, in which space is also created for pharmacies, small shops (such as bakeries or supermarkets), day-care centres, schools and cultural centres of the community. Thus, a small life can also take place outside the busy cities.

8.3.3 Tackling the property tax issue³⁷

The property tax is calculated on the basis of the unit value³⁸, the base rate (uniform at national level) and the municipal rate. The tax base is calculated by multiplying the unit value by the tax rate. The result is then multiplied by the municipal rate and the property tax is then obtained. The property tax benefits the communes and is therefore a communal tax. It applies to any property held on their territory. Whether the property is occupied or not, and whether it is occupied by the owner or by a tenant, the taxpayer is always the owner.

In Luxembourg, property tax currently represents only 0.05% of GDP. This is a tiny amount, both in comparison with the level recorded in the Grand Duchy in 1970 – i.e. 0.3% of GDP – and with the ratio of 1.2% of GDP observed in 2020 within the European Union. This failure of the Grand Ducal property tax is mainly explained by the fact that the unit value, the cornerstone of the determination of this tax, has only been revised in a punctual and piecemeal manner since 1941.

- To counteract land retention, communes should first apply their

³⁷ In this part, Volt endorses the ideas of the Fondation IDEA: Bouchet, Muriel (December 22, 2021): *Trois propositions concrètes en matière de fiscalité foncière*. Published on Fondation-Idea.lu: <https://www.fondation-idea.lu/2021/12/22/trois-propositions-concretes-en-matiere-de-fiscalite-fonciere/>

³⁸ The unit value is determined by the Tax Administration and corresponds to the value of the building on 1 January 1941, while the rate of assessment for built-up buildings ranges from 0.7% to 1% depending on the building. The only exception concerns land, for which the base rate is always equal to 1%. The municipal rate is set by each municipality for the calendar year. As there has been no revaluation of the bases since 1941, the unit value is therefore much lower than the real value of the property.

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current measures more consistently. For instance, nearly 25% of municipalities disregarded the "B6" property tax lever, which applies to land used for residential construction and identified as such for at least three years. Additionally, the local governments who dare to employ this tool have quite disparate property tax rates. It is suggested that a "corridor" of rates be established for the B6 property tax in order to address this issue.

Since a corridor of this kind has defined the communal commercial tax rate since January 2017, when the most current reform of communal finances went into effect, this would not in any way constitute an unconscionable assault on the notion of local liberty. The lack of available land affects many localities, not just a select few. Instead, it is really a national issue.

- Volt supports the new version of the property tax that would put special emphasis on "land that has not been built on for a certain period of time". The longer the period, the greater the tax pressure on these undeveloped areas. This "progressive tax" will be aimed at land located in areas intended primarily for housing purposes. This applies whether the land is immediately suitable for construction (in German: "Baulücken") or requires development work.
- But Volt wants to go further than that. Indeed, this reform would only target unbuilt land, and not empty flats, houses or building lots which should also be concerned by this. Thus, the authorities should urgently re-evaluate the unit values used as a basis for property tax assessment.

A concrete example is the "mass appraisal technique" or automated price calculation, which is used in Canada and the USA, among others. In concrete terms, this involves determining the taxable base mathematically and on the basis of the prices appearing in notarial deeds (registered prices), according to various characteristics such as the surface area of the dwelling, the number of bedrooms, the availability of a car park, a fitted kitchen, the floor, the location of the dwelling, its year of construction, etc. The underlying statistical model would be transparent, objective and could be recalibrated periodically and easily – without having to "reinvent the wheel" every time, for example every 5 years. It is moreover likely that such a model (or at least an embryo) already

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exists, as shown by the establishment by the *Observatoire de l'Habitat* of a hedonic index of property prices.

Such an “automated” mechanism for calculating unit values would make it possible to avoid another 80 years of unit value “freezing”. This is a simple question of economic efficiency and coherence, fiscal transparency, and basic social justice. It would also generate significant additional resources for the municipalities.

This would mean a significant increase of the property tax across the country. The aim of Volt is of course not to penalise today’s owners. This new way of calculating the basis for property tax assessment would indeed be applied at the national level but would at the start only concern second residencies, empty flats, etc. Homeowners would only be progressively touched by this reform. (Moreover, if this reform was shown to be effective, taxation of main residences would not need to be concerned by this new property tax.)

- Volt also wants to create a dedicated fund for social housing financed by inheritance fees We want to create a specific 10% tax base rate for inherited properties (including building land).

This specific tax base rate would be the same regardless of the family tie uniting the heir to the legatee (10%).

This new specific tax base rate would only concern second homes and not main residences. The latter as well as the other assets would still fall under the current bracket.

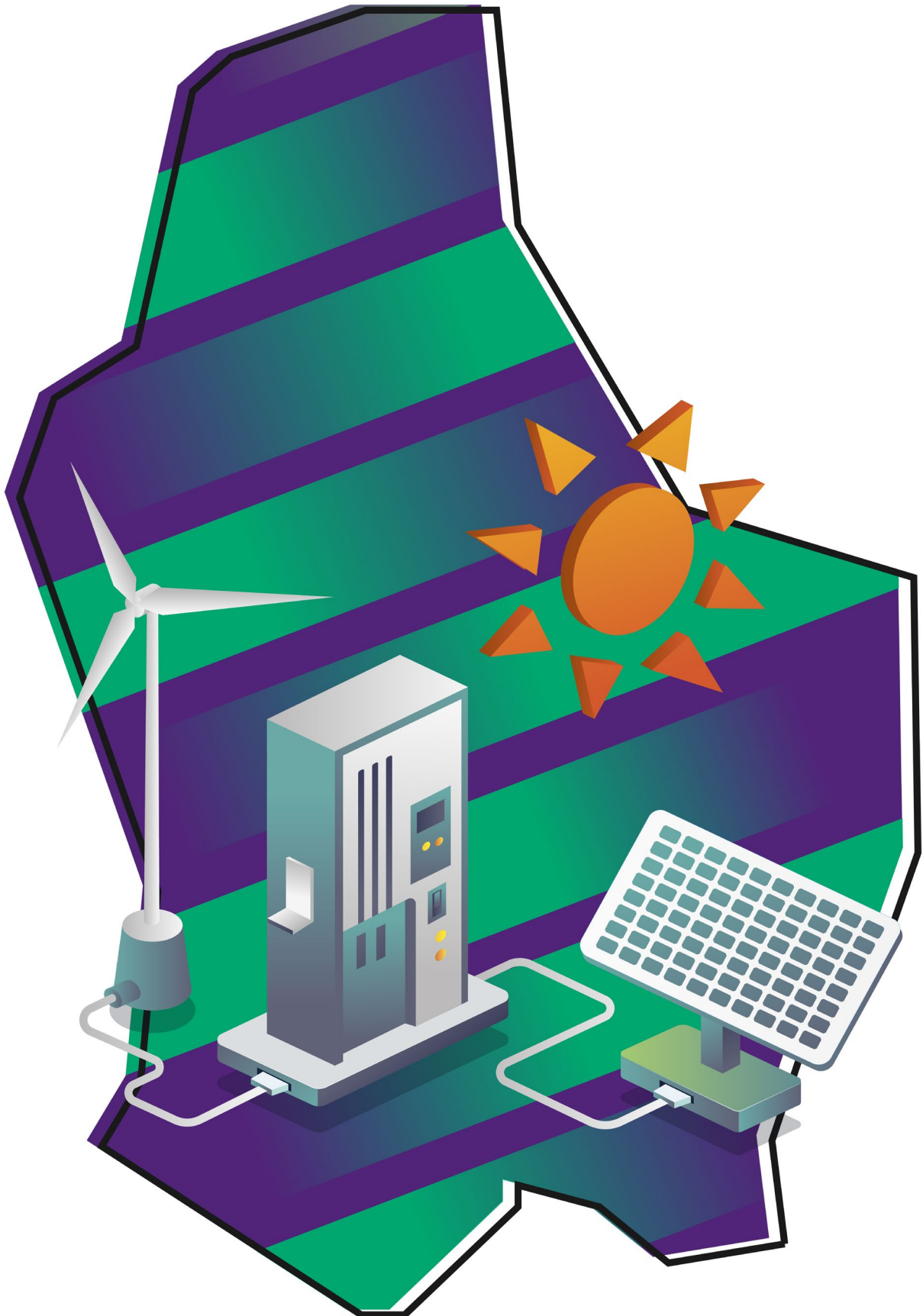
The amount of taxes collected by this specific inheritance tax rate would be collected in a special fund dedicated to finance social housing in Luxembourg and nothing else.

CHAPTER III

**Commit to
the climate
and
science**

FUTURE  MADE IN EUROPE

COMMIT TO THE CLIMATE
AND SCIENCE



COMMIT TO THE CLIMATE AND SCIENCE



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9 PROMOTING INNOVATIVE SCIENCE

Without well-funded and development-based research, a state cannot move forward and solve the current problems in its state and in the world. Research not only brings solutions, but also makes Luxembourg and Europe competitive with the rest of the world. A diverse academic offer, a decent budget and new research areas broaden Luxembourg's horizons. Volt wants to use scientific knowledge to drive the world forward and tackle the problems of the 21st century.

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9.1 Increasing the budget for research & development

Science is and remains the core driver of new technologies and is the condition for technological progress. Volt is clearly committed to science, and we want research and development to continue in Luxembourg. If the budget in science is higher, Luxembourg will also become even more interesting for foreign scientists, which will allow us to promote talent from all over the world at the same time as bringing it to our country.

