



FIRST DOMINO MANIFESTO

*“There are two types of countries in Europe: those that are small
and those that do not yet know they are small.”*

— Paul-Henri Spaak

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The Brief

- The nation-state is no longer sufficient on its own. It is time to evolve it into a continental union: one continent, one voice, one civilization.
- A divided Europe is a chessboard for the US, China, and Russia. Federalized, it stops being a junior partner to the global superpowers.
- We are non-aligned in the culture war. Every lawful ideology is welcome here except the rejection of democracy itself.
- The current Union is a single market but only in theory. In practice it is fragmented by bureaucracy and national veto.
- What we want: end the veto, cut the bureaucracy, unite key industries, unite defense capability, and build a federal union.
- Federalization is not only inevitable but the earlier it happens, the faster its benefits compound.

Why First Domino

A single nation, standing alone, holds no real power in this century. The current world order is collapsing and Europe is not adapting. Europe is currently a chessboard for realist superpowers, where the empires of China, America, and Russia compete for influence and control. First Domino exists to change that. We want to tip the first domino toward a federal Europe.

In the modern period, half a billion Europeans are asking 340 million Americans to help protect them from 140 million Russians. Europe is the largest of the three by population, with the 3rd largest combined armed forces on Earth and yet it remains dependent rather than decisive. America is threatening to step back from its NATO commitments and has floated territorial ambitions over Greenland and Europe's response has largely been to submit and continue buying more American defense systems. Since 2014, Ukraine, our closest democratic ally, has protected the Continent from Russian expansionism, yet EU institutions still deliberate the extent to which we ought to support Ukraine. China floods our markets and undermines our industry, aided by a centralized government that can subsidize its own industry in ways EU member states individually cannot match.

Federalization of Europe is not only inevitable, but also vital to institute as soon as possible for the security and wellbeing of Europeans. Not a distant ideal to admire, but a political reality we intend to build. Our disunity is the root from which nearly every other weakness grows. The First Domino Eurofederalist movement pushes for a federal Europe through coordinated social media campaigns and collaboration with other Eurofederalist groups. This is just the start as the movement grows so does its ambition, from simple discussion to real influence.

We are non-aligned in the broader culture war, and we do not intend to reopen the disputes that have splintered this continent into competing factions. Federalization is the condition on which all other progress depends, and to secure it we must set lesser disagreements aside. With one principle in mind we will not yield: democracy. A federal Europe that is not free is not the Europe we seek.

What is First Domino?

The federalist cause has never lacked conviction. What is lacking is unity. Eurofederalists push for a Federal Europe in every direction at once: Volt, the Union of European Federalists, the Young European Federalists, We Are Europe, Astra Europa, Ave Europa, and many more. We honor them, yet too many have tied federalism to a single ideological wing, turning away the majority of people who might otherwise stand beside them. All federalists are owed the same seat at the same table, no matter their political leaning. The cause is greater than the tribe.

First Domino has been built to end that division. We ask no member to abandon their convictions, only to place European unity above them. Within the movement, we organize into ideological squads with each keeping their own beliefs, all beneath one banner. We welcome every lawful political ideology, with one exception: the rejection of democracy itself. The sole requirement for membership is belief in one idea: that the future of Europe is federal and free.

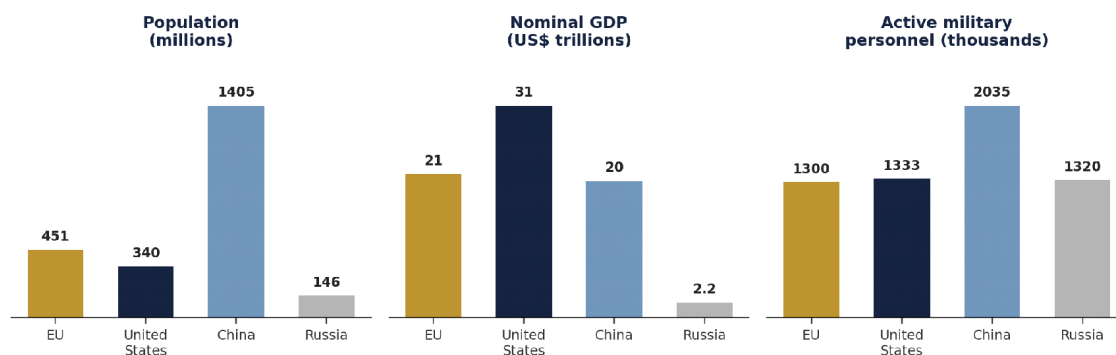
The Diagnosis

In the current era, no individual European country holds genuine global leverage on its own. As the postwar international order breaks down, Europe is struggling to keep pace. The continent risks becoming a strategic arena where the United States, China, and Russia compete for influence and control.

