

Gender in The Age of the Strongman:

Unveiling the gendered dynamics of Marine Le Pen and Giorgia Meloni's
electoral campaigns 2022



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Abstract

The 21st century has witnessed a revival of authoritarian and populist leaders, a new wave that has fundamentally changed the political landscape, earning it the title: *The Age of the Strongman*. This evolving style of leadership has been driven by “angry white men”, notably strengthening masculinity as a symbol of political authority. However, in recent years, the *strongman* archetype has met a rising challenger: the *strongwoman*. In 2022, Marine Le Pen and Giorgia Meloni achieved unprecedented electoral success, paving the way for women in far-right politics. Through the lens of a multimodal Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA), this study delves into how these two female leaders’ self-representations exploit the power dynamics between masculinity and femininity in their far-right populist leadership. By applying the poststructuralist feminist concepts, *gender performativity* and *gender hegemony*, to their 2022 electoral campaigns, the research unveils that the admired *hegemonic masculinity* is not confined to male leaders but has been effectively performed by Le Pen and Meloni. The masculine portrayal is also balanced with a maternal and empathic femininity, embodying “the mother of the nation”, seamlessly aligned with the nativist ideals of far-right populism.

Key words: Marine Le Pen, Giorgia Meloni, far-right populism, gender hegemony, multimodal FCDA

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1 Introduction

The 21st century has witnessed an increased support for right-wing populism spreading across the globe. After the 9/11 terror attacks, the 2008 financial crisis and the 2015 refugee crisis, a pattern of *strongman* politics has found its way into the search for a solution (Mudde 2022, p. 35). The new era is characterised by a wave of authoritarian and populist leaders, signalling a revival of nostalgic nationalism. According to Gideon Rachman (2022), the trend has fundamentally reshaped global political dynamics, earning it the title: *The Age of the Strongman*. With the crises as the backdrop, a more personalised style of leadership with a rhetoric of strength and hostility has gained traction and normalised support of the right-wing. Altogether, the political landscape is becoming increasingly populist, and masculinity has become a symbol of power, creating a new paradigm of leadership (p. 1-2, 15-20).

Over the past 20 years, this trend has been predominantly driven by what is commonly termed as “angry white men” and far-right populism has become almost synonymous to male authoritarian leaders. However, we are seeing a shift as women enter the right-wing arena, challenging the underlying preconceptions of *strongman* politics. 2022 clearly demonstrated that a new generation of “angry white women” are rising to leadership roles (Chrisafis et al. 2019). This year, Giorgia Meloni and Marine Le Pen both achieved electoral results that were significant milestones for women in politics (Griffini & Montecchio 2023, p. 2). The archetype of the *strongman* is now meeting a climbing competitor: the *strongwoman*. This new female face has sparked interest in examining the relationship between gender and power, and more specifically the role of political women in *The Age of the Strongman*. The following thesis aims to delve into this era and examine Marine Le Pen and Giorgia Meloni’s navigation within far-right populist leadership. To stay in line with the personalised character of populism, my focus will lie on their self-representations of masculinity and femininity in their 2022 electoral campaigns.

1.1 Purpose

This thesis aims to unveil the gendered dynamics of Le Pen and Meloni's self-representation within the context of far-right populist leadership. Employing a multimodal Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA), this study will examine their 2022 electoral campaigns through the dual lens of poststructuralism and feminism. By analysing the themes of *ideology*, *power*, and *persona*, the goal is to explain and criticise their exploitation of the power structure between masculinity and femininity in far-right populist leadership. Finally, the purpose is also to provide insights that consume and develop the applied concepts of *gender performativity* and *gender hegemony*.

1.2 Question

How does the self-representation of Marine Le Pen and Giorgia Meloni in their 2022 electoral campaigns exploit the power dynamics of masculinity and femininity in far-right populist leadership?

1.3 Scope

The study is confined to an analysis of Le Pen and Meloni's electoral programs and posters of 2022. I have chosen to focus on these elements as it has been established that they effectively communicate the values and demands of political actors (Zúñiga 2018, p. 2). Furthermore, the chosen period is motivated by their political success that year, notably marked by Meloni's victory. The study adopts a theoretical framework rooted in the principles of FCDA, resulting in a poststructuralist approach that forms the ontological and epistemological perspective on the material. Within this framework, feminism serves as the overarching theory to facilitate a critical analysis appropriate to the purpose of the study. In addition to this, the analytical template for the posters is based on Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen's visual grammar (2006), completing the framework of a multimodal analysis. Finally, the study is also limited to a focus on self-representation through the themes of *ideology*, *power*, and *persona*. FCDA traditionally includes the study of interaction, delving into the recipients of language acts, which has been re-interpreted as the interaction between discourse and self-representation to maintain the focus on the actors.

2 Background

2022 marked a pivotal year for female leaders in the far-right populist movement. Despite different outcomes, Meloni and Le Pen both reached electoral results highlighted as momentous for women in politics. Leading Fratelli d'Italia, Meloni achieved an impressive electoral win, securing 24% of the votes as she became the first female prime minister of Italy. Although Le Pen lost the French presidential election, her results were described as a significant accomplishment and personal victory (Griffini & Montecchio 2023, p. 2). As previously noted, the rise of male authoritarian leaders has strengthened a perception that masculine traits can solve the uncertainties of our world (Di Silvestro & Venuti 2021, p. 58). This continues to place women in leadership in a dual bind, especially within the far-right, creating a lose-lose situation. They are either perceived as “too” masculine or “too” feminine, enforcing a standard where women are bound to fail (Hall Jamieson 1995, p. 5). Despite these challenges, Le Pen and Meloni have achieved political milestones and become a topic of discussion. In light of this, I will present a summary of their approaches with the aim to trace their political development and contextualise the study.

Meloni's political journey and the rise of Fratelli d'Italia began in 2012. Initially rooted in fascism and anticommunism, the party has gradually shifted toward a more modern right-wing stance under the leadership of Meloni. As she portrays herself as a saviour of the post-fascist social right, Meloni promotes patriotism, nationhood, and Italy's historical legacy in Europe (Bergman 2022, p. 31-38). On San Giovanni Square, the 19th of October 2019, Meloni famously said: “I am Giorgia, I am a woman, I am a mother, I am Italian, I am Christian” (De Giorgi et al. 2023, p. 108), highlighting the key pillars of the party's ideological stance. An important aspect of her success lies in the tactic of criticising the government from the outside, as the party has long been in the margins of the political arena. In addition to this, Meloni continues to utilise women's issues and the protection of the ‘natural’ family to bolster a nationalist narrative. Altogether, the legacy of fascist masculinity remains present in the party's political discourse and as she embraces a national-conservative identity, Meloni's success has attracted global attention (Bergman 2022, p. 47).

The political evolution of Le Pen and Rassemblement National (RN) began in 2011 when Jean-Marie Le Pen, her father, and the founder of the party, stepped down. In the transition, Le Pen initiated a modernisation of the party's image, rhetorically declared as a strategy of de-demonisation (*dédiabolisation*). The aim is to mainstream RN by distancing it from its racist past and militant leadership style (Eltchaninoff 2018, p. 30, 38; Pétren 2018, p. 106-107). Moreover, France's historical lack of mass emigration, coupled with a deep-rooted sense of self-sufficiency and patriotism, has fostered a strong national pride (Pétrén 2015, p. 57), and this remains central in the Le Pen's current ideology. However, she has reshaped the nationalist discourse to present a more coherent worldview and broaden the party's appeal. She praises French culture while expressing apprehension about the future, presenting the French identity as a struggle against globalism and linking immigration to national issues. She attempts to avoid allegations of xenophobia by framing discrimination as a political solution. For example, similar to Meloni, Le Pen promotes women's rights as a strategy to boost the anti-Islamism movement. Evidently, despite the reforms, Le Pen remains loyal to the traditional far-right values, resulting in a strengthened foundation rather than a new political direction (Eltchaninoff 2018, p. 38-46, 55-57, 132, 171-172).

3 Previous research

The comprehensive history of research on the relationship between gender and power is a massive undertaking, tracing its roots back to the critical attention towards language and narrative that began during the early stages of the second wave feminism in the 1960s. This period started an expansion of feministic scholarship, igniting the academic field regarding gender identity and representation (Cameron 1992, p. 5-6). As a result, the following decades have been filled with research that has paved the way for studies like mine. While acknowledging the limitation of only covering a fraction of the research history, the following segment will present an overview of the field and contextualise the relevance of my study.

To start off, R.W Connell stands as a pivotal figure in gender studies, introducing a social theory that emphasises gender as structural phenomenon rather than simply a personal identity. Connell's exploration of the social construction of masculinities has been foundational, and her books *Gender and Power* (1987) and *Masculinities* (1995) are still some of the most cited works within the field. Also included is the presentation of the concept of *hegemonic masculinity*, notably developed in Connell's article with James W. Messerschmidt (2005) "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept". Following this, there has been a large amount of research building upon Connell's concept. For example, Mimi Schippers (2005) presents a compatible conceptualisation of *hegemonic femininity* in her article "Recovering the Feminine Other: Masculinity, Femininity, and Gender Hegemony". By putting femininity in the centre of theory, Schippers creates a wider approach that enables research on the balance between femininity and masculinity in society. This serves as an essential base to my study as it illuminates the dual approach of navigating the gendered dynamics of politics.

In her book *Beyond the Double Bind*, Kathleen Hall Jamieson (1995) argues that the bind of women in leadership can be overcome. Through a historical overview of victim feminism, the acceptance of failure and strategic choices of women, Jamieson illustrates the complexity of our gendered political landscape. The simplicity of women being bound to failure is criticised and a more inclusive view of history is promoted. Drawing from extensive research, Jamieson presents an insightful analysis of the barriers that have hindered women's progress, and the ways they have handled them. For my study, this book serves as a cornerstone. Jamieson lays out different tactics that demonstrate how

gender norms do not confine women to predefined roles, suggesting that female leaders can strategically utilise traditional structures to their advantage.