That is why we are calling for an increase in the amount of money spent on R&D in Luxembourg. **We want to increase spending by 0.1% points per year to reach 3% by 2035.**

9.2 Promote, regulate, & prepare the expansion of artificial intelligence

Artificial intelligence is both an opportunity and a risk. Artificial intelligences are becoming exponentially more powerful every year. This means that entire fields of knowledge are being opened up to this form of technological change within a very short time.

In order to meet the challenges posed by artificial intelligence (AI), both ethical frameworks and economic-structural measures must be taken. To develop AI that remains compatible with our ethical principles, we cannot rely on the self-regulation of the market. This has been shown by examples such as the misuse of data by Cambridge Analytica or the treatment of critical AI experts by large technology companies. Companies do not have sufficient incentives to develop AI that complies with the Human Rights Charter.

Since AI is not programmed in the classical sense, but trained for specific tasks based on data, the bias of these data bases can be a serious problem. For example, insufficient data for machine learning and AI can disadvantage marginalised groups – especially in medical applications, insufficiently trained AI can lead to life-threatening harm. In other cases, an unquestioned database can exacerbate existing inequities. In addition, it is questionable whether humans will be able to comprehend all of an AI's decisions in the long term and thus effectively control them. This makes

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AI development vulnerable to abuse and thus a threat to our fundamental rights, if not an existential threat to humanity.

The strong performance growth of AI is putting the European market under increasing pressure. Important milestones are made possible in Europe through research, but their implementation then takes place in China or the USA. There, structures have already emerged that are better prepared, both infrastructurally and financially, for the needs of AI development. The successes of their AI development are not sufficiently shared and disclosed socially, so that not all people benefit from its use. Companies and organisations in the EU often lack the appropriate conditions to network with each other. They are not able to use synergy effects. The stagnating digitalisation, e.g., in the expansion of networks, is an additional obstacle. In addition, there is a lack of access to sufficiently powerful cloud computing services that are suitable for ambitious AI development.

Artificial intelligence is one of the key technologies of the next century for good reason. Together with Europe, Luxembourg should commit to this quickly and effectively. We want to anchor a basic understanding of AI in society and counteract a shortage of AI specialists. AI and data literacy should become part of general education. In this way, citizens can participate in this technology and achieve broad social support for these technologies.

9.2.1 Regulation and promotion of AI in Europe

- **We see publicly available training data as an important catalyst of a new European AI strategy.** This strategy must include ethics guidance to prevent problematic use of data or other AI products.
- **We want to drive digitalisation forward.** Big data is the foundation of AI development. In order for European industry to access as much data from as many contexts as possible in the future, these contexts must first be digitised. A digital and automatic generation of data must nevertheless always adhere to the applicable data protection regulations.
- **We want to anchor AI knowledge in education.** AI will change the everyday life of all of us. For this to happen, a minimum level of knowledge must be available in society in order to be able to assess issues correctly. For this purpose, AI knowledge in the form of data literacy etc. should already become part of general education. In order to be prepared for the highly complex development of AI, we also want to

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invest specifically in study and training programmes that optimally train interested parties for working with AI.

- **We advocate more transparency in AI development.** Anyone who wants to use an AI in Europe must prove that it complies with the local privacy and ethics guidelines. Furthermore, we see the establishment of an auditing body to check compliance with these guidelines, e.g. for conformity with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, as crucial.
- **We advocate for more transparency in the use of AI.** Content created by AI, such as news articles or social media posts, must be recognisable as such.
- **We support the creation of a new European centre of excellence for AI, the Centre for European Research on Artificial Intelligence (CERAI).** Its tasks should range from research into AI to the provision of legally and ethically compliant AI products and services. Our requested European research and competence centre should enable effective regulation without slowing down development. To create a fruitful working atmosphere that combines both research and agile working environments, there should be no publication requirement for the centre's staff and longer-term employment contracts should be the norm.
- **We want to stop the “brain drain”.** The competence centre should bundle national efforts and provide a working and research environment that prevents the brain drain from Europe.
- **We advocate the targeted promotion of control AIs.** In the long term, the only way to ensure the security of AIs used in Europe is to ensure that they are in turn edited by AI-based systems.
- **We promote AI research.** To this end, we are expanding and linking clusters of excellence. The various research centres in Europe are to cooperate more closely through joint projects and funding.
- **We want to define limits for the use of AI at an early stage.** For example, regarding the generation of false information or the possibility of making independent decisions without human influence to the detriment of people.
- **European cloud capacities are to be opened up for research.** This will ensure the necessary computing power and make it possible to offer European AI services. Together with partners such as Gaia-X, these can be integrated into a pan-European ecosystem.

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9.2.2 Prepare Society for AI related structural changes

However, artificial intelligence is also causing anxiety in many people. These anxieties need to be taken seriously and addressed. Otherwise, widespread anxiety may slow a necessary transformation and populists may use anxiety to spread divisiveness with false promises and simple solutions. This anxiety manifests itself in the labour market, in the form of a widespread fear of job losses and job quality, although predictions about the actual impact of AI vary widely.

Volt proposes a three-pronged approach: secure – prepare – create.

- **Secure livelihood in the case of job loss.** Set an EU wide standard for Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI) schemes, initially with the modest goal of converging to a minimum poverty threshold of 40% of the corresponding national median income (“extreme poverty”). To ensure fair and broad access to GMI, social security coverage should be expanded to those working outside the traditional formal employment sector, such as platform workers, freelancers, self-employed and other forms of flexible work arrangements.
- **Prepare for a changing work environment.** Instead of waiting until jobs are lost, it is necessary to move **‘from an Unemployment to an Employment Insurance’** with a focus on preventive programmes aimed at maintaining lifelong employability. This includes **setting up a “Volt programme” for lifelong learning.** The Volta programme would become an umbrella for Europe-wide initiatives to prepare European workers for the future of work. It would include subsidised training programmes on new tools and technologies, as well as career counselling. It would target workers already affected by technological change in their workplace or at risk affected in the near future, by technological change at their workplace. Priority would be given to people who do not have the economic means for education and training. Training activities should be accredited by recognized training and academic institutions and participants would receive certifications recognised throughout Europe.

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➤ **Shape the future of work. Initiate a public consultation process on 'Work 4.0'** at European level to explore the shift

Best Practice
from Germany & Denmark

in fundamental values related to work across Europe and support policy formulation at EU and Member State level. It can draw on practical experience from the Germany multi-stakeholder 'Work 4.0'³⁹ process and from the Danish 'flexicurity'⁴⁰ model, which combines generous public and social welfare benefits with flexible labour markets. Volt believes that there are two aspects that deserve particular attention:

- **Develop a Working Time Choice Act**⁴¹ at the European level, that gives workers more time-sovereignty and provides rules for negotiating working arrangements that balance workers' and companies' flexibility needs. Particular attention should be paid to the growing number of self-employed, start-ups and crowd-workers, which are so far neither well represented politically nor organised collectively, and hence usually have less negotiation power.
- **Undertake large-scale universal basic income (UBI) pilot programmes.** The prospect that AI-related technologies might reduce the overall demand for human labour and increase structural unemployment, calls for a new concept of social protection de-linked from traditional employment. Routine work, in particular, will be automated, which will mean that fewer and fewer people will be needed for that work. This development will create new jobs, but how many of them and how many people can be retrained?
- Volt therefore believes that we need to look at work differently. **Unpaid voluntary work**, such as informal care or work for civil society organisations, is no less valuable to our society than paid work. A **basic income** can be a way of reassessing people's contribution to society. It is a financial minimum that can be guaranteed to everyone. It may be a more effective instrument for combating poverty than the current system of allowances.

³⁹ BMAS – German Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (November 2016): *Weissbuch Working 4.0*. A883. Available at <https://www.bmas.de/EN/Services/Publications/a883-white-paper.html>

⁴⁰ On the website of the Danish Agency for Labour Market and Recruitment: <https://star.dk/en/about-the-danish-agency-for-labour-market-and-recruitment/flexicurity/>

⁴¹ DJB – Deutscher Juristinnenbund, *Konzeption eines Wahlarbeitszeitgesetzes*, available at <https://www.djb.de/netzwerke-und-projekte/konzeption-eines-wahlarbeitszeitgesetzes>

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- o That is why Volt is positive about a **universal and unconditional basic income**: a monthly amount that guarantees a minimum subsistence income, without the need to find paid employment.
- o Before we can take that big step, we need to examine and assess the financial feasibility and all the possible consequences. Pilot programmes should be of relevant size (e.g. more than 10,000 participants, more than five years, in different settings and countries), accompanied with rigorous monitoring of results. The overall programme should be steered at EU level and implemented by Member States, with the EU funding ongoing and consistent evaluation of results. Key questions the programmes need to shed light on include: Can UBI effectively replace traditional social welfare systems? What are the costs? How will the UBI be financed? Which effects do they have on work attitudes? What effects does it have on self-esteem?

9.3 Nuclear energy

Nuclear energy has always been subject to controversy. Therefore, Volt deems it important to clarify its position on that issue and give a clear stance.

9.3.1 Promotion of nuclear energy and its research (with restrictions)

Volt understands and is aware of the unresolved risks associated with nuclear energy such as nuclear waste, proliferation of nuclear materials and rare catastrophic nuclear accidents. They can all be valid reasons not to support nuclear power.

However, even if nuclear power in its current form is incompatible with the vision of a truly sustainable world, **Volt believes that rapid, large-scale CO₂ reductions are more urgent considering the current global climate crisis**. It is also a moral imperative because climate change will disproportionately affect those with the least resources to prepare.

