

EPP Party Reform

Congress document

Draft adopted by the Political Assembly 20 March 2024

1 As EPP, we have built a Europe where people’s dignity, security and freedom always come first.
2 Our history, our heritage, our Judeo-Christian roots, and our cultural diversity define us. We are
3 proud of our roots and confident about the future. We do not tell citizens what to believe or what
4 to fear, but we listen to them, respect them, and deliver for them. We are bridge-builders. Over
5 the past years and thanks also to the power and electoral success of our member parties, the
6 EPP has successfully confirmed and strengthened its position at the heart of European decision-
7 making. We are today the decisive power in the European Commission, the European Parliament
8 and the European Council. We have secured the lead candidate process. We have developed a
9 party manifesto as a guiding document for the next Commission. We have succeeded in
10 interlinking the EPP work in the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council
11 for example with EPP-Summit and -Retreat Statements and a programmatic upgrade of
12 ministerial meetings. Belonging to this party allows us to be stronger, through information
13 sharing, agenda-setting power and having friendships among likeminded politicians across
14 Europe and beyond. We want to utilize the party’s strengths to the fullest, strengthen its
15 structures, optimize its internal coordination and upgrade its communication, to become a true
16 modern European party. Therefore, we seize this opportunity to reform our party in an inclusive
17 and transparent joint team effort. This document is the result of our party’s internal consultation
18 with our leadership, our member parties, our Groups in parliamentary assemblies, our
19 associations, foundations and associated entities.

20 The EPP has always been at the forefront of orienting European decision-making and will
21 continue to do so in the future. We want to evolve from being a forum for dialogue and meetings
22 to a common space where European decisions are made. We know that being in a majority in
23 every European legislative institution, we now have a decisive responsibility to deliver the
24 concrete changes expected by citizens across Europe. To reach that goal, we want our new unity,
25 our new spirit and our new style to be reflected in our party structures as well as in our
26 programmatic work in the future. We want to achieve this through five measures: politicizing our
27 party further, bringing increased responsibility to the structures we have, fully embracing and
28 preparing the future of the Spitzenkandidat process, realising EPP party life to the fullest, and
29 bringing Europe further together in the best interest of its member parties.

1. We want to politicize the EPP further

- 31 ○ **We upgrade our ministerial meetings and enshrine them in the by-laws**
32 In preparation of Council meetings, EPP ministerial meetings have proven
33 successful to coordinate positions and discuss current affairs in member states.
34 We want to enshrine them in our by-laws. We ensure their added value by working
35 on the participation of ministers where needed and seek to realise meetings in as
36 many policy formats as possible. We however also want to attribute to them a
37 longer-term role. For such long-term strategic discussions, for example at the
38 start of a Council presidency, co-chairs may decide to exceptionally open
39 ministerial meetings to EPP member parties in opposition and/or associated
40 member parties, possibly in an informal retreat format in a European. The goal to
41 have in mind is to maintain the EPP line, both in the short term and in the long
42 term. In addition, it should always be possible to invite on an ad-hoc basis

43 member parties in opposition, associated members when the respective topic
44 directly concerns their state, or the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies
45 when relevant topics arise on the Council agenda.

46 We furthermore believe the ministerial meetings should be co-chaired by the co-
47 legislators, meaning by one Council member and one Member of the European
48 Parliament. The EPP Vice President responsible for the corresponding portfolio
49 would then also be invited to the respective ministerial meetings.

50 ○ **We strengthen our cooperation and politicize the EPP's programmatic work
51 on core EPP topics through working groups with politicians of every level**

52 Upon presidency proposal and following political-assembly decision, standing
53 working groups will be created to discuss and prepare programmatic work on
54 policy areas, based on developments and EPP core topics that require
55 coordinated action. Likewise, to react rapidly to occurring developments, the
56 presidency may decide to create ad-hoc working groups. Working groups shall
57 bring together representatives from member parties of different levels,
58 associations, associated entities where relevant, and our Groups, to engage in
59 long-term policy coordination and deliver programmatic work. Members of
60 different working groups are nominated by member parties, associations,
61 associated entities where relevant, and Groups, and endorsed by the Political
62 Assembly. Upon presidency proposal following consultation with member
63 parties, working group chairs are elected by the Political Assembly. In order to
64 coordinate EPP positioning across organs, a link with the EPP Group, with EPP
65 ministerial meetings and with EPP Summits should be established.