As far-right populism has solidified its role in politics, there have been corresponding advancements in research. Aligned with the growing interest in power structures, research has underscored the right-wing's obsession with gender and masculinity's crucial role in their leadership (Linders et al. 2023, p. 653-654). Connell's concept of *hegemonic masculinity* is a reoccurring element and as several articles study gendered politics, a power hierarchy is affirmed (Linders et al. 2023; Meret 2015; Sauer 2020; Mellström 2016). Explored through different approaches, masculinity is identified as a key aspect in the self-positioning of far-right leaders (Linders et al 2023. p. 653-654, 670). Additionally, there has been a growing focus on female leaders as they become increasingly involved in the right-wing movement. Owen Worth (2021) found that women have had an influential role in strengthening masculinist ideals. By using their gender and sexuality as an asset, female leaders can reinforce traditional gender roles and garner a wider appeal (p. 521). In line with this, Ester Di Silvestro and Marco Venuti (2021) analysed different leaders' social media, discovering that Le Pen and Meloni achieved comparable success to their male counterparts when they balanced *hegemonic masculinity* and *femininity* (p. 76). All in all, it is established that gendered power can manifest in different ways, indicating that future research on multiple cases will contribute to the understanding of power dynamics within far-right populism.

Similar to my approach, Mariana Griffini and Laura Montecchio (2023) present a comparative analysis of the gendered discourse in the 2022 electoral campaigns of Le Pen and Meloni through a qualitative discourse analysis of their TikTok and Twitter accounts. The resembling focus may question the relevance of my study, but as I will utilise a multimodal FCDA and examine different material, my study will complement and extend their findings. My research will also critically assess the use of gender norms, further clarifying the interdisciplinary relevance. To conclude, my study is firmly conscious of the surrounding work, and I believe that I have found a gap in previous research related to my choice of material and method.

4 Theory and method

As a multimodal Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) combines theory and methodology, the following segment will present the theoretical framework, analytical concepts, material, and the research strategy to fully cover my approach.

4.1 Poststructuralism

Poststructuralism is the foundational theory of discourse analysis, delving into the critical examination of discourses both within and about societies. At its core, poststructuralism claims an ontology that rejects an objective reality, suggesting that our society is constantly constructed by the interplay of language and power. As illustrated by its name, it represents a theoretical expansion of structuralism, an approach based on the patterns and predictability of social arrangements. Instead, poststructuralism is a style of critical thinking that directs attention to the uncertainty within our systems of meaning to recognise the decisions we make when establishing social structures. Therefore, discourses – systems of language, norms, and practices – become crucial sources for unravelling how our perceived “reality” is created. This recognition is essential to the ontology and epistemology of CDA. Together, it serves as an interpretive lens, applying critique on structures and how they change (Winther-Jørgensen & Phillips 2000, p. 12-18, 131-132; Harcourt 2007, p. 1). Finally, as the theory centres on the relationship between power and knowledge, with a focus on the role of language, it also aligns with constructivism, where language and rhetoric are understood as power factors. This element is relevant when analysing gendered dynamics as it supports the view of masculinity and femininity as performance acts. It provides a way of developing awareness of how language both serves as an arena created by existing structures and as an act of power that has an impact on our own and others sense of subjectivity (Fox 2014, p. 1855-1865; Lazar 2005, p. 4).

4.2 Feminism Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA)

CDA is a broad poststructuralist approach that studies the relationship between language, power, and society (Winther-Jørgensen & Phillips 2000, p. 66-70). The approach has been further developed by Norman Fairclough (1989) who created a more structured method

with philosophical premises and guidelines. Fairclough underscores how CDA contributes to “[...] correct a widespread underestimation of the significance of language in the production, maintenance, and change of social relations to power” (p. 1). CDA does not only seek to explain language but also to intervene in the political arena. The ambition to criticise social inequalities upheld by language and achieve emancipation unifies CDA with feminist scholarship, resulting in the combined approach: Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA). The incorporation of feminism provides the study with a theoretical foundation that challenges the masculine biases inherent in far-right populist leadership (Lazar 2005, p. 1-5; Fairclough 2010, p. 7-8).

However, feminism covers a diverse, and sometimes contradictory, set of theoretical, methodological, and political perspectives which cannot be simplified to one single theory. Consistent with the study’s aim, I will present two concepts: *gender performativity* and *gender hegemony*, that will delineate the critical theory to poststructuralist feminism.

4.2.1 Gender performativity

One of the most significant theoretical works to influence the field of gender studies is Judith Butler’s (2007 [1990]) concept of *gender performativity*. The concept challenges the notion of gender as a fixed and inherent trait and instead proposes it as a dynamic enactment influenced by a discursive power constellation that builds upon societal norms. Gender, according to Butler, is not a passive identity but a repeated social performance (p. 12-13, 28, 55-57). Individuals do not conform to pre-existing gender roles but actively participate in constructing them (Ehrlich & Meyerhoff 2014, p. 4). This concept has been labelled the foundation of poststructural feminism as it derives from the philosophy of linguistics and disrupts the normative alignment of sex, gender, and sexuality (Bucholtz 2014, p. 37-38). *Gender performativity* will be applied to shed light on the dynamic and productive aspect of the performance of masculinity and femininity.

4.2.2 Gender hegemony

R. W Connell’s (1987) work on *hegemonic masculinity* illustrates how power is intertwined with masculinity. The concept builds upon the process of certain masculine qualities being established as superior. To further clarify, hegemony refers to a form of cultural dominance, also described as a balanced ascendancy. It requires that other

qualities, such as femininity and alternative masculinities, are subordinated, and not necessarily eliminated. This builds upon a consent that is accomplished through discourses which often characterise an invisible power asymmetry (Connell 1987, p. 183-185; Lazar 2005, p. 7). Connell (2005) describes *hegemonic masculinity* as the “[...] accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy” (p. 77). Building on this, Mimi Schippers (2007) extends the concept by presenting *hegemonic femininity* – an intersectional performance of femininity and heterosexuality, where women reproduce several societal hierarchies as well as masculine domination (p. 94-95). Their combined work on *gender hegemony* will help determine how Le Pen and Meloni exploit masculinity and femininity in their electoral campaigns.

4.2.3 Masculinity and femininity in far-right populist leadership

Gender hegemony is a dynamic and contextually dependent concept (Connell 1987, p. 187; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005, p. 832-833). In this study, I will limit it to the traits aspired in far-right populist leadership. I will categorise the following description into three themes: *ideology*, *power*, and *persona*, to create a pre-determined structure for the analysis.

Ideology

The ideology of the populist radical right centres around the naturalness of inequality. It embraces hierarchical structures within the realm of authoritarianism, anti-elite populism, and nativism. This encompasses the ambition of a strictly organised society, permeating xenophobia and politics that represents ‘the people’ and not ‘the corrupt elite’. In addition to this, the far-right is described to revolve around four pillars: the land, the people, life, and myth. These pillars lay the foundation for the nationalist, nativist, conservative and often mythologised narratives that shape the worldview and agenda of the far-right (Mayer 2013, p. 163; Mudde 2022, p. 41; Eltchaninoff 2018, p. 17). Within this framework there is a romanticising of the past and the ‘natural’ order. Drawing upon a nostalgic view of history, a preferred gender order has been established that builds upon a *hegemonic masculinity*. Nativism, an ideology that links nationalism with xenophobia, is consistently linked to masculinity as it projects a traditional perception of the ‘natural’ family where a man is expected to protect the woman, the mother, against the foreign ‘other’. This aligns with familism, emphasising that women’s reproductive rights are subordinated to the normative demands of the nation, enforcing the image of women as

solely mothers. Moreover, fascism, another ideology within far-right populism, also aligns violence with power, glorifying the masculine attributes of aggression and strength (Mudde 2022, p. 41-46, 176). Collectively, the ideological ground sustains the *hegemonic masculinity* within the conservative and traditional gender order where the masculine attributes of strength and aggression are seen to protect the native culture (Linders et al. 2023, p. 657; Sauer 2020, p. 24; Mudde 2022, p. 177-180).

Power

Throughout history, power and leadership have predominantly been held by men, resulting in the alignment of leadership traits with masculine attributes such as ambition, assertiveness, confidence, and dominance. In contrast, femininity is associated with traits like kindness, collaboration, and caregiving, which are not typically linked to power and leadership in this context (Snipes & Mudde 2020, p. 442). The right-wing narrative portrays *hegemonic masculinity* as heroic, tasked with protecting the nation and its women. The concept is based on the logic of the nation as vulnerable and in need of protection, which results in masculinity having a distinct function of serving as a shield against foreign identities and ideologies. It has become a rhetorical device that seems to have the answer to restore order in a changing society and reactionary politics. This reinforces patriarchy through the weaponisation of masculinity (Sauer 2020, p. 24-25; Linders et al. 2023, p. 657; Mellström 2016, p. 135-136).

Persona

In recent years, the personalisation of politics has become a large part of the election process. As a populist leader strives to embody the voice of the people, a certain persona has become coordinated with the politics. It is explained that charisma, a strong popular appeal, is a crucial part of far-right populist leadership to achieve a relationship between the leader and 'the people' and that this appeal is synonymous with masculinity. The admired persona is connected to masculine attributes such as strong and assertive, aligned with the strict discourse of far-right politics (Meret et al. 2016, p. 122; Meret 2015, p. 83, Coffé 2019, p. 173). Correspondingly, masculinity is related to rational thinking, objectivity, selfishness, and determination, reinforcing a collective image of male charisma. As a result, this persona is put in opposition to femininity and the traits of emotionality, empathy, softness, subjectiveness, relational behaviour, and motherhood (Meret 2015, p. 87). The male charisma is perceived to have a positive mediating effect

of the leader's relationship to the people and therefore becomes the most appropriate persona to represent the voice of the people.