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There is no doubt that nuclear power is a very low-carbon source of electricity and can be useful for multiple reasons:

- First, as mentioned above, nuclear energy is an essential low carbon energy source of the European energy mix. It emits 273 times less greenhouse gases than coal and 163 times less than gas. But more crucially, the IPCC reports show that nuclear energy is used in most paths that are compatible with the aim of limiting global warming to 1.5°C.⁴² Among other things, the IPCC refers to a study conducted by 22 scientists, which states that “a rapid development of nuclear energy production [...] limits the Global Mean Surface Temperature (GMST) increase to 1.5°C.”⁴³
- Furthermore, we firmly believe that nuclear energy, through research and innovation, has the potential to become a totally sustainable energy source. We want to make sure that corresponding research efforts are well-funded, especially given the EU's global responsibility to contribute to a safe and effective global decarbonization.
- Adding to that, Volt demands to look at the bigger picture. Countries should not only take into account the need of nuclear energy in their country but also beyond their own borders. In fact, numerous countries in Europe are still highly dependent on the coal industry especially in the east.⁴⁴ But it is also the case of western European countries such as Germany.⁴⁵ The only difference here is that Germany is much more advanced in its approach to the development and use of renewable energies and can therefore rely on them more.⁴⁶ And therein lies the problem. Indeed, Germany, despite its heavy dependence on coal, can afford to oppose nuclear power because it already has significant renewable energy resources in place. But this is not the case for countries such as Poland or the Czech Republic for example, which cannot jump from coal energy directly to renewable energies or at least not in the coming years. Especially in those countries nuclear power should not be seen as an obstacle to renewable energy, but rather as a support for it. To deal with this ideological problem, Europe must stand

⁴² The IPCC chapter on this can be found here:

https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/2/2022/06/SR15_Chapter_2_LR.pdf

⁴³ Berger, A. et al., 2017: <https://dx.doi.org/10.1504/ijgei.2017.086622>

⁴⁴ For example, in Poland in October 2021 the percentage of electricity produced by coal-fired power plants was 73.2%, in Bulgaria it was 60.76% and in the Czech Republic 40.48%.

⁴⁵ During the month of October 2021, it still produced 30% of its electricity via coal-fired power plants.

⁴⁶ In October 2021 35.57% of the electricity produced also came from solar and wind energy.

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together, and Luxembourg must also take a stand to reconsider nuclear energy as green energy.

- Apart from the nuclear energy currently used, which is based on nuclear fission, Volt continues to support the EU's efforts to promote nuclear fusion as a better, more efficient, and greener source of energy through research. Recent discoveries and experiments⁴⁷ are encouraging, and Volt fully supports research in this direction.
- Finally nuclear energy would also allow to reduce our natural gas imports⁴⁸ which is important for two main reasons:
 1. Natural gas is significantly more harmful to the environment⁴⁹ and at the same time significantly more deadly⁵⁰.
 2. It would reduce our enormous dependence on non-European gas imports. In fact, the 27 Member States of the European Union currently depend on Russia for almost 41% of their natural gas imports. And this is likely to be accentuated if we consider the objective of the EU to reduce its consumption of coal, the depletion of national gas sources and finally the reluctance of some countries regarding nuclear energy. Dependence on Russia will reach 50-60% of all gas imports over the next two decades if different energy policies are not adopted.

The dangers of this dependence are manifold:

- The EU and Europe as a whole will find themselves in an economic quandary vis-à-vis Russia. We have seen from the Russian war against Ukraine and its consequences for Europe that this can be very dangerous.
- Dominance of the European market is a clear and calculated goal that an unreliable Russian administration has been striving to achieve for several years. This Russian domination of the European natural gas market would give the Kremlin incredible power in its relations with its European neighbours.

⁴⁷ <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/02/09/uk/nuclear-fusion-climate-energy-scen-intl/index.html>

⁴⁸ It must be said that electricity is produced via nuclear power plants, while natural gas is basically used in houses for heating (it is burnt and heats the heating water, which then flows through the pipes and radiators). In order to be able to use nuclear energy as a gas alternative on a large scale in the long term, more heat pumps must be installed in houses as heating systems.

⁴⁹ <https://climate.selectra.com/fr/empreinte-carbone/energie>

⁵⁰ <https://ourworldindata.org/safest-sources-of-energy>

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- o Europe's dependence on Russia for natural gas already profoundly affects the freedom of action of some European states and will increasingly erode European sovereignty.
- o A country like Luxembourg, which currently gets a third of its gas imports from Russia, just like other EU states, cannot afford to be under the wing of a pseudo-democracy that has trampled on human rights countless times and whose leader has a seemingly endless thirst for power.

We can see that nuclear energy is not only a climatic issue but also a geopolitical issue which aims at maintaining Europe's sovereignty! Volt believes that European energy independence is an essential point for the future. As a result, nuclear energy⁵¹ will unavoidably remain an important part of Europe's energy mix in the coming decades. Once nuclear energy is accepted as a part of our future European energy mix, it becomes imperative to support nuclear energy infrastructure investments for reasons of efficiency, safety, and innovation.

9.3.2 The importance of a final repository

Finally, Luxembourg and the entire EU must also finally think about final storage facilities for nuclear waste, because even if nuclear energy is no longer promoted, we still need final storage facilities that are more suitable in terms of capacity and load-bearing capacity than the temporary storage facilities that Germany, for example, uses, since they cannot agree on a final storage facility.

Finland serves as a model here, having built the first European final repository for nuclear waste in 2022, in which the waste can be stored for more than 100,000 years.⁵² Luxembourg would have an economic interest in storing the nuclear waste of other countries in a final repository.

Best Practice
from Finland

⁵¹ We are aware that gas, like nuclear energy, can be useful in order to transition to green energy. But we believe that nuclear energy should be a priority because it is cleaner and is more conducive to maintaining our European sovereignty.

⁵² <https://www.science.org/content/article/finland-built-tomb-store-nuclear-waste-can-it-survive-100000-years>

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10 PROTECTING THE CLIMATE

We want a complete transformation towards climate neutrality! The climate crisis is a justice problem within and between societies as well as between generations. A few are responsible for the majority of global greenhouse gas emissions. At the same time, those who contribute least to climate change will suffer the most. The climate crisis is the most prominent example of how our way of life threatens to exceed the planetary boundaries of the Earth. The challenges could not be greater. The global CO₂ budget to limit global warming to a maximum of 1.5°C will be exhausted in four and a half years. Meeting the goals of the Paris Agreement is becoming a distant prospect. But we are taking on this task! By means of an anti-waste law, which at best applies to the whole of Europe, we call for a circular economy. Soft mobility will also be an important step to tackle climate change already at the local level.

We are convinced that only a new, holistic approach will make the triad of climate change, economic prosperity, and social justice possible. This is what we mean by the transformation to climate neutrality.

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10.1 Climate diplomacy: European action against climate change

The success of our efforts against the climate crisis and its consequences depends significantly on international cooperation. This is impressively demonstrated by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement. These cornerstones of international climate policy are contradicted by the Energy Charter Treaty (ECT) of 1994. The ECT was originally intended to promote international cooperation in the energy sector, but today it can be misused to delay the energy transition through investment arbitration. Previous attempts to reform the ECT have failed because changes have to be made unanimously by all member states. Even if a state withdraws from the ECT, the possibility of legal action against it remains for another 20 years because of the so-called sunset clause.

Climate and security policy are also strongly intertwined. Climate change acts as a catalyst for regional conflicts due to increasing water scarcity, droughts and severe weather events. Many millions of people will flee these conflicts and the direct consequences of the climate crisis in the coming years. As a result, there is a risk that entire regions will be further destabilised and the destination countries will also face major challenges.

Climate diplomacy is becoming one of the central foreign policy tools of Luxembourg and the EU. We take responsibility for global climate protection – by mobilising worldwide for ambitious climate protection and adaptation measures. In this way, we also strengthen the adaptive capacity of those already particularly affected by climate change.

Luxembourg and the EU should use their trade power, their reputation and their technological and financial possibilities to accelerate the global transformation towards climate neutrality.

➤ **We are committed to creating a European Climate Diplomacy Group.** This will strengthen the EU's climate diplomacy efforts and should be supported by the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Directorate-General for Climate.

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- **We aim for a joint withdrawal of all European countries from the Energy Charter Treaty.** At the same time, a so-called inter-se agreement is to be concluded to neutralise the consequences. Countries outside the EU should also join this agreement, which the European Climate Diplomacy Group is advocating.
- **Together with the EU, we advocate the establishment of an international body on geoengineering under the supervision of the United Nations.** This body will prevent potentially dangerous and unethical use of geoengineering. To do this, it will ensure that the Oxford Principles on Geoengineering are followed. Geoengineering does not become part of the strategy to meet climate targets – it remains the last reserve and is always coordinated at the international level.
- **The EU should use trade agreements as a tool to advance environmental and climate protection internationally.** We make the conclusion of agreements dependent on compliance with the Paris Agreement and other environmental protection standards. We want to review existing trade agreements with regard to their climate impact and renegotiate them if necessary. We only want to conclude new agreements if they take into account sustainable development standards, compliance with which should be continuously monitored.
- **We underpin the protection and reforestation of tropical and non-tropical forests with effective monitoring and regulation.** We want to ensure that the capacity to monitor biodiversity outcomes increases, for example by enabling innovative financing models. Agroforestry and agroecological production methods eliminate the need for further deforestation. We want to strengthen support programmes under the Paris Agreement, such as the "REDD+" programme.
- **Connecting European energy networks.** The large-scale deployment of renewable energy makes it necessary to link up the national energy networks in Europe. Because energy is generated in many places in Europe and can be generated more efficiently in some areas than in others, we want all those electricity networks to communicate smartly with each other. That way, a surplus of energy in one Member State can be made available to another Member State. In this way, we can make efficient use of local raw materials and energy generation opportunities.