Europe is the second largest of the world's three major power blocs by population, and the European Union has the largest single consumer market; European countries together hold the third largest army on Earth by personnel, everything mentioned should translate into real geopolitical power. Instead, a divided Europe relies heavily on Washington's protection even as the United States threatens to step back from NATO and has floated ambitions over Greenland; the response from European leaders has largely been a humiliation ritual to appease the US by buying their weapons systems. Meanwhile Russia wages the largest war on European soil since World War II against Ukraine, and EU member states still continue to debate the extent to which we should aid Ukraine. At the same time, China's subsidized industrial base puts pressure on European manufacturers causing local companies to fail and leading to European deindustrialization. If the EU does not become a more assertive global actor, it risks being reduced to a sphere of influence, just a battleground for other power conflicts rather than an actor in its own right.

By “Europe” we mean, concretely, the European Union and any other European state that chooses to join the federal Union on the terms below. We do not call for the dissolution of nations. Instead, we call for the powers that no single nation can exercise alone, such as defense, foreign policy, the single market, and the energy and digital grids to be exercised together.

Europe, United States, China, Russia: the scale Europe already has



Sources: Eurostat / IMF (2025 estimates); NATO and Statista active-personnel figures (2025). EU military figure approximate, NATO-aligned member states.

Dependence on foreign powers

THE UNITED STATES Digital infrastructure and military protection.

RUSSIA / MIDDLE EAST Energy. Europe has little leverage when fuel prices spike.

CHINA Dominates EU markets by subsidizing its own industry.

A shared European identity

A federal Europe would not erase national identities but rather protect them; language, art and the various cultures that make each part of Europe unique would be preserved for all to enjoy. Federalization is not a merging of our cultures: national governments would keep control over local law, education, and cultural institutions. What it removes is the bureaucratic gridlock that makes the Union weak and inefficient. Europe is ultimately not a unitary nation-state but a civilization-state, whose peoples are already bound by shared values and common interests.

Critics argue this is just more centralization, that smaller states lose their voice once national vetoes disappear. We see it the other way around: right now, a single government can already block the other twenty-six. Qualified majority voting means no nation rules the rest, but no nation can hold the rest hostage either. The smallest member states keep their seat at the table; what changes is that progress is no longer paralyzed by a veto. Decisions would finally require a fair, broad, representative majority.

Endless recession

Too often, European leaders have focused more on national priorities, rather than working as a European bloc. The result for the common man has manifested in the form of higher taxes funding inefficient, duplicated national systems that increasingly fail to meet our needs. First Domino calls for a real EU budget to fix this: not a Multiannual Financial Framework stitched together from the member states goodwill, but rather a self funded European budget that pays directly for shared European priorities and growth. That means lower taxes at the national level and real, durable fixes for strained systems like retirement, welfare, and education.

Closing the fiscal gap with the United States requires a single capital market, serious cross border investment, and a business culture that thinks continentally rather than nationally. The eurozone crisis was the price of unfinished integration: one currency and one central bank, but no fiscal union behind them. A functioning federal budget could have absorbed shocks like Greece's debt crisis rather than forcing it through years of externally imposed austerity.