4.3 Multimodality

CDA acknowledges multiple semiotic modes such as language, visual images, and sound as relevant elements in the analysis of discourse. When recognising these diverse forms of communication, it becomes pertinent to explore their interplay in discourses (Fairclough 2010, p. 7; Kress 2010, p. 1, 12-13). This perspective has enabled me to structure an analysis that integrates both textual and visual elements to reach a more comprehensive understanding of the gendered performance within Le Pen and Meloni's electoral campaigns. The analysis of the programs will be the primary focus as I predict it to be more accessible to dissect political statements in relation to the far-right gender discourse. The image analysis of Le Pen and Meloni's election posters will emphasise that self-representation is highly related to visual presentation. This dual approach will expand the discursive landscape and provide a richer examination of the gendered dynamics in politics (Winther-Jørgensen & Phillips 2000, p. 67).

To analyse the visual elements of the electoral posters, I will follow Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen's (2006) template presented in their book *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. Their analytical strategy includes three dimensions of visual composition:

- 1) *information value* (the placement of elements, compositional organisation)
The positioning of Le Pen and Meloni, the overall visual composition and complementary elements such as logos and text.
- 2) *salience* (elements that are designed to catch attention)
The leader's appearance, the colour, tone, and sharpness of the poster, as well as the effectiveness of the political message.
- 3) *framing* (presence or absence of elements that divide and frame, indicating if whether certain elements belong together in the making of meanings)
The dividing elements within the poster, how the leader's photograph interacts with other elements such as text, logos, and background.

These dimensions will explain how visual elements are used to communicate, and therefore cover the self-representation within the posters (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006, p.

177). As political posters typically centre around photographs of politicians, they will be primarily analysed. Following this, the addition of accompanying elements will be examined to understand how they collectively convey a political message. It is important to note that these components cannot be objectively measured but are instead assessed based on an intuitive impression of the overall composition (Ibid. p. 201-203). The intuitive aspect will be further discussed under 4.5 Research strategy. Finally, it should be acknowledged that a multimodal analysis often includes an interactive dimension, similar to CDA, but as this study focuses on the actors, this aspect will be overlooked (Ibid. p. 14-15).

4.4 Material and DeepL Translate

Electoral campaigns include various strategies to present their politics, but I have chosen to analyse the electoral programs and posters given their proven effectiveness in articulating the core values and policy priorities (Zúñiga 2018, p. 2). The programs are available in two formats: an extended version (App. I and App. III) and a shorter version highlighting the key points (App. II and App. IV), both accessible on the parties' official websites. The references for the original programs are presented within the respective appendices. I've translated and compiled the programs to a simple format with line and page numbers to easily be able to reference to them in the analysis. For clarification, the in-text reference will be: (App. appendix number, p. page number: line number). The posters serve to enrich the discursive landscape and underscore the significance of image representation in modern politics (App. V, App. VI, and App. VII). The references for the posters are also found within the respective appendices.

To translate the programs, I used the online translation service called DeepL. By combining deep learning technology and the latest AI advancements, DeepL provides high-quality translations. The service is known for its accuracy in producing natural language, as well as its ability to generate translations that are contextually relevant, making it highly appropriate for a politically oriented study (Plenter 2023, p. 3, 7; Bao & Zhang 2023, p. 60). DeepL was recommended to me by a lawyer who regularly uses the service to translate material from diverse sources, one of them being the European Court of Justice. After personal evaluation and cross-checking a few translations with French and Italian speaking associates, it became the preferred alternative for making the programs accessible for analytical purposes.

4.5 Research strategy

The foundation of the research strategy is a critical attitude that aims to underscore the political interplay of (re)production, interpretation, and representation. As FCDA includes three dimensions of discourse: text, interaction, and social context, I will intertwine these aspects to cover the material and its relation to the far-right discourse and social context. The campaigns will be picked apart organically and then analysed and criticised through the outlined theoretical and methodological framework (Winther-Jørgensen & Phillips 2000, p. 85-87). The aim is to resist an isolated analysis and instead illustrate the connection between macro-level structures, gendered power discourse within far-right populist leadership, and micro-level practices, the self-representation in the electoral campaigns (Fairclough 1989, p. 109; Winther-Jørgensen & Phillips 2000, p. 70-76). Consistent with this strategy, the visual analysis of the electoral posters will combine Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) three elements of visual composition with the three dimensions of discourse. Overall, the poststructuralist practice of deconstruction is essential to the analysis – whereby underlying assumptions in social expressions are analysed and criticised.

I will approach the material without predetermined themes and instead collect phrases, repeated words, and visual characteristics intuitively. By placing the material in the centre, it will be handled independently rather than guided beforehand, and the following analytical findings will provide insights that consume and develop the analytical concepts (Esaïsson et al. 2017, p. 41-43; Teorell & Svensson 2007, p. 52). A methodological aspect worth acknowledging is that my focus on self-representation is a strategical decision at the expense of an analysis of the recipients. The interactive dimension will be interpreted as the interaction between the campaigns, the far-right populist discourse, and the social context, instead of the interaction with the public. I will focus on parts that express personal character, values and opinions related to the conceptualisation of masculinity and femininity within far-right populist leadership. The visual analysis will also be restricted to the elements relevant for self-representation. This focus is motivated by the gendered obsession and personalisation of far-right populist leadership as discussed in the background and theoretical outline.

All in all, this research strategy will make room for reflexivity, a fundamental part of feminist research. To create templates for extracting certain parts of the material can be

useful for validity and reliability. However, feminist research rejects the objectivity of universal observations and instead values the subjectivity of the researcher as a crucial part of analytical findings, supporting the option of approaching the material intuitively (Tickner 2005, p. 8-9). This will be further addressed in the last segment, 7 Final Discussion.

5 Analysis

5.1 Marine Le Pen

Le Pen's 2022 electoral campaign marks an ideological shift by blending populist rhetoric with a moderated far-right approach. While upholding the party's core values, the discourse has evolved, incorporating themes of anti-globalisation and xenophobia to broader social concerns through new stylistic and rhetorical elements (App. I, p. 2-3). Organised into three key parts – protection, projection, and transmission – the program outlines Le Pen's vision for France and its trajectory over the five-year presidential term. The introductory section, titled "My ambition for France", draws upon lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, exposing vulnerabilities in French governance, and advocating for a necessary political shift. Le Pen states: "The time has come for our country to close this parenthesis and rediscover the greatness it has enjoyed for centuries" (App. I, p. 2: 9-10). The following analysis of Le Pen's self-representation will be structured around the three themes: *ideology*, *power*, and *persona*. The linguistic and image analysis will be explored within the context of far-right populist discourse and societal dynamics, as well as critiqued through the principles of poststructuralist feminism.

Ideology

The program is grounded on a firm ideological stance centred on nativism, populism, and authoritarianism. Le Pen underscores the imperative to secure the nation's future and greatness through strict immigration policies, prioritising the will of the French people and asserting control for the nation's benefit. The first point in the summarised program, "22 measures for 2022" (App. II), states: "Stop uncontrolled immigration by giving the French a say in a referendum" (p. 1: 5)", clearly linking populist ambitions with nativism. The rhetoric reflects a call for national unity to counter a perceived decline, advocating for increased political representation to empower citizens against the foreign 'other'. Le Pen's goal to modernise the party and reach a broader voter base becomes visible as she relates the far-right ideology to contemporary challenges. In the social context of escalating terrorism, the financial crisis and the refugee crisis, this ideology is highly compatible with the political discourse that has turned to *strongman* politics.

In addition to this, Le Pen refers to the French people as “compatriots”, incorporating xenophobia as she underscores the national unity. The ideological framework positions Le Pen as the voice of the people with strong nativist and authoritarian ambitions, emphasised by the first-person tense permeating the program. By repeatedly using themes of defence, protection, and promotion of the French identity, she establishes a narrative where *hegemonic masculinity* is perceived as the appropriate political approach. It is through strength that Le Pen will protect the native culture and fulfil her ideological aspirations. In the realm of *gender performativity*, this political strategy serves as a discursive act, constructing Le Pen as a masculine leader. This, in turn, solidifies the hierarchical gender norms that amplify the authority of masculinity and marginalise feminine qualities.

Moreover, Le Pen advocates for a Europe of sovereign nations. She rejects the federalist ambitions of the European Union and instead emphasises the preservation of French territories and cultural heritage. Building on this, Le Pen introduces initiatives such as the Francophone Union, designed to protect the French language, and the European Alliance of Nations, also aimed at preserving sovereignty and heritage (App. I, p. 14: 1-11, 14-21). Le Pen also adopts a colonialist perspective as she calls for reinforcement in overseas territories. She states: “Every measure will be taken to ensure that the territories in question remain French and that France's presence there is reaffirmed” (App. I, p. 14: 16-17). In addition to this, she confronts Islamist ideologies, framing them as a threat to French values and proposes strict legislation to counteract them, stating: “[...] I've tabled a bill to combat Islamist ideologies, which are incompatible with our values, our history and our culture [...]” (App. I, p. 7: 5-6). This stance has its roots in the naturalness of inequality often associated with far-right populist ideology. Compatible with France's proud national identity, Le Pen advocates for nationalist and colonialist policies to elevate France status, also aligning herself with the masculine traits of hostility, protection, and determination. The suggestions correspond with the new paradigm of leadership: *strongman* politics.