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- **Connecting European nature reserves.** The preservation of biodiversity in nature is an increasingly urgent issue. Humans are increasingly dismantling this system and making it more homogenous by, for example, felling forests and emptying the oceans of fish. It is time we helped strengthen biodiversity in nature. We can achieve this by connecting all Natura 2000 sites in Europe, including areas in the sea. The total area of protected nature will increase to 30% by 2030. This will strengthen biodiversity and provide more space for recreation and nature-inclusive agriculture.

10.2 Consistent climate policy with foresight

10.2.1 CO₂ equivalents taxation

Climate protection is our most urgent task. Volt therefore calls for an increase in the price on greenhouse gas emissions. The more CO₂ equivalents are released into the atmosphere, the more costs are incurred – especially for future generations. Climate adaptation measures required at a later date clearly exceed the costs of a transformation to a climate-neutral society today. Therefore, Volt wants to move as quickly as possible to a steadily increasing EU-wide minimum price per tonne of CO₂ for the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (EU ETS). The EU ETS should cover as many areas of life as possible, in particular buildings, transport and agriculture.

- Current scientific studies show that the **effective design of the EU ETS is possible**, but very demanding and correspondingly time-consuming. In the short term, Volt therefore wants to introduce a national CO₂ price in the form of a tax or levy on the production and consumption of CO₂-intensive products and services. Once an effective EU ETS has been prepared, the short-term pricing will be transferred to the EU ETS.
- **A predictable price creates planning security for investors.** A higher price strengthens the incentive to invest in clean technologies. In line with the costs incurred by emitting one tonne of CO₂, Volt advocates a steadily rising CO₂ price in the EU ETS and national pricing. According to current scientific findings, a price of 205 euros per tonne of CO₂ should be aimed for in the medium term. Volt wants to support low-income households to absorb rising living costs that might follow.

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- For a fair transformation, **the proceeds of the CO₂ price should be used in equal parts for direct repayments to citizens, for subsidies in climate-friendly technologies and products, and for investments in research and development and infrastructure measures.** In this way, we accelerate the transformation, support climate protection and climate adaptation measures and mitigate social distortions.
- **Climate-harmful subsidies should be converted into climate-friendly subsidies and create climate-friendly incentives.** If this is not possible, they should be abolished as soon as possible. Volt's goal is to keep fossil fuels in the ground.
- **Effective incentives must be created** in the financial sector to make investments in fossil fuels and other environmentally harmful activities unattractive and to withdraw existing investments (divestment).

10.2.2 Energy transition: Renewables are the only sensible option

Volt aims for a pan-European energy strategy that prioritises CO₂ neutrality. At national and local level, this strategy will be adapted to the respective needs and circumstances.

We face the challenge of ever-increasing energy demand. Volt sees the need to make the energy system more efficient and strives to moderate the demand for raw materials and energy. In addition, efficiency gains and associated cost savings must be prevented from increasing consumption ("rebound effects"). Volt is aware of the special importance of the energy transition in the context of the mobility transition and the use of heat in industry and buildings. Only renewably generated electricity and heat will enable the basis for sustainable transport, low-emission heating and economic activity.

- Volt wants to **harmonise and simplify the system of fees, taxes and allocations in the electricity sector.** Existing distortions in the electricity market are to be eliminated as far as possible unless this conflicts with other important objectives. Among other things, this is also important in order to be able to better use flexibility potentials (e.g. demand management). The so-called sector coupling (integration of energy flows in electricity, heat, energy and transport) must also be supported and strengthened by the price signals on the markets.

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- The **subsidisation of fossil fuels** is a significant hurdle to the successful completion of the energy transition. Volt is therefore clearly **opposed** to this. The money that is freed up could be used for subsidies for renewable energies or to reduce electricity costs, or it could benefit citizens in other ways. Concessions in energy prices for companies should also be avoided as far as possible. International competitiveness can also be supported with positive incentives, such as a CO₂ import tax. Without concessions, everyone, consumers and industry, will share equally in the costs of the energy transition and there will be greater incentives for energy efficiency in the area of electricity-intensive industry.
- The expansion corridors for wind power and solar energy are currently not ambitious enough to comply with the Paris Agreement. Volt calls for an increase in the targets in line with the Paris Agreement. In addition, the use of geothermal energy as a residual and base-load capable renewable energy form should be considered, especially for the heat transition.
- The citizens are very positive about the **expansion of photovoltaics**. Therefore, solar energy is one of the technologies with which the energy transition can be implemented with the least resistance. For this reason, there should be as few legal restrictions as possible on the expansion of PV systems. In addition, Volt would like to create incentives for the expansion of private photovoltaic (PV) systems for own use as well as for local and regional use (e.g., in transport) by removing the obstacles for private PV system operators. Simplification of the tax legislation applicable to private PV systems also promotes expansion.
- To accelerate the **expansion of wind energy**, existing obstacles (e.g., distance regulations and ecological balance) must be analysed and sustainable solutions sought. Blanket distance regulations prevent the necessary increased expansion of wind energy; therefore, Volt proposes as a compromise solution a distance regulation depending on the compass direction (due to shade, preferred wind direction), which takes local conditions into account but does not indiscriminately inhibit the expansion of wind energy. A tendering system for the remuneration of wind power should also be designed in such a way that it does not inhibit the expansion of wind energy but promotes it and, above all, favours the growth of citizen wind turbines. To increase the acceptance of wind turbines and the energy transition among the population,

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Volt proposes to let citizens participate more in the renewable energy projects in their neighbourhood. This requires new framework conditions for citizen energy and an increased involvement of citizens in the planning and approval processes of wind power plants.

- To ensure true sustainability for photovoltaic and wind power plants, Volt requires that they be **disposed of in an environmentally sound manner** at the end of their useful life.
- For electricity generation from predominantly variable renewable sources, the Luxembourg electricity grid must become more decentralised. Three things must be considered: the feed-in from many smaller sources must be guaranteed, the distribution in changing directions as well as the transfer of wind energy from the north to the south must be optimised. The digitalisation of the power grid and the rapid transition to intelligent power grids ("smart grids") is an important building block for this. Here, Volt particularly wants to ensure the resilience of the grid against cyber-attacks. In municipalities where the grid is being expanded, solutions are to be worked out together with citizens: the energy transition as a citizens' project.
- The goal is to enable municipalities to meet their energy needs locally from sustainable energy sources with smaller, regional projects. Accordingly, a departure from the idea of "base load" is necessary; it should rather be about a basic supply and the residual load (i.e., the load that cannot be covered by wind and sun at a certain point in time). Electricity generation, storage and consumption will have to be managed more flexibly in the future, with "smart grids" playing a major role, as they enable storage and biogas plants to be switched on and off flexibly in times of fluctuating production of electricity from wind and sun.
- Since electricity from the sun and wind is subject to diurnal and seasonal fluctuations, energy storage plays an important role. Volt wants to advance the research and use of sustainable storage media and conversion technologies. This includes, for example, researching and producing liquid and gaseous energy carriers from CO₂, hydrogen⁵³ and surplus renewably generated electricity and promoting their storage.

⁵³ If Luxembourg was the first to develop this technology, we would gain a head start and be able to sell the knowledge in the future. This could have a huge positive economic effect for the Luxembourgish industry.

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Such synthetic fuels represent a climate-neutral alternative in transport or electricity generation, i.e. they can be used in a wide variety of areas ("multi-use approaches"). The ability to store electricity flexibly and decentrally can help to cushion production peaks and minima. Volt also supports research and implementation of sector coupling here. In principle, it then also makes sense to promote flexibility options, such as intelligent load management. This can help to reduce the need for storage and thus the resulting costs. Electric cars should also be included in the load management of the electricity grid, if possible. Volt wants to create a uniform legal framework here and define interfaces and specifications for electric cars together with experts.

- Volt advocates facilitating the promotion of energy efficiency measures. In particular, the application procedures for measures that make an above-average contribution to energy efficiency, or the energy transition should be significantly simplified. Support measures should be constantly reviewed for their usefulness and, if counterproductive, abolished as quickly as possible.

10.3 Climate adaptation through negative emissions and CO₂ pricing

Ambitious climate protection targets such as the 1.5°C target make it necessary to actively remove CO₂ from the atmosphere. This is called negative emissions. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) emphasises the importance of negative emissions in its 1.5°C report: CO₂ capture is necessary in all the pathways studied for limiting global warming to 1.5°C. On the one hand, it neutralises emissions from sectors for which mitigation measures are insufficient. On the other hand, negative emissions bring global warming back to 1.5°C after a temporary overshoot. The earlier we reach net zero, the less we need to rely on negative emissions. And the less danger there is of reaching climatic tipping points in the Earth system.

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Forests, peatlands and kelp forests are large, natural CO₂ reservoirs. Human intervention and the first climatic changes are putting pressure on these ecosystems. If ecosystems lose their CO₂ storage capacity, we must increasingly rely on technical processes and hybrid solutions for CO₂ capture. These are grouped under the collective term "Carbon Capture and Storage" (CCS). One of the most discussed technical processes in models is the direct air capture (DAC) of CO₂ with subsequent storage of the carbon. Hybrid solutions can intelligently combine natural processes and technical procedures. These include processes that combine bioenergy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS), as well as plant carbon as a decentralised solution.

In the implementation of these measures for carbon removal from the (Carbon Dioxide Removal, CDR) measures, an appropriate policy framework is essential.

We want to reverse global warming in the long term. To this end, Luxembourg should drive the development of a long-term European carbon neutrality strategy. Achieving climate neutrality by 2040 at the latest is thus only an interim goal. In doing so, we are creating a buffer to compensate for the emissions of other economies should they fail to make their contribution to reducing emissions. The use of CO₂ capture does not replace our emissions reduction path.

