

## STOCKHOLM DECLARATION

# “A EUROPEAN SECURITY PACT TO PROTECT OUR CITIZENS”

February 2025

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As the EPP Group, we are determined to stop criminals from exploiting Europe’s freedoms. **Freedom of movement should never be a free pass for criminals.** While national governments are responsible for internal security, the complexity of these threats demands a coordinated European response. We are calling for a European Security Pact to protect citizens and our way of life, integrating security into EU legislation and creating an EU Security Strategy to guide all initiatives. To fight back against crime, we will focus on five key areas:

**1. We will ensure Schengen is for citizens and is not abused by criminals.** Over 70% of criminal networks operate across borders, fuelling trafficking, drug trade, and money laundering. Seven out of ten of Europe’s most dangerous criminal networks involve multiple nationalities, and eight out of ten infiltrate legitimate businesses. To tackle these networks, the EPP Group calls for full enforcement of anti-money laundering laws to trace illicit financial flows and cut their resources. We advocate for expanded powers to confiscate criminal assets, including preventive value-based seizure and reversing the burden of proof. We must restrict the movement of gang criminals, including entry bans and restrictions for EU citizens convicted of serious crimes. Moreover, we call for a common legal framework barring those under investigation, with proven links to criminal networks, or deemed dangerous by law enforcement from travelling freely, even without a conviction. Criminals must not be allowed to exploit the EU’s freedom of movement to orchestrate gang violence in Sweden while living in

luxury in Spain—something exposed by recent investigations. We call for a more automated and intelligence-led approach to border control, integrating Europol’s databases with Frontex to allow real-time security screening of travellers. We support strengthening joint investigation teams (JITs) between Member States and third countries, particularly focusing on organized crime networks that operate across the EU’s external borders.

- 2. We will have a zero-tolerance strategy towards violence against children and women.** One in five children suffers from sexual violence, and one in three women experiences violence in their lives—this must end. We will finalise both the Regulation and the Directive on child sexual abuse and ensure full enforcement of the new measures to protect women across the EU. Human trafficking is also a great danger - victims are 15% children and 63% women and girls. We will tighten EU laws to dismantle trafficking networks. Over 60% of child sexual abuse material is hosted on EU servers. The digital world must not be a safe haven for criminals. To crack down on cyberbullying and online harassment, we will push forward an EU Action Plan against cyberbullying and online child abuse and develop the Digital Fairness Act to ensure safer online environments.
- 3. We will fight criminal gangs and terrorists.** In 2023, Europol supported over 1,500 cases and more than 450 anti-terrorism operations. As criminal networks become more skilled at crossing borders, law enforcement must be better equipped. The EPP

Group calls for a stronger Europol and Frontex with increased resources, funding, and staff, proposing to double Europol's workforce and triple Frontex's staff, while granting both agencies full enforcement powers. We also advocate for a larger role for the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO), the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), and Eurojust in prosecuting cross-border crimes. We call for better coordination between the EPPO (European Public Prosecutor's Office) and national law enforcement agencies to improve efficiency in prosecuting cross-border financial crimes. Reforming the European Arrest Warrant for automatic detention and surrender between Member States, also extending it to crimes against constitutional integrity and public order, fully implementing the Prüm framework, and updating the definitions of organised crime and investigative tools, including AI, are essential. It is also crucial to crack down on illegal firearms, explosives and pyrotechnics trafficking, which fuels the escalating gang violence that we see in Europe. Law enforcement officers are on the front lines to protect our lives and property; we must ensure their protection in return. The EPP Group calls for a Directive on minimum protection standards for police officers and rescue workers facing violence.

- 4. We will protect our critical infrastructures and cyber-space.** As digital threats grow, the EPP Group want to adapt law enforcement to the digital age, granting authorities access to key data for investigations. A European Cyber-Brigade should be established to counter cybercrime and illegal disinformation. The security of critical infrastructure must be reinforced against both physical and cyber threats, including the protection of vital submarine cables. We call for the full use of all means to prevent, deter, and respond to state-sponsored hybrid attacks and urge the Commission to define, categorise, and address these threats in a comprehensive response by strengthening the EU Cyber Resilience Act and simplifying its reporting requirements.
- 5. We will protect our democracies from foreign interference.** Foreign undemocratic regimes exploit illegal disinformation and cyberattacks to manipulate public opinion in the EU to serve their own interests. We are

committed to countering these foreign interferences by fully enforcing the Digital Markets Act and the Digital Services Act, fortifying our democracies in the digital space. We also advocate for a strong EPP stance on strengthening our border protection from the weaponisation of migration by foreign powers. A resilient democracy does not wait for attacks—it anticipates, adapts, and responds decisively. That is why, at the outset of this mandate, we launched the Democracy Shield committee in the European Parliament—an EPP Group initiative designed to defend our democratic values from those foreign enemies and terrorist organisations who aim to erode them. We propose enhanced screening of foreign investments in European media and strategic industries to prevent covert hostile influence, even by hidden domestic players.