Another central element is the emphasis on family. Le Pen portrays French families as the bedrock of society and the embodiment of their civilisational model (App. I, p. 22: 21). She also positions them in opposition to immigration, stating: “[...] the choice is between immigration and a higher birth rate, I am very clear that I am choosing the birth rate, the continuity of the nation and the transmission of our civilisation through our

family model” (App. I, p 22: 22-24). This statement resembles the logic of the “great replacement theory” (*la grand replacement*), a radical right-wing conspiracy that depicts non-white people as a threat to replace ethnic French citizens (Camus 2017, p. 53). Additionally, Le Pen pledges to implement increased support for single mothers, indicating a perceived gendered responsibility (App. II, p. 2: 17). The collective rhetoric draws from the ongoing romanticising of the past and ‘the natural’ order that persists within the far-right. The *hegemonic masculinity* emerges as a foundational element of the nation, where women carry a greater responsibility for reproduction and caregiving and once more, the narrative highlights Le Pen’s role to protect the national identity against the foreign ‘other’, this time framed within familism. By intertwining assertive immigration politics with the protection of traditional French families, Le Pen constructs a self-representation that blends elements of *masculinity* and *femininity*. She embodies the role of “the mother of the nation”, a *gender performance* driven by the empathic motives to defend French values and identity yet achieves this through aggressive policies that maintain the masculine logic of the far-right. This approach is aligned with France’s societal dynamics and reinforces the hierarchical gender order as the protection of France cultural heritage will continue to limit women.

Power

Le Pen presents her view on power early in the program, stating: “If France reconnects with power, with sovereignty, with its civilisational roots so deeply embedded in each of us, it will be able to look the century ahead in the eyes” (App. I, p. 3: 18-20). As she advocates for a return to power politics, she positions herself as a resolute leader unaffected by external pressures (App. I, p. 4: 12-13). Her agenda emphasises the value of national sovereignty and military capabilities to protect France's interests. For example, she proposes firm measures, including blocking money transfers and visas for countries refusing to repatriate their citizens, to illustrate a determination to prioritise French security (App. I, p. 6: 17-21). Le Pen also plans to increase prison capacity to combat leniency in judicial sentencing and vows to tackle economic exploitation, promising to empower the French people and restore collective prosperity (App. I, p. 9: 13-15; p. 11: 15-16).

Building on this, the initiatives extend to improve discipline within education and preserve France's cultural and environmental heritage, reflecting a vision of power consolidation and national rejuvenation under Le Pen’s leadership (App. I, p. 25: 31-33,

p. 26: 1-19). Yet, even in these aspects, the penalistic power politics shines through. For example, in relation to strengthening the educational system, Le Pen states: “Significant and immediate penalties will be introduced for parents whose children fail to be punctual or show the respect due to national education officials” (App. I, p. 26: 2-3). This implementation of power works well with the social context of France that is firmly connected to self-sufficiency and patriotism. The unapologetic national pride has laid a foundation that welcomes *strongman* politics in the face of new challenges. This way, the determined and heroic presentation of Le Pen confirms the necessity of *hegemonic masculinity* in far-right leadership.

Persona

Le Pen's persona is clearly depicted on the election posters where she is presented as a political figure at the heart of the campaign. The posters feature an inviting photograph of Le Pen, highlighting how she invests in her feminine strengths, presenting herself with a soft and positive approach. However, the assertiveness and confidence conveyed through the depiction of Le Pen as the representative of the French people also indicates a perseverance of *hegemonic masculinity*. The following analysis will be structured around Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) three analytical dimensions: 1) *information value*, 2) *salience* and 3) *framing*.

The first dimension, *information value*, underscores the effects of composition and placement. As Le Pen is in the centre, with the visual focus being accentuated by the bland background, her importance is clearly emphasised. The clean composition, with few distractions and Le Pen's simple look, clarifies the personalised nature of her politics. Additional elements are deemed unnecessary, and it is especially noticeable that her party's name or logo is not included, further emphasising the personalised focus and minimal risk for distraction. The positioning aligns with the populist principles and masculine logic of the far-right, where confidence is highly valued in a leader. This insight is supported by the electoral program. For example, when promoting her aggressive immigration politics, Le Pen states: “No political pressure from abroad will alter my commitments in this area: **my hand will never tremble when it comes to protecting the safety of my compatriots**” (App. I, p. 8: 11-13). This enforces the individual responsibility and determination that she strives to identify with and corresponds with the far-right's admiration for male charisma.

The second dimension, *saliency*, focuses on how certain elements grab attention. Le Pen's portrayal exemplifies this with her moderate attire, relaxed demeanour, and effortless elegance. Her natural hair, minimal make-up, casual suit, soft eye-contact, and smile signals an investment in a "controlled" femininity. Considering the social context, a big part of Le Pen's political evolution has been related to distancing herself from her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen. The political strategy has been labelled a de-demonisation (*dédiabolisation*). Therefore, investing in *hegemonic femininity* can be interpreted a strategical decision disassociating her from her father's radicality. However, the complementary quote: "Statewoman" adds a nuanced layer, contrasting softness with capability. Le Pen is presented not only as inviting but also as a capable president of the republic. This portrayal challenges the far-right's negative perception of female leaders as it reminds the audience that a woman can embody valued masculine traits. By declaring herself as a "stateswoman", Le Pen emphasises her status while drawing a clear distinction between women and men, a *gender performance* with significant purpose. The message suggests that not all women are appropriate leaders, but Le Pen is. The second quote, "For all the French people", also underscores the populist foundation of her politics, highlighting the masculine logic of a strong and assertive leader who can fulfil the will of the people. Correspondingly, depicted against a dark blue background with a radiant glow illuminating her face (App. VI), as well as a white office background and a sharp focus on Le Pen (App. VII), she emerges as the core of the campaign, to which everything else is subservient. In summary, the attention-grabbing elements communicate a self-representation that handles the double bind of female leadership by exploiting *hegemonic femininity* while preserving the male charisma expected of a far-right populist leader.

Finally, *framing* puts focus on elements that divide and frame, indicating if certain elements belong together in the making of meaning. This dimension is relevant because of its absence. By placing Le Pen at the centre of attention, the emphasis on the leader is heightened, reinforcing the populist aspect of far-right leadership and the assertive element in *hegemonic masculinity*. Once again, Le Pen embodies the voice of the people and serves as the centrepiece of the campaign.

In conclusion, Le Pen's election posters promote her feminine traits, making it a significant part of her persona. However, in line with the interpretation of ideology and power, she is marked by *hegemonic masculinity* to assert authority as a far-right leader.

Le Pen navigates the challenge of female leadership by balancing *hegemonic masculinity* with her feminine attributes, effectively upholding the ethnonational ideal. She invests in her femininity and takes on the role of the “mother of the nation”, encompassing the nativist and populist aspirations of the right-wing movement. Furthermore, by sticking to the admired male charisma, Le Pen maintains authority while adapting her strategy to a performance compatible with that of a female leader. Finally, although *femininity* is given a larger role in Le Pen’s *strongman* politics, this does not lead to feminist progress. The use of *hegemonic femininity* serves a specific purpose of complementing and reinforcing the authority of masculinity, thereby upholding the hierarchical gender order of the far-right discourse.

5.2 Giorgia Meloni

In her bid to become Italy’s first female prime minister, Meloni anchored her campaign in a strong ideological language centred on themes of national sovereignty, traditional family values, and concerns over immigration. While emphasising Italy’s rich heritage, she advocates for drastic reforms in governance and law enforcement to guarantee stability and security. The program presents the party as the solution to the nation’s decline: “The story behind this journey is told by the cultural identity and patriotic commitment that have always characterised Fratelli d’Italia’s battles to redeem Italy from years of left-wing misrule” (App. III, p. 3: 9-10). The electoral program is structured into 25 points, outlining the party’s ideology while proposing a wide range of policy measures. It is marked by an aggressive rhetoric that is compensated with Meloni’s softer visual presentation on her poster, a dynamic that will be further explored in the following analysis. The examination will be structured by the three themes: *ideology*, *power*, and *persona* and explored within the context of far-right populist discourse and societal dynamics, as well as criticised through the lens of poststructuralist feminism.

Ideology

Aligned with the right-wing’s tendency to idealise the past and the aspiration to uphold a ‘natural’ order, Meloni’s program advocates an ideology that encompasses a blend of nativist, populist, and authoritarian values. With a focus on preserving Italy’s cultural heritage and sovereignty, the program declares: “We are not afraid. Fratelli d’Italia was born to defend and love the country. We are ready” (App. III, p. 3: 16-17). This statement also underscores the party’s emphasis on collective identity. The program consistently

refers to a “we”, serving as a technique to construct an exclusive national group. Although the language of the program is marked by the third-person tense, embodying the voice of the Italian people, statements like these still project a self-representation. Together, they promote an aggressive leader who will act decisively to protect the nation, an image influenced by the *hegemonic masculinity* within far-right populist leadership.

Following this, Meloni advocates for national protection and stricter policies, notably illustrated under the 21st point: “Stopping illegal immigration and restoring security to citizens” (App. III, p. 22). Through concise and direct language, the foreign ‘other’ is portrayed as a threat responsible for the perceived decline of the nation’s greatness and the party promotes tougher regulations. In addition to this, the program rejects concepts like “*ius soli*” (“right of the soil”), a widely acknowledged principle that the nationality of a person is determined by their country of birth (European Commission n.d). A limit on the maximum number of foreigners per classroom is also proposed and together this signals a xenophobic and nativist populism (App. IV, p. 2). The incentives contribute to a *gender performance* where Meloni represents a masculine rhetoric, enhancing a self-representation of her as a fitting far-right leader. This need to maintain a masculine identity is strengthened by Meloni’s preference of being referred to as “il presidente”, instead of the feminine form “la presidente”, in her first official communications as prime minister (Kaval 2022; Governo Italiano n.d). This also underscores the androcentric perception of leadership and the rejection of feminist progress.