All measures must be integrated into an overall strategy towards net zero or carbon negativity.

The climate crisis is also a result of the fact that market prices do not reflect the ecological costs of products and services. However, the consumption decisions of an individual have an impact on the wider community. Rising sea levels, increasing extreme weather events and declining agricultural productivity are expected to cause enormous (financial) climate damage. These externalised costs should be factored into private and economic consumption and investment decisions. Without such a "true" price, we will not be able to effectively limit global warming to a maximum of 1.5°C.

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In the EU, the basic framework for such a price already exists with the European Emissions Trading Scheme (EU ETS). After the EU ETS showed almost no effect for a long time, the now rising certificate prices are leading to the first effects. The national emissions trading system (nEHS) in force in Germany since this year contradicts all efforts to reduce emissions quickly. Both systems urgently need to be revised.

Volt stands for joint European efforts against the climate crisis. In the measures to shape effective CO₂ prices, however, a distinction must be made between medium-term European solutions and short-term national efforts. Due to the narrow time window we have left to counteract the climate crisis, we want to make advance national efforts. The goal is a rapid reduction of emissions in Luxembourg and Europe.

10.3.1 Actively supporting global objects

Luxembourg should make its competences available as a nation of innovation and commit itself worldwide to large-scale projects for the active removal of CO₂ from the atmosphere and its use or permanent storage. The prevention of new emissions and the efforts on negative emissions are complementary and simultaneous. We want to combine natural, technical and hybrid solutions for CO₂ capture and set the political framework for this. All future climate plans should transparently distinguish between the goals of direct emission reduction on the one hand and negative emissions on the other.

10.3.2 Promote extensive afforestation measures, especially in mixed forests

Continuously check where additional biomass can be created. We want to make compensatory measures after infrastructure projects obligatory. Sustainable forest management is to be ensured through stricter sustainability criteria. In order to define agroforests as agricultural production systems, we are adapting the agricultural subsidy law. Nature should increasingly find its way into cities. To this end, we promote concepts such as urban forestry.

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10.3.3 Convert or equip large-scale bioenergy projects in Europe with carbon capture technologies

Prior to this, case-by-case assessments are carried out to determine whether it makes sense. The biomass used must only be produced in a sustainable manner. The biomass also should only be produced in Europe because nowadays it is often transported by ship from the US, Canada and other countries. We push ahead with research and development of processes for negative emissions through BECCS.⁵⁴

10.3.4 Direct removal of CO₂ from the atmosphere

With a suitable political framework, we would like to contribute to the development and implementation of processes for the direct removal of CO₂ from the atmosphere as quickly as possible. Start-ups are to be promoted for this purpose. We oblige companies from the conventional energy sector to initially recover 1-2% of the emissions caused by their products from the air using DAC.

10.3.5 Promote the use of plant carbon in agriculture and forestry.

Vegetable carbon will be released from waste legislation and will no longer be considered waste. We want to introduce a binding quality certificate, modelled on the previously voluntary European Biochar Certificate. Research programmes to clarify unresolved issues are to drive technology development forward.

10.3.6 A single CO₂ price in Europe

We are striving for a uniform CO₂ price throughout the EU. That is why we want to transfer the nETS to the EU ETS as quickly as possible.

⁵⁴ We are aware that much scientific research shows that replacing coal with biomass may increase CO₂ emissions. The Social and Economic Council (SER) also argues in a report from July 2020 that we should only burn unusable biomass residues, so this is what we are aiming for.

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10.3.7 Introduction of a CO₂ border adjustment mechanism at the external borders of the EU.

With this instrument, also known as Border Carbon Adjustments (BCAs), we levy compensatory taxes on the import of products that are subject to no or lower CO₂ prices in their countries of origin. Exports are relieved according to the difference in the CO₂ price. The BCAs are explicitly not intended as a long-term global community measure to reduce emissions. At the present time, however, they strengthen climate protection worldwide.

10.3.8 Accompanying the transformation through revenues

We use the proceeds of the CO₂ price to accompany the transformation. The proceeds are to be used in equal parts as a direct repayment to citizens ("climate dividend"), as subsidies for environmentally friendly products and for government investments in research and development

10.4 Circular economy

Getting rid of disposable plastic, better informing consumers, fighting against waste and for solidarity-based reuse, acting against programmed obsolescence, and producing better: these are the major challenges of the anti-waste law for a circular economy.

Best Practice
from France

France passed a law in this regard in February 2020, which we, as Volt, want to propose **not only for Luxembourg, but for the entire EU.**⁵⁵

10.4.1 Achieving zero disposable plastic by 2040

2040 is a finish line, but the race has already begun with a ban on cups, plates and cotton buds from 1 January 2020, followed in 2021 by a ban on straws, cutlery, swizzle sticks, etc.

The idea of the law is that reduction, reuse and recycling targets will be set by decree for the period 2021-2025, and then for each consecutive 5-year period.

⁵⁵ <https://www.ecologie.gouv.fr/loi-anti-gaspillage>

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These 5-year decrees will be drafted with NGOs, industrialists, local authorities and consumer associations in order to jointly define realistic objectives and credible solutions and to get away from the current logic, which lacks strategy and coherence: each law has its own prohibitions.

10.4.2 Introducing a mixed deposit for reuse and recycling

The EU, the State and representatives of local authorities must agree on a method to achieve the ambitious collection and recycling targets for plastic bottles.

Like the French model, **we propose and support:**

- the definition of an objective measurement of collection, sorting and recycling performance throughout a 10-year trajectory;
- the guarantee to complete the simplification of sorting rules and therefore the modernisation of sorting centres;
- the setting up of a contact group between the State and the representatives of the local authorities organising the public waste service;
- the introduction of a mixed deposit system for recycling and reuse at the end of a progress report on the simplification of sorting rules;
- in the meantime, the launch of deposit experiments in voluntary territories (particularly overseas);
- the need to support reuse initiatives.

10.4.3 Add a plastic microfibre filter to new washing machines

Machine washing of synthetic fabrics releases plastic microfibres that end up in the treated wastewater into the oceans. To limit this pollution, the law requires all new washing machines, whether professional or not, to be fitted with a plastic microfibre filter. In France, the measure will come into force on 1 January 2025, and we are proposing the same for Luxembourg and the entire EU.

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10.4.4 Make sorting more efficient

In every European country, the rules of waste separation are different. In fact, the rules sometimes even change from municipality to municipality. Fortunately, Valorlux in Luxembourg has meanwhile moved to ensuring that at least the permitted contents of the "blue bag" are the same throughout the country. Nevertheless, there is still a lot of room for improvement. France has taken the first step and enforced the same bins, logos and waste separation systems throughout the country. We should do this not only in Luxembourg, but throughout Europe, so that everyone who disposes of their waste in the EU knows immediately how to separate it.

10.4.5 End of unsold goods disposal

630 million euros worth of products are destroyed each year. Disposal, i.e. landfilling and incineration, of unsold non-food products will be banned. Companies will now have to donate or recycle their unsold products. This includes daily hygiene products, clothing, electronic products, shoes, books, household appliances, etc.

The measure is intended to boost donations. Three million French people go without basic hygiene products. 1.7 million women do not have enough sanitary protection, according to a survey conducted by *Ifop* for the association "*Dons solidaires*". Associations are faced with a chronic shortage of basic hygiene products, such as soap, toothpaste, nappies and toilet paper. The law would make it possible to reduce this chronic deficit.

10.4.6 Increasing penalties for breaches of the food waste ban

France's 2016 law against food waste has made many advances, by making the deliberate destruction of foodstuffs or the failure to conclude a donation agreement between large and medium-sized retailers and authorised associations punishable. It has also changed attitudes and practices. It is now necessary to be firmer with recalcitrant actors. The fine will have to be higher and adjustable according to the size of the business, up to 0.1% of turnover, which is more dissuasive for the largest retailers.

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10.4.7 Stopping the printing of cash register and credit card receipts

In France, as of 1 January 2023, the law will ban the systematic printing of cash register receipts, bank card receipts, vouchers and ATM receipts when money is drawn. However, customers will still be able to ask for a receipt to be printed whenever they wish.

10.4.8 Applying a reparability index and moving towards a sustainability index

Since 1 January 2021, France has created a 'reparability index' which is being deployed on 5 so-called pilot product categories: washing machines with windows, smartphones, laptops, televisions and electric lawnmowers. This tool allows consumers to know whether their product is repairable, difficult to repair or not repairable. This will give them the means to act via a simple and visual tool. The aim is to achieve a 60% repair rate for electrical and electronic products within five years.

In the medium term, work on the reparability index will enable it to be enriched in order to move towards a sustainability index.

The work on the reparability index involves all stakeholders (manufacturers, sellers, distributors, NGOs, consumer associations, etc.). It is intended to be adapted to be applied to other categories of electrical and electronic products.

10.4.9 More food through closed-circuit farming

Agriculture, horticulture, greenhouse horticulture and livestock farming must also reduce their emissions and promote biodiversity. To encourage this, farmers should no longer receive subsidies for the area they farm but based on how they use it. This will encourage closed-loop farming for livestock and arable farming: this way we can produce and consume responsibly. Animal welfare is central. Farmers will then feed their animals mainly with roughage from their own land. For concentrated feed, we can use residual products from the food industry, arable farming and horticulture. With a closed cycle, we can produce up to 70% more food.