66 ○ **We bring EPP Leaders together**

67 Our EPP Summits organised in preparation of European Council meetings shall
68 be enshrined in our by-laws as should be the formats of enlarged Summits and of
69 the Leaders' Retreat, a yearly informal meeting between leaders in one of the
70 European Union member states to discuss long-term EPP strategy at Leaders'
71 level.

72 ○ **We redefine and strengthen the agenda of our Political Assembly**

73 The Political Assembly is the strategic organ and the general assembly of the EPP.
74 The regular meetings of the political assembly provide also an opportunity for all
75 EPP family members to meet and discuss. The Political Assembly is between the
76 EPP Congresses the primary decision-making body of the party. Each Political
77 Assembly should have clear key topic(s) with at least one programmatic paper –
78 prepared by EPP bodies. Adopted documents shall be of political relevance and
79 serve as a basis for EU policy making. We use the political assembly meetings as
80 platforms for political committee reporting and organise thematic working
81 sessions in which we exchange with society. We encourage member parties to
82 identify and propose topics for discussion at Political Assemblies. As already
83 started in Lisbon in 2022 and continued with Helsinki, Munich and Valetta, we
84 shall invest more in political assemblies in different European capitals.

85 ○ **We organise a yearly Summer University**

86 Once a year, we convene a Summer University in which party members meet
87 informally to discuss the activities of the different meeting formats. This includes
88 group leaders of EU institutions and parliamentary assemblies gathering to
89 coordinate the messaging and meet in their respective bodies. The chairs of

90 ministerial meetings will assess the discussions and the meeting format of
91 ministerial meetings. Members of political committees will meet to discuss their
92 work and define the practical way forward for the coming year. Nevertheless, the
93 Congress and the Political Assembly remain the sole body to take decisions
94 collectively with all party members. The Wilfried Martens Centre for European
95 Studies will play a key role and contribute to the preparation of the Summer
96 University.

97 **2. We bring increased responsibility and inclusive participation to the structures**

- 98 ○ **We upgrade the Presidency's responsibilities.** Presidency members today
99 already have dedicated responsibilities, including relations with associations,
100 member parties, content work, financial responsibilities (Treasurer). Yet, to
101 maximise coordination, Vice Presidents would also become responsible for
102 specific thematic portfolios liaising with, taking part in, and reporting on
103 dedicated ministerial meetings and/or political committees. They could also
104 engage in benchmarking action to compare and analyse member-party activities
105 in member states and EU candidate countries.
- 106 ○ **We establish or strengthen where applicable and of added value coordination
107 between the European Council, the Council of the EU, the European
108 Parliament, and the European Commission.**
- 109 ○ **We establish a regular reporting mechanism to associations** and Member
110 parties about summits, ministerial and presidency meetings, in which they are not
111 represented.
- 112 ○ **We regularly gather the leaders of the different EPP Groups in the various
113 parliamentary assemblies** in a coordination to discuss and align positions in
114 said assemblies.
- 115 ○ **We strengthen a gender balanced inclusive participation.** The EPP in its
116 internal functioning shall promote equal gender representation in all processes of
117 managing, decision making and representation. We shall moreover seek to
118 implement it for all authorized entities of the EPP during elections and
119 appointment of representatives and delegations to internal party organizations
120 and bodies.

121 **3. We prepare the future of the Spitzenkandidat process**

- 122 ○ **Without EPP, there would not have been a Spitzenkandidat process.** We
123 believe in it and want to strengthen it. To that end, we develop a dedicated
124 playbook to prepare for the future Spitzenkandidat, in which the practical aspects
125 related to the nomination process, the campaign process and the election
126 preparation are described.