The theme of family as a basic building block of society permeates the entire program. From the outset, it is presented as a foundational aspect of the party’s ideology: “For us, the family is the founding community of society, a sacred asset to be protected, not an old and outdated institution to be torn down” (App. III, p. 3: 7-8). While opposing gender ideology and promoting a traditional family, the rhetoric upholds the hierarchy inherent in the ‘natural’ order. For example, the program presents support measures specified for working mothers, enforcing the gendered responsibility of childcare (App. IV, p. 1: 9-17). Although expressing ambitions to address discrimination, such as the gender pay gap and to challenge stereotypes that portray women in subordinate roles, the program maintains a commitment to preserving the hierarchy within the ‘natural’ family. This is clearly rooted in *hegemonic masculinity* and *femininity* as it puts men and masculine qualities in a superior position. By advocating this, Meloni embodies the role of the “mother of the nation”. While aiming to protect her country, she also recognises women’s responsibilities

in contrast to men, a *gender performance* based on the complementary *hegemonic femininity* in far-right populist leadership.

This political stance is further underscored in the opening point of the shorter version: “Defence of the natural family, fight against gender ideology and support for life” (App. IV, p. 1: 16-17). By intertwining women’s empowerment with politics that align Italy’s culture with the concept of the ‘natural’ family, a mythic association is crafted. This combination implies that the ‘natural’ order inherently benefits women, while portraying foreign cultures as misogynistic and a threat to this progress. This is based on femonationalism, a far-right concept that involves leveraging feminism for xenophobic motives (Farris 2017, p. 4). The association is illustrated in the following statement: “Combating all forms of discrimination, promoting, and supporting pathways to emancipation from cultural stereotypes that see women in a condition of subordination” (App. III, p. 15: 19-20). While arguing that the protection against other cultures is beneficial for women, they simultaneously maintain a xenophobic femonationalism that is aligned with the masculine attributes of hostility and determination.

Power

As already indicated, the program is marked by a strong emphasis on power politics, with Meloni advocating for stricter policies and national protection. The program introduces a determined and forceful presentation of policy suggestions, illustrating a strategical use of masculine attributes to convey the goal of protecting the native culture. The frequent use of terms such as “strength”, “fight”, “combat” and “defend” constructs a rhetoric consistent with *strongman* politics. For example, under the 21st point, the program states: “*We need a strong political turnaround to ensure legality within our borders, to redevelop our territories and to strengthen the national, social, and economic fabric*” (App. III, p. 22: 28-30). This logic of strength and protection comes from Italy’s fascist roots, a fundamental aspect of Fratelli d’Italia’s *hegemonic masculinity* and power politics.

In addition to this, Meloni’s taste for law and order mirrors the far-right’s aim for a strict and organised society marked by xenophobia and populism. As the program promotes a collective identity, it is clear who is included and excluded, which builds upon the perception of power as a tool of exclusion. For example: “Defence of Europe’s classical and Judeo-Christian roots and its fundamental values of freedom, democracy, solidarity, subsidiarity, and justice” (App. III, p. 26: 16-17), and: “Enhancement of the Italian

language abroad, defence of Italianness, culture and Italian symbols in the world” (App. III, p. 8. 16-17). In relation to the social context of the 21st century, the hostile and aggressive power politics work consistently with the *strongman* strategy that has emerged as a perceived solution to the contemporary challenges. The aggressive power politics, particularly targeting Islam, is also evident in the shorter versions fifth point: “Protection of our identity from the process of islamization” (App. IV, p. 2). This can be attributed to the dominating negative discourse against Islam that gained momentum after the 9/11 attacks and continues amid ongoing terrorist crises. As a result, it has become more welcomed to turn politics inwards, rejecting globalisation and humanitarianism, than choosing a more diplomatic and collaborative approach.

Additionally, the 22nd point: “Fair and swift justice for citizens and businesses”, advocates for a justice reform, emphasising punishment to uphold honesty and justice for Italy (App. III, p. 23-24). A proposed new prison plan aims to ensure fairness, associating punishment with the resolution of societal issues, which is consistent with the right-wing’s admiration for dominant leadership. The program also suggests a presidential reform to ensure stability and a closer relationship between the leader and the people (App. III, p. 25; App. IV, p. 6). It becomes evident that Meloni asserts her dominance through various means, including resisting the integration of foreign cultures, amplifying the penalistic dimension of society and promoting a centred power. The adoption of *strongman* politics uplifts the role of *hegemonic masculinity* in viable leadership, further solidifying the exploitation of male traits in political self-representation. Ultimately, Meloni emerges as an aggressive far-right populist leader, embodying the core values of the political movement.

Persona

Against the backdrop of this masculine rhetoric, the persona of Meloni, portrayed on the electoral poster, provides a distinct contrast. Similar to Le Pen, Meloni is presented as the political figure at the heart of the campaign. As she poses with a soft smile and an inviting eye-contact, the photograph establishes a warm feminine presentation. To dissect her persona further, the analysis will be structured around Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) three analytical dimensions of visual communication: 1) *information value*, 2) *salience* and 3) *framing*.

The first dimension, *information value*, focuses on the placement of elements. In the rectangular poster (App. V), Meloni is placed on the far right, visually distinguished by a

gradient transition blending into the dark blue backdrop of the political message. This transitional boundary features a symbol, with “Giorgia Meloni” in capital letters atop of the party’s logo positioned just below. On the other side, the political slogan “Ready to lift up Italy” commands attention in a large font, with “Ready” specifically highlighted, followed by the date of the election beneath it. Collectively, the arrangement of these elements indicates an aspiration to position Meloni within the context of a parliamentary election. While she remains the central figure of the campaign, aligned with the populist ideal, emphasis is also placed on the party and the political message. These elements mutually reinforce each other, reflecting the collaborative dynamic of their politics that puts the group identity over individual prominence. This is aligned with Italy’s proud nationhood that puts value on the community, in contrast to solely the strength of a leader. The composition also underscores a *gender performance* strategy, where the masculine logic of the political rhetoric is complemented by a feminine visual presentation. This balance allows the self-representation to include Meloni’s feminine strengths, achieving the image of an empathic leader.

The second dimension, *saliency*, puts focus on the elements that catch attention. The inviting photograph of Meloni is characterised by her open demeanour, leaning into her left hand, adorned with subtle makeup, and red nail polish, complemented by statement earrings and a turquoise shirt. Together, these elements establish a feminine presence, contrasting and complementing the *hegemonic masculinity* evident throughout the electoral program. This can be connected to the principles of femonationalism, where feminism is used for nationalist objectives. As the program emphasises the goal of combating gender discrimination while upholding traditional family values and gendered responsibilities, the poster serves consistently with this association, representing a few female qualities. The quote: “Ready to lift up Italy”, serves to solidify her determined character, aligned with the narrative of nationalist *strongman* politics. This combination of assertive politics with a soft persona supports the notion of Meloni as the “mother of the nation”, blending determination with empathy. The balance between the *hegemonic masculinity* and *hegemonic femininity* aligns with nativist and femonationalist leadership styles, maintaining the superiority of masculinity and utilising the ethnonational ideals. It illustrates Meloni’s exploitation of the gendered power dynamic in far-right populist leadership.

The third dimension, *framing*, delves into the elements that divide and frame to create meaning. As noted earlier, the poster is split by a gradient transition between the dark blue background and the photograph of Meloni, serving as a visual divide underscoring that Meloni is not the sole focal point of the campaign. Instead, it highlights the triple importance of both the leader, the party, and the political message. Meloni is portrayed as the front figure, but the political logo and the large font on “Pronti” effectively relieves the focus and communicates a broader political statement. This diverges from the principles of *hegemonic masculinity*, which often prioritises individualism, and instead aligns more closely with the feminine traits of inclusivity. However, the previous dimensions have collectively established a self-representation shaped by an interplay proven to be deeply rooted in Italy’s national pride and influenced by the parliamentary election format. Together, it encompasses a balance between *hegemonic masculinity* and *hegemonic femininity*, reaching a self-representation with layers still appropriate within the context of far-right populist leadership.

6 Conclusion

In this new era of political leadership, *The Age of the Strongman*, the interplay of gendered power dynamics cannot be overlooked. Circling back to the guiding question of this thesis: “How does the self-representation of Marine Le Pen and Giorgia Meloni in their 2022 electoral campaigns exploit the power dynamics of masculinity and femininity in far-right populist leadership?”, the preceding analysis has unveiled three key findings: 1) the balance between masculine authority and feminine empathy, 2) the distinction between marginalisation of women and femininity itself, and 3) the femonationalist populism.

Both Le Pen and Meloni effectively adopt the leadership traits associated with *hegemonic masculinity* to establish authority, aligning themselves with the discourse of *strongman* politics. Their consistent use of terms such as “strength”, “protection”, and “defence” characterises them with a male charisma, a *gender performance* positioning them as suitable leaders in far-right populism. However, their advocacy for sovereignty, traditional family values, and xenophobic politics, also integrate feminine qualities, presenting the leaders with a maternal touch. While they remain loyal to the core values of the right-wing, promoting a ‘natural’ order demonstrates a balance of strength and compassion. As a result, they portray themselves as protectors and embody the ethnonational archetype of the “mother of the nation”. Supporting this balance, their campaign posters contrast the masculine power rhetoric of the programs with glimpses of the leader’s softer side, signalling a “controlled femininity” to redress the assertive male charisma. The *gender performance* of their leadership reinforces the gender hierarchy where masculinity is admired, and femininity is inferior, but also illustrates the utilisation of *hegemonic femininity* to complement and modernise the far-right approach.

Building on this, the analysis reveals that Le Pen and Meloni’s self-representation diverges from the far-right’s typical marginalisation of women and the associated traits. Instead, they maintain a connection to a specific type of femininity that is advantageous in the context. While they position leadership as a traditionally male domain, presenting themselves as an exception to this norm, they project an image of femininity marked by maternity and empathy, strategically utilising *hegemonic femininity* to reinforce their leadership positions. This performance illustrates the exploitation of the gendered power dynamics as it maintains a prejudice against women, isolating them into a maternal role,

while simultaneously leveraging traits of motherhood and empathy to bolster their leadership credibility. It serves to distinguish women from women, efficiently navigating the double bind of female leadership.