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10.5 Climate-neutral buildings and promotion of green energy

10.5.1 Promoting photovoltaic systems

In 2016, around 100 GWh of electricity was produced by photovoltaic systems, which corresponds to just under 1% of total electricity consumption. Overall, 7.1% was already produced from renewable energies in 2016. Luxembourg, incidentally, is only 5th in Europe in terms of per capita photovoltaic area. Volt wants to set an example with Luxembourg and bring Luxembourg to the first place!

a) Creating the framework and investing in companies

First and foremost, the state must invest in companies that build and maintain photovoltaic systems. The market is booming and growing steadily, almost exponentially. In order to keep Luxembourg and Europe green and to stop climate change as quickly as possible, advantages must be created locally so that companies can build such PV plants as quickly and easily as possible. This ultimately also has economic benefits for Luxembourg and Europe, as jobs are created and large sales are generated in a growing market.

b) Require new buildings to have photovoltaic systems

Just as new buildings are built with good insulation, at least double if not triple glazed windows, modern heating systems and the like, photovoltaic systems should also be a must. Solar cells have incredible potential, are becoming cheaper and more efficient – it would be quite a mockery in this day and age, when we need more electricity than ever, not to promote local energy production. The electricity that is generated goes firstly into the direct consumption of the building and the surplus is sold to the state and fed into the public grid (where it may even be stored).

That is why we demand:

- If roofs of newly constructed buildings are suitable for solar cells (right angle, right orientation, etc.), then the builder must be forced to build a photovoltaic system.
- When a new building is planned, roof constructions that are specially built for a particularly efficient use of photovoltaic systems and a high number of solar cells should be promoted explicitly.

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c) Encourage existing buildings even more to install photovoltaic systems.

On the one hand, we have public buildings of the state. The state has the right over its buildings and must set a good example. A myriad of public buildings (offices, ministries, schools, hospitals, etc.) are already suitable for large photovoltaic systems, which already pay for themselves through their efficient electricity generation. But most public buildings do not have solar cells, which is an absurdity. (Whether a building is suitable for a photovoltaic system can already be checked in the national solar cadastre⁵⁶).

It is the same with private houses. We don't want to force anyone to put solar cells on their roof. We believe that the reason why only a few houses have photovoltaic systems so far is not the price of the installation, because the economic advantages for homeowners are high in and of themselves! (The surplus electricity is sold, and less is purchased through self-consumption). The main problem lies in the knowledge of the people who are not aware that it is so simple and yields so much. So more advertising for photovoltaic systems needs to be done. **That is why we demand:**

- **Public buildings** suitable for photovoltaic systems must be **forced to install them**.
- **Private houses** that are suitable but do not yet have a photovoltaic system **must be automatically contacted** at certain intervals. The efficiency and low costs of such a system must be pointed out.
- There must be even more advertising for solar cells overall – the state must make it clear to citizens and homeowners that it is definitely worthwhile to build one.
- We could imagine setting an ultimatum that all houses that are suitable according to the solar cadastre must be equipped with a solar system by a cut-off date (this would also address the problem that with completely electrified private transport, more electricity is needed than ever).

⁵⁶ https://map.geoportail.lu/theme/energie?version=3&zoom=9&X=669751&Y=6416190&lang=fr&rotation=0&layers=1813&opacities=1&bgLayer=basemap_2015_global

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10.5.2 Promote heat pumps

Heat pumps prove to be particularly effective heating systems in well-insulated buildings, which is why they are in principle suitable for new buildings in thermal insulation classes A and B. However, they can also be an alternative in existing houses, provided the heating system is suitable for their installation.

A heat pump uses electricity to harness the solar energy stored in the ground or in the ambient air for heating and for producing domestic hot water. **It can supply the entire heat demand of a building, regardless of the day/night cycle and the seasons.** The heat pumps are based on mature technology, are characterised by low-maintenance operation and represent a fully-fledged and space-saving alternative.

The smaller the difference between the low and high temperature levels, the higher the coefficient of performance of the pump and the more economical its operation. A heat pump therefore works best at relatively low temperatures of the heat distribution circuit (ideally with a flow temperature of less than 35°C), which is in principle only possible if **underfloor heating** is installed in the entire building. This is because regular radiators, which do not heat over a wide area but from a specific location in the room (often under windows), require significantly higher temperatures. So, if underfloor heating is not installed everywhere in a house, the most that can be recommended is a hybrid system (e.g. heat pump plus gas heating).

Heat pumps are the future in terms of energy-neutral heating and independence from fossil fuels such as natural gas. Especially because the sources of supply for natural gas are very limited and a large part of European gas comes from Russia, there is an urgent need to change our approach here!

That is why we demand:

- **Heat pumps must be systematically provided in new buildings.** For this, there must be clear subsidies and the sale of gas heating systems for new buildings must be taxed extremely heavily so that their installation is no longer worthwhile.

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- **The state should** once again set a good example and **only use heat pumps in new public buildings and retrofit heat pumps in existing public buildings.** A phase-out of gas is easily possible here by renovating room by room and using underfloor heating (thus, one would still have hybrid systems in the beginning, but could later switch off the gas heating completely).
- **Private conversions from gas heating to hybrid systems or complete renovations with heat pumps must be subsidised even more than before.** Homeowners must be encouraged to install sustainable heating systems.

10.5.3 Promote the construction and research of micro wind turbines

Besides solar energy, wind energy is also a promising sustainable option. Although it is less efficient than solar energy, it can be supportive. Besides large wind farms, there are also small wind turbines (micro wind turbines) that can be installed on houses. This means that small wind turbines can also be used to generate electricity when it is less sunny but windy.

In general, more research needs to be done here, as micro wind turbines are not always very stable and tend to break in areas with stronger winds. In addition, there is still significant potential for improvement in terms of their efficiency and thus electricity generation. Nevertheless, they already offer another sustainable way of generating climate-neutral electricity on the roofs of buildings within cities. That is why we demand:

- The state must put money into research of micro wind turbines.
- The state should install micro wind turbines, which are already available and profitable, on suitable roofs of public buildings.
- There must be government subsidies for homeowners to help private individuals purchase such micro wind turbines.

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11 FUTURE-PROOF MOBILITY

Mobility represents the capacity and potential for people and goods to travel or to be transported. It is the foundation of social, economic and cultural exchanges among individuals, businesses and societies.

To be sustainable, mobility must be efficient, safe, permanent, fair, integrated into the community and compatible with human health and ecosystems. Sustainable mobility limits the consumption of space and resources, provides and facilitates access, favours economic dynamism, is socially responsible and respects the integrity of the environment.

In order to not only protect the environment, but also to get to grips with the mobility problem in Luxembourg and in Europe a little further, we want to further strengthen soft mobility. There are a number of possible measures to achieve this.

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11.1 Mobility as a service

We want to drive forward the development of a uniform Europe-wide platform for mobility as a service (MaaS). This platform should become the cornerstone for integrated mobility concepts. To this end, public tenders should oblige the bidding companies to provide traffic data in the EU Datex II format free of charge. An anonymised evaluation will enable city administrations to improve spatial planning. With the “Internet of Things”, private and public sites can be made available to the general public as mobility hubs. We support municipalities by standardising interfaces and funding programmes with the aim of promoting a sharing economy approach.

11.2 Good and cheap public transport throughout Europe

To make public transport easier and cheaper across Europe, Volt Europe has launched a European Citizens' Initiative (ECI): The **EuroTrain**.

Our EuroTrain ECI suggests introducing a single European railway network. This would be centred around more high-speed rail lines, more night trains and a single technical and ticketing system, supported through the use of cohesion funds. Through this, we will work to make rail travel in Europe easier, faster and smarter, and so more competitive with air and road-based transport.

With ambitious targets set for emissions reduction under the European Green Deal, there is a pressing need for cleaner transport, currently the second most CO₂ emitting sector in the EU (responsible for almost ¼ of the EU's greenhouse gas emissions).

Railways are the greenest mode of mass transport, with a low impact on air quality and the lowest social costs. Shifting more traffic to rail is a clear part of the solution to our climate crisis, but to do this, we need to make rail travel easier, faster and smarter for all.

To achieve this, and so progress towards the climate objectives set in the Green Deal, several measures are needed to address current challenges; an inadequate and disconnected high speed rail network, differing ticketing and technical systems that introduce complexity and delays (in particular in comparison with the airline industry), and insufficient investment.

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Finally, we advocate for well-developed public transport throughout Europe that is affordable for everyone. Luxembourg has led the way and made the entire public transport system **free of charge** – now the EU must follow suit to guarantee smooth mobility in and through all European countries.

11.3 Environmentally friendly mobility

Every person in Luxembourg is on the move for an average of 1 hour and 16 minutes per day.⁵⁷ We walk or drive to work, to sports, to shopping or to the cinema. The time we spend in transit is also precious. That is why journey times should become shorter and more pleasant, and transport as a whole should become climate-neutral and fairer.

We advocate a transport policy that puts the environmentally friendly modes of transport at the centre of transport planning: Cycling, walking and the use of local public transport should become more attractive, safer, and faster to enable convenient, efficient and sustainable mobility in the city. Central aspects are infrastructure development and innovative solutions for public transport, walking and cycling.

For public transport, walking and cycling, and intelligent interlinking of the various modes of transport. The means of transport of the environmental alliance must optimally interlock and build on each other.

With the help of a gradually introduced social city toll, extensive parking space management and innovative solutions for delivery traffic, we plan to significantly reduce motorised traffic in city centres at the same time. Necessary motorised journeys are to be replaced preferably should preferably be covered by climate-neutral, low-emission ride and car-sharing services. Together with the promotion of neighbourhood blocks and car-free zones, we will thus achieve a significantly higher quality of life and quality of stay. In all areas, we also want to focus more on often overlooked groups that are often disadvantaged in transport.

Volt wants a Luxembourg where people can move freely and breathe freely.