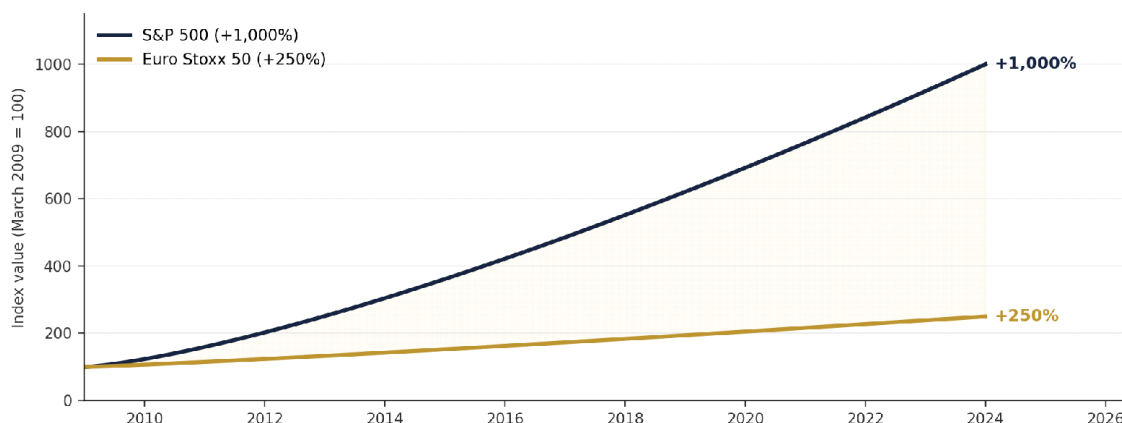
Much of the EU's current financial and bureaucratic dysfunction stems from an incomplete federal integration. Europe remains unwilling to build an efficient shared system largely for the sake of preserving national sovereignty in areas, like defense, where individual states have limited capacity to act independently in any case.

The cost of staying divided

Since March 2009, the S&P 500 has grown roughly four times faster than the Euro Stoxx 50 in total return terms. That gap is not purely a capital markets story, in fact, it sits alongside more structural findings. The European Commission's own 2024 Draghi report on competitiveness found that the EU needs roughly €800 billion in additional investment every year (about 5% of EU GDP) just to close the innovation gap with the US and China, a gap driven largely by Europe's underdeveloped tech sector. The Letta report on the single market, presented to the European Council the same year, reached a parallel conclusion from the trade side:

internal barriers in EU goods and services remain high enough that economists debate the size of the cost, not whether it exists.

The cost of staying divided: a capital markets gap



Illustrative comparison scaled to match total-return growth figures cited in text, March 2009–December 2024.

The greatest issues are faced by mid-sized European companies; they should drive innovation in tech and energy, but instead they fail to scale across borders. Some face regulatory constraints on expansion; others simply lack access to the investment needed to grow. And because each European country still governs the same activities under its own rules, cross-border expansion remains costly and complex.

Economic consequences of division

Fragmentation has real, everyday consequences. Consider the cost of living: when companies cannot expand efficiently across the continent, production stays local. That can look beneficial at first since it keeps activity within a region but it ultimately limits the scale at which businesses can grow, with knock-on effects for everyday consumers. Price gaps between member states for comparable goods are common, driven by transport costs less than by regulatory divergence, which forces companies to adapt operations market by market and passes the added cost on to consumers.

Public transport tells a similar story. The EU has already made real progress connecting the continent, but a melting pot of competing national operators, each working within its own regulatory framework, still makes the overall system less efficient than it could be. A better integrated high speed rail system; for example, a fast Amsterdam-Brussels connection could let workers commute across the border and be home the same evening, easing labor shortages, widening students access to universities abroad, and reducing car dependency, congestion, and emissions in the process. A Federal Europe committed to the defense and high scale project development would see megaprojects like Rail Baltica handled with much more urgency and care.

Digital and energy infrastructure follow the same pattern. Europe continues to rely heavily on American and Chinese digital services in part because homegrown alternatives haven't been given the scale to compete. A better integrated EU energy grid and digital infrastructure would reduce that dependence, support genuine digital sovereignty, and lower costs for consumers across the continent.

Migration

Immigration policy has been mishandled across the board. Whichever side of the debate one is on, it is difficult to argue the EU's collective response has been effective. Rather it has been fragmented, inconsistent, and inadequate, because 27 member states continue to argue over responsibility while prioritizing short term national interests. The result is legal uncertainty, disproportionate pressure on border states and overcrowded reception systems. A united European approach is essential to fixing this.

A fragmented approach similarly undermines Europe's ability to retain its top scientific, entrepreneurial, and other high-skill talent, which currently flees to the United States. Just as 27 conflicting immigration systems create internal weakness, 27 separate national research budgets, regulatory frameworks, and venture capital ecosystems prevent Europe from competing globally. A European Federation would establish a unified, continental wide innovation ecosystem. Instead of elite workers leaving for the scale and simplicity of the American market, a united Europe would offer the massive scale, funding, and career mobility needed to keep and attract the world's best minds inside European borders.

Those who want stricter borders and more effective returns should support a common European policy capable of controlling major immigration routes and enforcing return decisions consistently. Those who want fair, regulated immigration followed by genuine integration should support pooling European resources and investing seriously in housing, language education, employment, and local services. Simultaneously the establishment of a Federal Europe would help keep Europe's brightest inside Europe, and attract more high skill immigrants. Different political visions may lead to different policy answers, but no solution can work while 27 countries pursue 27 conflicting approaches. Migration is a European scale challenge, and it requires a European scale response.