In their efforts to modernise their parties and become voices for the people, Le Pen and Meloni incorporate elements of feminism into their politics. For example, Le Pen advocates for additional support for single mothers, while Meloni seeks to narrow the gender pay gap. Their posters also clearly display a gender status, a *performance* underscored in one of Le Pen's poster quotes: "Femme d'état" ("Stateswoman"), signalling a role for women in politics. However, beneath these gestures of support lies an undertone of nationalism, particularly nativism. Both leaders intertwine the themes of women, traditional families, culture, and nationalism, portraying them as a collective threatened by immigration. The analysis reveals that this femonationalist approach effectively aligns with the populist ideal. Through the incorporation feminism, Le Pen and Meloni seek to garner support for their xenophobic initiatives, once again presenting themselves as protectors, "the mother of the nation". Ultimately, this uncovers the exploitation of *hegemonic femininity* in their self-representations, which aims to uphold the populist goal of their far-right politics, maintaining *hegemonic masculinity* and perpetuating the *strongman* era.

To conclude, these findings underscore that the admired *hegemonic masculinity* of far-right populist leadership is not confined to male leaders but has been skilfully performed by Le Pen and Meloni in their 2022 electoral campaigns. They exploit the power dynamic between masculinity and femininity as they present assertive, hostile, and aggressive power politics that fit into *The Age of the Strongman* and utilise *hegemonic femininity* in forms of motherhood and empathy to conform to the ethnonational ideals. Their *gender performance* constructs a female leadership aligned with the core values of the right-wing, navigating the dual bind as it gathers the strengths of both male charisma and female compassion.

7 Final discussion

As I approached this topic, it was important to not only consider its relevance in gender studies but also to contextualise it within the previous analyses of Le Pen and Meloni. I was determined to find an approach that would contribute with fresh insights and not simply reiterate what has already been established. While the main findings align with previous observations that Le Pen and Meloni strike a balance of masculine authority and feminine compassion, my analysis succeeds to expand upon this by examining how the exploitation is manifested in the electoral programs and posters, as well as the implications of these dynamics through a feminist perspective. The critical analysis enables a deeper understanding of the relationship between the far-right discourse, context, and political self-representation. The analytical congruence, despite significantly different material, illustrates the established power structure perpetuating through the political discourse, which I see as an interdisciplinary strength rather than weakness. To conclude, my choice of material and methodological approach not only reinforces but enriches the existing body of research on the exploitation of gendered dynamics within the political strategies of Le Pen and Meloni.

Another essential part of my study was the reflexive approach which involved acknowledging my biases, assumptions, and perspectives into the research strategy. While these aspects were not explicitly integrated in the analysis, I intentionally avoided a predetermined model to extract relevant elements. Instead, I relied on my intuition, partly shaped by the lens developed through establishing the theoretical framework. I understand that this can be viewed as a weakness as it does not prioritise reliability in a traditional sense. However, this strategy is aligned with the feminist framework where the researcher's perspective is a valued component of the analytical process. This approach allowed for a dynamic analysis, offering insights that may not have been as apparent through a stricter objective framework. To address this choice, I put considerable effort into developing the theoretical framework and research strategy. By clearly mapping out the process leading to the conclusions, I aimed to provide transparency despite the inherent subjectivity of the analysis.

As I conclude, I wish to highlight two elements that were not covered due to the limits of this assignment but could be relevant for future research on this topic. Firstly, I made a choice early on to reinterpret the interactive dimension of the multimodal FCDA to

maintain a focus on the actors. However, it would be interesting to explore how the campaigns were received by the public, and how the self-representations interact with the broader discourse in society. An additional analysis of this dimension could expand the currently limited far-right populist leadership discourse, providing a broader relevance of the study. Secondly, when analysing the electoral programs, I quickly encountered a difference in political traditions. As I approached the material with the same strategy, I was challenged by their unique rhetoric. Le Pen used a more personalised and stylistic approach, consistently emphasising her individual responsibility to France. In contrast, Meloni presented her politics through succinct sentences, accentuating the Italian “we” with a limited literary style. For future research, an in-depth exploration of each country’s political culture could offer important insights to the analysis, shedding light on diverse traditions and their implications for the political campaigns. By addressing them, the analysis could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the political landscape.

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9 Appendices

Appendix I. Le Pen 2022. Electoral program.

Original text: Le Pen, M. (2022). Mon programme présidentiel. *M la France*. Available at: <https://mlafrance.fr/pdfs/manifeste-m-la-france-programme-presidentiel.pdf> (Accessed: 7 April 2024).

M la France: My presidential project

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My ambition for France

After years of meeting hundreds of thousands of French people, after years of warning them about the dangers of mass immigration and deregulated globalisation, after years of analysing the ills that affect them and years of working to bring about change, the project I am presenting
5 here has its roots in centuries of civilisation. More than ever, I am proposing a reasonable way forward to guarantee the French people the legitimate protection of the Nation and to project our country into a future that we hope will be radiant.

The last two years have shown all our compatriots the limits of the policy chosen decades ago, of which Emmanuel Macron could be the last representative. The time has come for our country
10 to close this parenthesis and rediscover the greatness it has enjoyed for centuries. The years 2020-2021 will go down as one of the great revelations of our hidden weaknesses: we had "the best healthcare system in the world", and the hospital was the diamond point; our social model, reflecting our deep-rooted concept of national solidarity, offered the French people the most comprehensive and effective protection. All it took was for a virus to arrive from China, and
15 we saw the amateurism and unpreparedness of the public authorities, the sudden halt to the economic machine, fundamental freedoms suspended and the craziest bureaucracy at the helm. The French people experienced this debacle as a humiliation.

The vast majority of our compatriots have seen this period of constraints and deprivation, whether for our elders confined to retirement homes, for young people whose diplomas and
20 futures were suddenly very uncertain, or for the most modest workers responsible for running the activities essential to community life. I am convinced that this crisis has not yet left its mark on people's consciences, and that not all of its effects are yet perceptible. Not only did it reveal the government's inability to anticipate events that were nonetheless foreseeable, it also revealed the exhaustion of our healthcare system, incapable for a country of 67 million inhabitants,
25 of providing more than 4,000 intensive care hospital places, but it has revealed the impotence of the State and the collapse of our country.

As a consequence of France's decline, the health crisis has, at the same time, given us the exact measure of it. It has torn away the veil that had been masking the real state of our nation; I take
no comfort, for example, in the fact that tens of thousands of French students have been reduced
30 to queuing for "one-euro meals".

This crisis is, in the final analysis, the ultimate defeat of the policy pursued since the turn of the 1980s. A policy synonymous with opening up to the wider world, unfair competition and 'happy globalisation'. A policy that first led to the accelerated impoverishment of our country, the retreat of its sovereignty, the collapse and relocation of its industries, the total opening up of its borders to the benefit of a workforce that could be drilled mercilessly, importing unfair competition for French workers, soon to be joined by whole families attracted by widely distributed social benefits.

All these phenomena, accompanied or observed by our leaders, with blind satisfaction or scandalous resignation, have led to the impoverishment of society and the collapse of our national identity. In truth, it's hard to feel proud of being French in this global village whose leaders have allowed us to become its idiots.

This parenthesis is closing, in failure. Faced with the major challenges of the coming decades - the scarcity of raw materials, increasing migratory tensions, climatic upheavals - the French people rightly feel weakened, powerless, as if dazed by forty years of blindness and naivety on the part of a ruling caste that has never ceased to sell off the national heritage.

But because I believe deeply in Politics, as I am deeply convinced that this is not fated, I believe that the stakes in the forthcoming presidential election can be defined with luminous clarity: if Emmanuel Macron is re-elected, our country will follow its path towards collapse. If France reconnects with power, with sovereignty, with its civilisational roots so deeply embedded in each of us, it will be able to look the century ahead in the eyes. Yes, our nation still has much to say to the world; all we lack is the will to give substance to this great vocation.

Our country is unique in that it was the State that made the Nation. The path to renewal therefore lies in rebuilding the State, both in terms of its missions and the way it carries them out.

My ambition is to rise to this challenge.

In all conscience, it is because it is still possible, in 2022, to avoid the worst that I am once again seeking the votes of my compatriots. It is because my ambition for France is commensurate with the love I have for her that I have endeavoured, since the last presidential election, to draw up the proposals that follow, with a single compass: to give our country the means to regain its freedom and its greatness.

This manifesto is an opportunity to set out my vision for France, based on the three requirements that the State must meet in order to give our country the leap forward that I hope and pray for -

protection, projection, and transmission - and to present the philosophy of the policy that I will be pursuing during my five-year term.

Details of these measures can be found in the various thematic booklets published during these months of campaigning; the main ones can be found in the document “22 measures for 2022”.

5 **The duty to protect**

DEFENDING NATIONAL TERRITORY IN A DETERIORATING INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

The figures will also be made public during the campaign. Since politics is first and foremost a question of choices and priorities, it is through savings that I will finance new spending and through a reorientation of our economic model that I intend to restore the public finances that will have deteriorated significantly at the end of this five-year term.

Our country is now faced with a return to power politics in a context of general rearmament of nations. Everywhere, we are witnessing an increasingly uninhibited use of violence, coupled with a growing contempt for international law. The policy of the accomplished fact has gradually become the norm. Unfortunately, the war in Ukraine proves this once again. We therefore have a duty, in order to ensure that our interests are defended on a global scale, to improve our defence tools. The armed forces of all European Union member states are currently in a state of decline. The armies of all the member countries of the European Union are now in a state of decline: only France, with its capacity for projection and rapid intervention, is an exception to this rule. This observation dictates the duty of the Head of the Armed Forces for the years to come.