127 **4. We bring Europe closer together**

- 128 ○ **Complementary to our member parties, our associations and foundations
129 connect us with European society.** They understand best what is in the voters'
130 minds. They are best placed to organise dialogues with citizens. We will intensify

131 engagement with them following Presidency and ministerial meetings. We engage
132 in a mapping exercise to identify the need for creating one or more new
133 associations, to reinforce our links with society, such as an EPP Farmers'
134 association. We invite our associations and foundations at the start of each
135 calendar year to present their activities from the previous year and their goals for
136 the year ahead.

137 ○ **With the help of the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies, we engage**
138 **in outreach to national think tanks in member states.** Without duplicating
139 contacts and work of national member parties, we want to feel the pulse of
140 societal developments in member states and candidate countries. We believe a
141 solid contact network of think tanks can help with that.

142 ○ **We make individual EPP membership possible for citizens of EU Member**
143 **States.** Identifying with a European political party should first and foremost
144 happen through national party membership. Yet, we believe also that a European
145 identity means it should be possible to become part of a European political party
146 as an individual. Such a membership involves a membership cost, provides
147 access to regular European political news and allows to gather in EPP networks in
148 member states' capitals, such as the EPP Brussels network.

149 **5. We realise “EPP party life” to the fullest and upgrade considerably our political**
150 **communication**

151 ○ **Our messages should be spread fast and coherently across our member**
152 **parties.** On a regular basis therefore, we offer communication outreach to
153 members of national parliaments, regional parliaments and mayors, to inform
154 them of European policy issues and raise awareness for upcoming legislative
155 developments. Where possible and needed, we do this in different languages.

156 ○ **We set up timely newsletters to member parties covering EU institutions**
157 **decisions and updates from member parties, as well as thematic**
158 **communication channels between European, national and regional member-**
159 **party representatives,** to ensure fast and up-to-date information sharing on
160 major policy initiatives. They involve newsletters or briefing sessions, such as the
161 recently created ‘EPP Café Connect’.

162 ○ **We want to propagate the network and expertise of our various member**
163 **parties and associated entities.** The strength of a European political party is
164 defined by the expertise of its various member parties and associated entities.
165 During election campaigns, member parties should be able to fully use the EPP
166 trademark to promote its role in the EPP bodies in European decision-making.
167 While we avoid doubling existing structures and by all means avoid unnecessarily
168 spending member parties' contributions, we will regularly organise campaign
169 managers' meetings and workshops to discuss latest trends in political
170 campaigning, to pool information and to exchange best practices. In the same
171 vein, member parties can call on EPP sister parties to activate their networks to
172 reach out to diaspora voters (in accordance with the existing rules for European
173 parties) and specific voter groups that member parties may find hard to reach.

- 174
- 175
- 176
- 177
- 178
- 179
- 180
- 181
- 182
- 183
- 184
- 185
- 186
- 187
- 188
- 189
- 190
- 191
- 192
- **Where needed, we facilitate dialogue and coordination between EPP member parties in one country.** To foster inclusive and effective interaction between all levels, we identify member states, in which we have more than two member parties, where a national coordination platform can be established if the member parties of that member state request this. Such a platform is composed proportionately to the respective number of elected members in the European Parliament and shall coordinate and decide by consensus or, failing that, by a simple majority vote.

 - **We want to coordinate our political messaging better.** For this, we will regularly organize communications directors' meetings, whom will also pool information on disinformation and foreign information manipulation and interference. We will involve our networks when relevant according to their expertise on specific topics.

 - **We organize regular fact-finding missions and study visits to EU candidate countries and other countries in the European neighbourhood.** Through cooperation with EPP member parties, we help the countries to meet the demands for EU membership and adopt the changes needed. Staying in close contact with what is happening around us, is of importance. To that end and where the opportunity arises, we engage in fact-finding missions or study trips to familiarize with and develop relations with relevant countries, parties or topics.