The Solution

A European Defense Union

European integration was built on one core promise: that war between European states would become impossible. That project gave us the coal-and-steel cooperation in 1951 and a borderless single market in the decades that followed. One piece of European sovereignty was never finished: defense.

For too long, Europe has run on fragmented security arrangements; duplicated procurement, mismatched equipment standards, and roughly twenty-five separate national defense industries that struggle to work together. A European Defense Union would change that through the following:

- **Efficiency.** Pooling resources, ending redundant spending, standardizing equipment, and building field forces that are genuinely interoperable and fast to deploy.
- **Independence.** The ability to act when European interests are at stake, without needing outside permission, and without relying on weapons systems subject to another country's export or "kill switch" controls.
- **Strength.** One decisive, unified force rather than a loose collection of smaller national ones.

Digital sovereignty

Over-reliance on foreign digital infrastructure creates real strategic and economic vulnerabilities for Europe: ceding control of critical public services, data storage, and communication networks leaves the continent exposed to foreign regulatory reach and geopolitical leverage. A unified European federation is positioned to address this where individual member states on their own simply cannot.

Individual nations lack the market share to negotiate effectively with global tech giants or to absorb the cost of building parallel digital infrastructure alone. A federal Europe, by contrast, would have the collective economic weight and regulatory reach to defend citizens, have hardware freedom for users to choose their own operating systems, and create genuine alternatives.

By pooling research, development, and procurement budgets, a federal government could scale open-source software and shared, secure cloud infrastructure at lower cost per taxpayer than 27 parallel national efforts. Anchored in strong, continent wide privacy law and transparent, open source code, this kind of sovereign digital infrastructure could also become a credible European export — a transparent alternative to the current dominant providers.

The Shape of the Union

A directly elected Commission President, accountable to a European Parliament with the power to initiate its own legislation. A Council of national governments, reformed into a Senate of states. A European Court with constitutional review powers. Everything else: local law, education, culture, language and healthcare stays exactly where it is: with national parliaments.

The Demands

- **End the veto.** While it exists, the EU remains structurally paralysed; a single government can hold roughly 450 million citizen's decisions hostage. Replace unanimity with qualified majority voting.
- **Let Parliament propose laws.** The EU's only directly elected institution currently cannot initiate legislation. A parliament that cannot do so is neither fully democratic nor fully representative.
- **Build real European political parties.** Europeans should be able to vote for continent-wide parties with a continent wide platform, not twenty seven separate national contests presented as one European election.
- **Write a European constitution.** A founding text defining shared identity, where authority sits, and which rights no European citizen can lose.
- **Unite foreign policy.** One voice, one representative, one diplomatic line. Member states core security interests already largely converge; a shared economy increasingly needs a shared foreign policy to match.
- **Fund the Union directly.** The EU currently runs on roughly 1% of European income, while member states retain 40–50% of national income in taxation. A more efficient federal tax base capable of finally closing the loopholes exploited by large global tech firms would fund shared priorities while allowing national taxes to be reduced.
- **Build European symbolism.** The EU flag currently inspires little public feeling, but a shared European identity is nonetheless forming; shaped as much by external pressure from Washington, Moscow, and Beijing as by anything from Brussels itself. This identity deserves symbols and institutions people can connect with.
- **Connect the continent.** Europe's energy grids and transport networks remain only partly integrated. Real progress has been made; it needs to be finished.

Fund the Union by its own hand



How We Get There

We will not wait for all 27 governments to agree at once. That is precisely the trap in which the current system is stuck. First Domino supports the Convention method used to draft the 2004 Constitutional Treaty, with elected parliamentarians, rather than governments acting unanimously, responsible for writing Europe's founding text. Where that process stalls, we support enhanced cooperation. A willing group of member states should be able to move forward together under existing treaty law, while keeping the door open for others to join when they are ready. A government that is unwilling to pool its veto should not be allowed to use that same veto to block countries prepared to move forward.

For too long, Europe has been the board on which others play their game. A federal Europe is not a distant utopia. It is a practical response to the world as it exists today, and the earlier Europe acts, the greater the benefits will become over time.

Join us to tip the First Domino for a Greater Europe.

In Varietate Concordia