This is why, first and foremost, I want our country, the world's second most powerful country in terms of geography because of the extent of its legitimate domain, a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and the holder of nuclear weapons, to take the measure of its responsibilities and opt for a hands-free policy. This presupposes that France withdraws from NATO's integrated command, puts an end to the industrial cooperation with Germany in the field of armaments, to the detriment of our technological sovereignty and our industrial interests, given our doctrinal and operational divergences, and lays the foundations for closer cooperation with the United Kingdom in line with the Lancaster House agreements. Above all, I hope that the new agreements will focus on three strategic issues for France: the fight against Islamic terrorism, cyber security, and space.

This hands-free policy must also open up new areas of influence for our country. Firstly, this means doing everything possible to mitigate the consequences of the extraterritoriality of US law.

5 Today, France is increasingly absent from many regions of the world. Particularly after the bitter failure in Austria, we need to build strategic partnerships with a number of key countries in Europe, around the Mediterranean, in Asia and in Latin America. To achieve this objective, we will need to strengthen our human resources to improve our detailed knowledge of these areas. I would also like to review our doctrine for future operations, which should be based above all on defending our national interests.

10 Thirdly, our defence policy must continue to be based on a clear, credible, permanent, and entirely national doctrine of nuclear deterrence, which implies the modernisation of all its components and the return to the national fold of industrial sectors that have been outsourced. It also means increasing the overseas format of our defence policy, particularly from Réunion to New Caledonia. Lastly, we need to devote more effort to human, technical and space
15 intelligence.

These priorities can only be implemented under two conditions.

20 Firstly, a significant financial effort, enabling us to reach a budget of around 55 billion euros by 2027, so that the human resources, equipment, and munitions of the armed forces can be increased. So that the availability of soldiers is also guaranteed, whatever the European Court of Justice may say, its ruling on the application of the Labour Directive to the military must be taken for what it is: contrary to the interests of the nation.

25 Secondly, the moral rearmament of the armed forces. Since 2017, too many humiliations have been inflicted on the military. My conviction is that the military state must be respected in all its forms, and its traditions maintained and popularised. Military conditions must be improved in terms of income, housing, care for the injured and retraining. I also want the armed forces to participate fully in major national and strategic debates.

PROTECTING THE FRENCH PEOPLE FROM MIGRATORY SUBMERSION

30 Because it is the role of the State, but also because the vast majority of French people want it, our country must regain full control over immigration. Within six months of the presidential election, I will be asking the French people to adopt a number of essential provisions by

referendum, otherwise the very future of France as a nation will be compromised. The text of the bill has been fully drafted and was the first public element of my campaign.

5 It is based on two simple principles: it is up to the French, and them alone, to determine the immigration policy that our country should follow; the residence of foreigners in France is not a right but must be subordinated solely to the satisfaction of France's interests.

To make the first principal concrete, the referendum will amend a number of articles of our Constitution in order to incorporate the migration issue into our supreme text, but also to prevent supranational courts from forcing France to follow policies contrary to the will of the French people.

10 For the practical application of the second principle, I will propose to the French people in the referendum to ban all forms of settlement aimed at altering France's identity (in particular through family reunification, which will become a rare exception). Similarly, I propose that illegal, criminal, or delinquent foreigners should be systematically and immediately deported. Similarly, foreigners who come to work will have to return home after a year's unemployment.

15 In this respect, I believe it is essential to remove all the legal obstacles that currently stand in the way of the expulsion of foreigners who are delinquent or criminals, and of a court order banning them from French territory. Furthermore, if a foreign State refuses to take back its nationals, it will experience a firmness that no French leader before me has dared to use in the last fifty years: money transfers from France to the country concerned will be blocked and no
20 visas will be issued to any of its nationals. This simple rule will make it possible, without delay, to re-establish France's authority in migration matters on the international stage.

At last, the referendum will make it possible to set in constitutional stone the rules governing French nationality, the way in which it is acquired or the serious cases in which it can be withdrawn, the possibility of resorting to national priority, a principle that exists in a large
25 number of countries, which makes it possible, for example, to reserve a certain number of social benefits for French nationals only or to give them priority access to social housing. Finally, I will restore the right of asylum to its rightful application, so that it is no longer a channel for immigration but a fair means of protecting the persecuted.

Finally, I propose to take all the necessary legal measures to ensure that the Republic upholds the
30 primacy of common law and prohibits not only all forms of communalism but also the expression and development of extremist ideologies, particularly Islamist ones.

Over the years, successive governments have allowed the threat of Islamist terror to take hold in France. This Islamist offensive seeks to erect in our country a counter-model for society based on a totalitarian ideology. In addition to the attacks that have plunged France into mourning, this offensive is taking on such proportions that it is now threatening the very equilibrium of our society and even civil harmony. That's why I've tabled a bill to combat Islamist ideologies, which are incompatible with our values, our history and our culture, and which stem from a totalitarian vision of social life. Rather than hindering the fundamental freedoms enshrined in the laws of the Republic to the detriment of all, my ambition is to **introduce specific legislation aimed solely at Islamist ideologies, which are the real totalitarian threat of modern times.**

10 RESTORING SECURITY AND REDISCOVERING JUSTICE FOR THE COMMON GOOD

As everyone can see, the safety of our fellow citizens is steadily deteriorating. It's not a question of a "feeling of insecurity", but of a tangible, daily reality: gratuitous assaults, gang or domestic violence, trafficking of all kinds, not least drugs, which create areas where French law is no longer applied, not to mention the almost systematic threats to all those who represent authority, from policemen to teachers, firemen and even caregivers.

I have worked on these issues at length over the last few years, devoting two "White Papers" to them, one entitled *Safety, Everywhere and for Everyone* and the other entitled *For a justice system that protects*. There is an urgent need to put the State back in its rightful place, which is to protect citizens and punish offenders.

20 In this area, there is no such thing as fatality; it's simply a matter of taking political responsibility for the exercise of authority after a lucid analysis of reality.

If we are to combat delinquency and crime effectively, we need to increase the numbers and budgets of the forces of law and order and the justice system, strengthen cooperation between the various players - I'm thinking, for example, of mayors, who are currently insufficiently involved in State policy in this area - and simplify procedural rules that have become so time-consuming and fussy that they hinder the search for the truth and discourage police officers and judges. All too rarely do victims benefit from the moral reparation that, in any civilised society, the punishment meted out to the perpetrators of offences constitutes.

It is then necessary to show common sense by quickly imposing appropriate sentences on those found guilty by a court of law. The penal policy implemented in the Netherlands, which follows the opposite logic to that of France, has produced remarkable results: for the first serious

offence, short or even very short prison sentences are handed down and carried out as soon as they are pronounced. Offenders are punished immediately, deterring repeat offences, and sparing the police from running into the offender from the previous day in the street on the day of their arrest. Victims of blows, injuries, insults, theft, or damage to their property will find
5 that sentences handed down and enforced quickly provide more satisfactory reparation than in the current situation.

As for foreign offenders, who are currently over-represented among the delinquent population, and criminals, in application of the principles validated by the referendum, will be expelled from our territory, reducing the risk of receives and also reducing the budgetary cost of
10 delinquency. I will also enter into negotiations with the countries of origin of the majority of these criminals so that they can serve all or part of their sentence in their own country. No political pressure from abroad will alter my commitments in this area: **my hand will never tremble when it comes to protecting the safety of my compatriots.**

As soon as I am elected, any violence, however minor, will be punished without the slightest
15 complacency. Sentence adjustments and alternatives to punishment (electronic bracelets, community service) will be drastically limited: only prisoners with exemplary behaviour and convicts who pose no immediate danger to public order will benefit.

I would also like to see specific measures taken to better prevent and punish violence committed against spouses or ex-spouses. The willingness to take action that Spain has shown for several
20 years in this area is lacking in France. Violent spouses or ex-spouses must be brought to justice as quickly as possible and measures to protect victims must be effective.

While the education of minors must remain a priority, it cannot be achieved at the expense of punishment. The rationale behind the fight against juvenile delinquency must therefore change. Juvenile offenders must be punished without delay, punishment being one of the dimensions of
25 education. It is just as necessary to make their parents aware of their responsibilities, so that it is not just the State that helps to put them back on the right track. This in no way precludes determined action in this area: during my term of office, I am committed to creating at least one closed educational centre in each department.

The return of republican order in my view, it is a priority to target all areas where drug
30 trafficking, gangs or mafias lay down their own laws. This is particularly true when it comes to drug trafficking, which is a source of funding for terrorism and affects the whole of society, taking an extremely worrying turn in rural areas.

In order to deal more effectively with acts committed by gangs, particularly urban violence, **I would like to see the concept of co-perpetrator, different from that of accomplice, introduced into criminal law.** This will enable the courts to seek to determine the precise role played by each co-perpetrator, while at the same time imposing a penalty on each of them. This innovation will also make it possible to better compensate victims, as each co-perpetrator will be jointly and severally liable for the others.

Finally, if order is to be restored, those who hold public office or participate in public service must be better protected by strengthening the legal arsenal. The introduction of minimum sentences will first of all concern the perpetrators of offences committed against them. At present, the court's discretion is limited by the maximum penalty set out in the Criminal Code. I would like this assessment to be framed both by a maximum and, for certain offences, by a minimum.

As an essential condition for the success of this new penal policy, the number of prison places will be increased to 85,000 over six years. No longer will any judge be able to hide behind the shortage of places to implement a permissive ideology.

As far as the fight against terrorism is concerned, I believe that it is not just a matter of security. Other public policies must contribute to it: immigration policy, foreign policy, intelligence policy. It's a question not only of waging a battle of civilisation to preserve our democracies and the principles on which they are founded, but also of better detecting and hindering terrorist plans by individuals or groups, whether present in France or abroad.