⁵⁷ AGAPE (Agence d'urbanisme Lorraine Nord): *Exploitation harmonisée des enquêtes de déplacements sur le périmètre MMUST* (mai 2021)
https://www.mmust.eu/download/202105_MMUST_harmonisation_pour_web.pdf

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11.3.1 Traffic calming for liveable cities

For a long time, the focus of Luxembourg's transport policy has been on the car as the means of transport of choice. Nevertheless, decades of car-centred policies have resulted in well over half of the street space being reserved for moving and parked motorised private transport.

The high volume of traffic in Luxembourg tempts motorists to look for detours. This drives up the volume of traffic in residential areas and takes up space that should actually serve as living space. In addition, poor air quality and high noise levels are a burden on the mental and physical health of residents.

We believe that the scarce and valuable public space should be used in a better way. We want to create space for more quality of life: green spaces, playgrounds, leisure activities and outdoor areas of cafés and restaurants.

Luxembourg has the highest motorisation rate among EU member states, this of course has a huge impact on the sustainability of the country.

A strong relationship exists between car ownership and car use. After the home itself, cars are usually the largest household expense. Stationary and moving cars claim up to 50% of the public space in cities. Cars are parked for 96% of the time.⁵⁸

Motorists are inclined to support car-friendly policies. Increased numbers of motorists therefore result indirectly in more car-friendly policies. Car-less voters are underrepresented at polling stations, as both car ownership and voting correlate to income and education levels.

- Cars should only be guests in urban areas and city centres should be made car-free. Here we can learn from the car-free city centres in **Utrecht** and **Groningen**, but also from the wider cycle paths in **Copenhagen** and **Madrid**.
- We should reconsider the leasing schemes companies offer their employees to create bigger incentives for electric vehicles.
- We should only allow one car leasing scheme per household if the commute is smaller than 30km, with no limit for bikes

⁵⁸ Luxembourg leads cars per inhabitant list in the EU: <https://europa.eu/!XHUtKn>

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- Although bike leasing schemes exist, they're administered by car lending companies, whom have no incentive to promote bikes over cars. That's why **the state should promote these bike leasing schemes.**

11.3.2 Use of public space, priority to soft mobility

In order to maintain the human scale of cities we propose a sustainable mobility plan that gives way to the most efficient modes of transport in terms of public space. This means that we prioritise pedestrians, cyclists, and public transport. This transition leads to a well-developed cycling infrastructure with dedicated cycle lanes and encourages taking the next step in bicycle-friendly urban development, such as:

- Implementation of user centred design
- Expanding the concept of shared space solutions at busy streets and spaces (example Dudelange)
- Reducing parking space to less than 0.3 car / house in new constructions in urban areas to boost the transition from car ownership to mobility as a service
- Restoring the attractiveness of public space in the areas surrounding the railway hubs of the country
- Including safety cycling and pedestrian information in driver's education courses, driver's education manual and driver's licence written exams

Moreover, parking on public spaces in Luxembourg remains, in comparison to minimum wage, one of the cheapest in Europe.⁵⁹ That is why we advocate for:

- Cost-justified pricing of parking permits and a significant increase in parking fees. Certain tradespeople (e.g., craftsmen or nursing services) could apply for adapted parking permits that are valid for all parking management zones.
- A reduction of parking spaces in favour of bicycle parking, bus lanes, delivery zones, cycle paths, outdoor gastronomy and the widening of pavements.

⁵⁹ The cost of parking across Europe – a Euronews investigation:
<https://www.euronews.com/2016/05/10/the-cost-of-parking-across-europe-a-euronews-investigation>

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11.3.3 Biking as a solution

Apart from the environmental benefits, cycling offers benefits to individuals, businesses, and society as a whole. Dedicated cycle lanes are the first step towards sustainable transport. Government support for the installation of cycle lanes can increase the number of cyclists, thus reducing noise and air pollution and ensuring safety, discipline and smooth traffic flow.

Both Modu 2.0 and PNM 2035 provide good insights and guidance, but lack the target for cycling to account for 10% of the modal split.

Volt wants the solutions offered to be implemented as soon as possible so that cycling becomes a priority in Luxembourg. We propose to follow the targets proposed by the ECF (European Cycling Federation) and aim for a modal split of at least 12%.

Financing can be facilitated with investments in the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and other programmes.

a) Promote cycling in general

Luxembourg is the EU's highest greenhouse gas emitter per capita.⁶⁰ With existing measures, it would fall short of its 2030 target for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This highlights the considerable efforts needed to deliver on Luxembourg's climate and energy objectives, particularly in the transport and housing sectors.

To reach those goals we want...

- ... to invest at least **10% of the transport capital budget into cycling.**
- ... that **Luxembourg** appoints a representative and **joins the ECF⁶¹ European Cyclists' Federation.**
- ... **car-free city centres** and **more space for bicycles.** Sustainable transport involves the bicycle first and foremost.
- ... **express cycle paths** to be built between municipalities inter-connecting major cities.
- ... **public buildings**, especially schools, **to have a mobility plan** that connects them to cycle paths and public transport and provides bicycle parking facilities.

⁶⁰ https://delano.lu/article/delano_luxembourgs-rich-biggest-polluters-europe

⁶¹ <https://www.ecf.com/>

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- ... an implementation of **time limits and/or temporary restrictions of cars** on peak hours around schools. The increased security could help motivate more pupils to use bikes to commute to school. Educating children from a young age to prioritise cycling will foster a cycling culture.
- ... to **expand the capacity of bicycle routes and bike parking facilities** to increase the percentage of people getting to work by bicycle and train.
- ... to integrate **service stations** (tools, air pump) close to bike sharing and public transportation terminals.
- ... to contribute to the **extension of the cycling infrastructure in neighbouring countries** and provide an optimal connection to Luxembourg's cycling routes within the "Grande Région".

b) Promote cargo bikes

We want to have Luxembourg City join the European Project *CityChanger CargoBike (CCCB)*⁶² to further promote the use of cargo-bikes. This includes:

- Increased subvention of cargo bikes as an alternative to the car
- The Creation of incentives for transport companies to make it possible that parcel deliveries can be done by cargo bike.

c) Cycle track cleaning

Regardless of the weather or the time of year, a high level of service is crucial when cleaning cycle paths. Systematic sweeping should be done up to four times a year depending on the importance of the cycle path. Additional sweeping is required when leaves are falling, as wet leaves pose a danger to cyclists and cause them to skid.

We therefore call for the establishment of an **on-call intervention team** to remove objects and broken glass that are dangerous to traffic, especially on Saturday and Sunday mornings on **cycle paths** where a busy nightlife leaves broken glass on the roads and paths.

⁶² *CityChanger CargoBike* is the third chapter of cyclelocistics.eu

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d) Including cycling in the Trans-European Transport Network

The Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T)⁶³ is the EU's primary network of roads, railway lines, inland waterways, ports, maritime shipping routes, airports and railroad terminals. As the EFC points out, cycling is unfortunately not yet included in the network.⁶⁴

The inclusion of cycling in the network would improve the connectivity, efficiency, and sustainability of the TEN-T across the continent. It would also open up access to new funding for cycling projects. Currently, cycling is not only overlooked, but actively hindered, as cycle routes are often obstructed by TEN-T projects. This harms our collective efforts to encourage the shift of carbon-intensive transport to sustainable alternatives such as cycling. That is why it is imperative that cycling is integrated into TEN-T as soon as possible.

11.3.4 Mandatory creation of bicycle parking in new, larger buildings

Anyone who travels by bicycle knows that not only riding but also parking is often a problem. If parking spaces are available at all at workplaces or buildings, we usually have to deal with simple constructions that only provide for fixing the bicycle with a tyre. However, decent, partly covered and equipped parking spaces in larger buildings are not only a gain in attractiveness, but also an incentive to cycle in the first place.

The city of Copenhagen, for example, has tightened the requirements for bicycle parking in new buildings in the 2015 master plan and set qualitative and quantitative requirements for bicycle parking facilities.⁶⁵

Best Practice
from Denmark

The qualitative requirements, which we also want to adopt for Luxembourg, are as follows:

- **Any new, larger building** that provides car parking in any form **must also provide bicycle parking facilities** at the same time.

⁶³ <https://europa.eu/!Mqfvxh>

⁶⁴ Buczynski, Aleksander (December 12, 2022): *Cycling and TEN-T update: Council of the EU adopts general approach, Parliament works on amendments*. From: <https://ecf.com/news-and-events/news/cycling-and-ten-t-update-council-eu-adopts-general-approach-parliament-works>

⁶⁵ Suermann, G. K., Thoms, K., Bonnet-Hévin, A., Van Geuns, M.F. (2020): *Tax Incentives for Bicycle Commuting in the Capital Region of Copenhagen*. Public report commissioned by Supercykelstier. Copenhagen Business School. https://supercykelstier.dk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Public-report_Tax-Incentives-for-Bicycle-Commuting.pdf

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- Every new, larger building that is a workplace, is public, receives customers or receives many people on a daily basis must provide bicycle parking facilities.
- Bicycle parking facilities shall be located in such a way that they are **easily accessible** to users.
- Bicycle parking facilities shall normally be located **directly adjacent to entrances**.
- Standards for bicycle parking facilities should also cover the extension and conversion of existing buildings, including change of use and special standards for special bicycles, e.g., **cargo bicycles** and **children's bicycles**.

11.3.5 Decentralisation of state institutions

One of the main problems in Luxembourg is the amount of traffic around Luxembourg City and the resulting daily traffic jams on motorways. Routes of just under 15 km can easily take an hour at rush hour times, and the longer the distance, the more the time needed will increase.

What is the best way to deal with the problem? By diverting traffic away from the capital. It is enough to decentralise large institutions and facilities. We are thinking primarily of public buildings, because the state can decide for itself where to build them without interfering too much with the free market economy.

a) Secondary schools

The easiest way to achieve this is with schools. Here we are talking about secondary schools, because it is clear that children of primary school age should ideally be able to get to their school on foot or, if necessary, only with a short bus ride. But secondary schools do not need this proximity to the place of residence – most pupils do not choose their school according to proximity, but according to other criteria. This is why there are already many pupils who take long bus, train or car journeys every day to get to the secondary school of their choice. If secondary schools were gradually eliminated almost completely from Luxembourg City and were also moved to less populated areas such as the east or the north of the country, not only would a large part of the bus traffic be kept out of the centre, but at the same time the economy in less populated areas would be boosted.

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After all, where there are students, there is pocket money, and it won't be long before the first fast-food restaurants or snack bars will be popping up to serve the students. Other businesses specialising in young people, be it clothes shops, bookshops or even cinemas or sports clubs, can also expect a thriving business near a school.

- **Systematic decentralisation of schools** (and we are not talking about moving from Merl to Kirchberg or from Bel-Air to the Cloche d'Or) would therefore move the traffic of pupils themselves (mainly buses and trains), school staff (cars) and shops targeting young people (cars and lorries) out of the capital and thus relieve it. **A redistribution of traffic, even if it is not a reduction, is nevertheless a decisive relief at the junctions.**

b) Government systems and services

The capital (the next largest cities in Luxembourg, i.e. Esch/Alzette, Differdange, Dudelange, Pétange, etc., do not come into the equation) has a disproportionately large number of state institutions. Of course, the capital city status justifies this, but if traffic, environmental and housing problems arise due to excessive density, the status quo must be broken.

It seems obvious that the parliament and above all prestigious institutions remain in the capital. Nevertheless, there are many institutions that unnecessarily bring a lot of traffic from all over the country to the capital, which is why we want to decentralise the following institutions:

- The Ministry of Culture, although it has a certain prestige, can easily be transferred to another city (e.g. Echternach...). This would upgrade the city and would make it a cultural metropolis.
- The Ministry of Health does not necessarily have to be in the capital either. We would welcome it if this could be moved to the east or north of the country.
- Finally, there are not enough important health institutions in the other areas of the country. Large hospitals like the one on Kirchberg or the CHL tie people back to the capital. Children's hospitals, maternity wards, emergency rooms at weekends and at night – all are in short supply outside the capital. We therefore demand that at least one large, central hospital be built towards the north/east of the country so that not all residents have to go to the capital all the time.

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11.3.6 Paradigm change by implementing the SUMP

The Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP)⁶⁶ contributes to the European climate and energy goals set by the European Union. The SUMP is an integrated planning concept that challenges transport related problems in a more sustainable way. Compared to traditional transport planning approaches, the SUMP focuses on the user, the citizen, rather than on vehicles and traffic.

Traffic congestion has an impact on the economy, including time loss and air quality impacts, and can ultimately harm Luxembourg's attractiveness and productivity, as well as having a social impact. Luxembourg is among the member states with the most time lost in road congestion (36.9 hours per capita in 2017, up from 31.1 in 2014). Despite improvements in recent decades, air quality in Luxembourg remains a concern and has implications for public health and the environment as a whole. Short-term measures to reduce emissions from existing vehicles have been prioritised. Traffic congestion can harm the attractiveness and productivity of the country and have a social impact as it contributes to worsening inequalities as poorer households have to spend more time travelling to their workplace. In the Luxmobil study, the total negative externalities of transport (including accidents, congestion, air pollution, climate, noise, energy production and habitat damage) in Luxembourg were estimated at 7.5% of the GDP in 2016, which is the highest in the EU (EU average is 5.7%).⁶⁷

11.4 Electromobility and autonomous driving

We are aware that electric vehicles cannot be the only strategy to meet the goals of climate and environmental protection in road transport, because the amount of raw materials required for electric cars is higher than for conventional vehicles, as is the total amount of particulate matter emitted. A sustainable transport turnaround will only succeed if the focus is also on avoidance and modal shift. This is also in line with the

⁶⁶ More information on the SUMP is available on the European Commission's website: <https://europa.eu/!6vGhkJ>

⁶⁷ Bausch, François (December 7, 2017): *Enquête Luxmobil 2017*. <https://transports.public.lu/dam-assets/publications/contexte/situation-actuelle/20171207-enquete-mobilite-luxmobil-2017-premiers-resultats-presse-v2.pdf>

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image of a liveable city with attractive public transport, more cycling and walking, and short distances between work, home and utilities. Nevertheless, it is likely that a considerable proportion of transport services will continue to be provided by motorised vehicles in the future.

Therefore, car traffic must become more environmentally friendly. The electric car can make an increasingly important contribution to this. This applies especially to climate protection, where the electric car already has clear advantages. A paper by researchers from the Bundeswehr University Munich and the Chalmers University of Technology showed that “conventional gasoline and diesel vehicles emit the highest amount of total life-cycle GHGs [greenhouse gases] in comparison to vehicles powered by other available energy resources. When using green electricity, plug-in hybrid electric and fully electric vehicles can reduce the total life-cycle emission in comparison to combustion engine vehicles by 73% and 89%, respectively”⁶⁸. The same conclusion comes to a study by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection: “As a result, the greenhouse gas emissions of a current compact-class electric vehicle are lower over its entire life cycle than those of comparable vehicles with internal combustion engines.”⁶⁹ This advantage will continue to grow, because the share of renewable energies in electricity generation is steadily increasing. Newly registered vehicles today will most likely still be on the road in 2030, when at least 65 percent of electricity is already expected to come from renewable sources.

11.4.1 Promoting development of autonomous driving

We are committed to the technically, legally and ethically safe introduction of autonomous driving. To this end, we want to continue testing it. Experiments in real laboratories should support the development of necessary technologies such as sensors, algorithms and cyber security. We promote open-source approaches for important software components

⁶⁸ Buberger, J., Kersten, A., Kuder, M., Eckerle, R., Weyh, T., & Thiringer, T. (May 2022): Total CO₂-equivalent life-cycle emissions from commercially available passenger cars. *Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews*, Vol. 159 (112158). doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rser.2022.112158>

⁶⁹ Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz und nukleare Sicherheit (BMU) (January 2021): *Wie umweltfreundlich sind Elektroautos? Eine ganzheitliche Bilanz*. Frankfurt am Main: Zarbock GmbH & Co. KG. S. 7

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to prevent the formation of natural monopolies. We want to create the political framework for autonomous driving at the European level. To this end, safety regulations, liability rules and minimum technical requirements will be harmonised.

We also want to make electromobility simple and customer-friendly and promote standardisation to this end. Charging electricity generated from renewable energies is to be exempt from VAT. We want to make information on prices and availability of publicly accessible charging points available centrally, publicly and free of charge via the EU format DATEX II. European standards should guarantee charging at every pillar. We want to promote grid-serving charging energy and advance research and development. European standards shall ensure the recycling of batteries.

Finally, we therefore promote the development of alternative technologies for inner-city logistics. In order to create the necessary infrastructure, we want to support municipalities in providing the land for micro-distribution centres and promote rail connections. The aim is to create digital platforms for the cooperative use of logistics centres and micro-distribution centres and for pooling (bundling) car trips. To promote the market introduction of the technologies, companies that implement such concepts should benefit from tax advantages. We also promote transit restrictions for conventional delivery vehicles or city toll systems at the local level.

11.4.2 State regulation of public charging stations

If almost all private local transport is to be electrified by 2035, there must also be enough public charging stations in Luxembourg (and in Europe as a whole) and the prices for the electricity consumed here must be visible from afar, just like at normal petrol stations, and ideally controlled and regulated by the state. Cars must be able to charge wherever they are and the prices must not be set arbitrarily by private operators, as is still the case. This could lead to monopolies and a complete exploitation of the purchasing power of the people who depend on these charging stations. Above all, people who do not own their own home with a so-called wall-box, i.e. tenants or small property owners, must be guaranteed that they will not be ripped off at public charging stations.

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That is why we demand:

- **More public “ultra” fast charging stations** (322 kW) and charging stations for electric vehicles at strategic locations. As of 2022, there are only four places in Luxembourg with fast charging stations: In Junglinster, Kirchberg and at the Capellen and Berchem service stations. However, such stations are essential for transit drivers and fast “refuelling” and onward travel. With more such stations, Luxembourg could also be a pioneer and at the same time earn money from transit drivers. We are aware that it has been announced that superfast charging stations will be set up every 60 km and we are also aware that an electric car should not be permanently charged at such stations in order not to shorten the battery life unnecessarily (especially due to the heat generated). Nevertheless, it is absolutely necessary for through traffic. That is why we demand that every existing filling station on the busiest roads be equipped with at least two such stations and just as many 160kW stations. Such stations would be needed in the south, west and north, especially on motorways and busy roads (e.g. Nordstrooss).
- **Stronger regulation of charging vehicles:** To ensure that people do not simply leave their vehicles standing for hours – especially at fast charging stations – and thus prevent other vehicles from charging, legalities must be created so that a steady change of different vehicles at the stations is possible. Mechanisms are conceivable that automatically unlock the cable on the part of the station after the process is completed or high penalties for long-term parkers.
- **State regulation of the electricity price at charging stations.** Here, the system of petrol prices, which has proven to be good, should be adopted and the largest part of the price should be set by taxes. This way, the state has control over the price and can adjust it according to the circumstances. Likewise, every station should charge the same price nationwide (as is already the case with normal petrol stations). All this prevents a monopoly position and the unnecessary profiting of companies at the expense of citizens for whom private transport is a basic necessity.

We're growing as a

Pan-European community



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