Radical mosques will be systematically closed down, and associations that promote the weakening of social ties or challenge our constitutional principles and values in the name of Islamist ideology will be systematically dissolved.

While the proper functioning of the criminal justice system is a concern for the French because they want to live in security once again, almost three-quarters of the cases handled by the courts involve civil proceedings: family cases, industrial tribunals, commercial cases, and all kinds of litigation. Yet the time taken to reach a decision is long - almost two years for a divorce at first instance and almost a year and a half for industrial tribunals - but even longer when one of the parties appeals. What's more, these timescales vary considerably from one court to another. It can take up to three years for an industrial tribunal case to come to trial.

This situation is unworthy of our country. It handicaps individuals and companies who turn to the courts to settle disputes that could not be settled any other way.

The civil justice system, so little talked about, yet so important for millions of French people every year, needs to settle cases much more quickly than it does today. To achieve this, it is
5 necessary to increase the resources devoted to it, to digitise all procedures and acts and to simplify procedures that deserve to be simplified.

In order to drastically reduce delays and ensure that they are more or less the same in all courts, I will be instructing the Minister of Justice to draw up an action plan that will enable us to offer the French people, by the end of the five-year period, a fast civil justice system, i.e. one that
10 judges cases in half the time. To achieve this, we will be recruiting several thousand magistrates over five years, by considerably opening up the channels of access: lawyers or police officers, retired members of the legal profession or even representatives of civil society will be able to benefit from an extended external tour, while guaranteeing the quality of recruitment. There is an urgent need to free the French justice system from the lax ideology, explicit or not, conscious,
15 or not, to which some of its representatives have been de facto subjected for decades.

PUTTING AN END TO THE THEFT OF FRANCE AND THE FRENCH BY FIGHTING FRAUD

Fraud is intolerable. The vagueness surrounding the figures speaks volumes about the carelessness of the State: the authorities detected over a billion euros in social security fraud in
20 2018, and the parliamentary committee of enquiry set up in 2020 estimated it at between 14 and 40 billion euros a year. Whatever the case, it undermines national solidarity and equality between insured persons and taxpayers, as well as the requirement for proper use of public funds, as enshrined in Article 13 of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen of 1789. Fraud is theft, committed to the detriment not only of taxpayers but also of recipients of
25 benefits, the sick and the re-treated, who could benefit from higher benefits if it did not divert the national effort from its legitimate purpose. It is therefore a matter of the utmost importance and requires vigorous action to be taken against fraudsters.

To this end, I would like to create a ministry dedicated to the fight against fraud, which will have authority over all the relevant administrations. It will have access to the services and
30 resources of the specialised inspectorates and will have the power to issue public injunctions to social security bodies and to set them quantified targets. Social security fraud must also be treated in the same way as tax fraud, i.e. it must be possible to refer cases to the judicial

authorities once fraud has been detected. France must equip itself with effective tools (e.g. biometric health cards) and the fight against social fraud, which is seen as a scourge and an injustice by all our compatriots, with the most modest being the first victims. Similarly, the fight against cartels, import fraud (particularly food fraud), labelling fraud and fraudulent expansion of supermarkets will be dealt with without complacency.

The penalties for proven fraud will be increased. **A fine equal to three times the amount received for the first fraud, then five times for the second, will be introduced immediately.** Beyond that, temporary suspensions of social security entitlements, proportionate to the seriousness of the offences, may be imposed. Penalties will have to be codified, and an adversarial procedure to establish the facts will have to be instituted. Finally, officers of social security bodies will be given judicial police powers, so that they can interview suspects and issue summonses to appear in court on the instructions of the public prosecutor, while at the same time introducing statistical monitoring of the treatment of offences by the judicial authorities.

As President of the Republic, I will no longer allow the French people to be robbed by those who have been undermining our collective prosperity with impunity for so many years.

REVITALISING OUR HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

The Covid-19 crisis revealed the extent of the deterioration in our healthcare system, which until recently was still considered by many of our compatriots to be the "best healthcare system in the world".

Today, more than 9 million of our compatriots live in a medical desert. The Regional Health Agencies (ARS), which were supposed to combat territorial inequalities in access to healthcare, have failed. Private practitioners are increasingly concentrated in metropolitan areas, leading to a desertification that is now affecting medium-sized towns for general practitioners and the whole of France for specialists.

That's why I want to implement a voluntary policy to combat medical deserts without delay. In these areas, consultations will be reimbursed at a subsidised rate to self-employed doctors by the social security system. Financial incentives for the creation of health centres will be increased, to enable them to treat "minor emergencies" wherever appropriate. Finally, telemedicine will be rolled out through a national investment plan for these technologies.

At the same time, **the Regional Health Authorities (ARS)** will be abolished, and hospital governance will be modified to improve coordination between administrative and medical staff. From now on, all public hospitals will be managed by a pair of doctors and a director.

5 The first will be responsible for healthcare policy and its development; the second for administrative and financial matters. A maximum threshold of 10% administrative staff will be introduced in all public hospitals; the social security contributions of the French people should not be used to finance chronic over-administration, which does nothing to improve the quality of care.

Putting an end to bureaucratic hospital management and medical deserts: that is my
10 ambition for our healthcare system. I believe that the simple measures I have just outlined are likely to achieve this dual objective, which is a real national priority.

To relieve the burden on emergency departments, I want to create geriatric emergency departments, dedicated to the elderly, and to link emergency departments to GP surgeries.

15 Finally, I am promising to make a substantial financial effort for all caregivers in order to raise their salaries and achieve a level of remuneration commensurate with their commitment.

Furthermore, the health crisis that has shaken our country has highlighted the inadequacy of the measures taken for the elderly and their careers. This is why I would like to see the investment plan for EPHADs, which is due to start in 2020, speeded up and given an extra billion euros, as well as tighter controls on establishments and their supervision being entrusted exclusively to
20 the prefects. In addition, in view of the current recruitment difficulties and the scale of future needs, it is imperative that additional pay rises are implemented for EPHAD staff.

GUARANTEEING DISABLED PEOPLE THEIR RIGHTFUL PLACE IN SOCIETY

25 Despite the inclusion of the value of "fraternity" in our national motto, public policies in favour of the most vulnerable members of our society, and disabled people in particular, are still not up to scratch. The national unity that I defend requires a social unity in which people with disabilities have an inescapable place.

30 Despite the government's promises, the situation is still highly unsatisfactory, as evidenced by the length of time it takes to obtain information from the Departmental Disability Centres (MDPH), not to mention the disparities between departments, and all the families forced to go into exile in Belgium to find a home for their disabled child or father.

As part of the constitutional reform, the fight against discrimination on the grounds of disability will be enshrined in our Constitution. This symmetrical measure will underline the importance of this issue as part of the civilisational debate that the forthcoming election will decide. To make this right effective, I will strengthen the legal protection of disabled people. This will
5 involve clear instructions from the Keeper of the Seals to prosecutors in cases of violence or insult against a disabled person, who will have to be more severe in their orders.

This protection will also cover financial issues. To this end, the AAH, **the disabled adult allowance, will be deconjugalised.** It is unfair for the income of a disabled person to depend on that of his or her spouse. The AAH will also be indexed to inflation. We also need to improve
10 access to employment for disabled people, and tax measures could be taken, including in apprenticeship centres. Accessibility to public transport and the digital world will obviously be improved, and efforts have already been made.

The disabled include a large number of children, for whom the situation is also very complicated, particularly due to a lack of health professionals or support (e.g. AESH). A major
15 plan for welcoming disabled children at school will be launched, based on the principle of inclusion in the ordinary school environment. For example, a substantial increase in the number of ULIS classes will be launched in the first few months of my five-year term. For those with severe disabilities, several tens of thousands of places will be created in specialised establishments. In addition, the 2018 autism plan will be speeded up; too many families are currently powerless
20 to cope with the onset of these disorders in their children; each department will be equipped with a screening centre for young autistic children.

Finally, the families of disabled people will be fully affected by the measures on family careers developed later in this manifesto.

The need for projection

25 PUTTING FRANCE BACK ON THE MAP OF NATIONS

In the multipolar world that surrounds us, France's role remains special, in keeping with the place assigned to it by history and geography, but also thanks to our status as a permanent member of the Security Council, which must under no circumstances be shared. It must once again become
30 a great independent nation, and its foreign policy must, in my view, be guided first and foremost by the defence of our interests.

In my view, this should be achieved through greater reliance on bilateral relations.

We need to focus on two areas if we are to regain this position. Firstly, the French-speaking world, which must become the main instrument of our influence in the world, not only cultural but also political and economic. In this respect, the French-speaking countries of Africa, which have been unjustly neglected for too many years, must play a key role in the Francophone Union that I am calling for. The second is, of course, **the creation of European Alliance of Nations, which will gradually replace the European Union.** This Europe of free and sovereign nations, embracing its age-old heritage, will be a Europe of cooperation and will put an end to the plans of those who want to turn the European Union into an ideologically charged federalist superstate. The many contacts I have been able to develop in a large number of European countries, including with several heads of government, give me hope that this project will come to fruition in the medium term.

OVERSEAS FRANCE: A TREMENDOUS ASSET FOR RESTORING FRANCE'S GREATNESS

First and foremost, we need to consolidate French security over our entire maritime and submarine domain, which is one of the largest in the world. There are threats to its integrity, whether in Clipperton or the Eparses Islands. Every measure will be taken to ensure that the territories in question remain French and that France's presence there is reaffirmed. To the same end, and without prejudice to diplomatic action to enable our country to successfully claim possession of the 500,000 km² resulting from the extension of our continental shelves, public action in terms of exploration and exploitation of the seabed will be placed under the authority of a Minister for the Sea and Overseas Territories.

Secondly, **the special status of the overseas collectivities within the Republic, enshrined in the Constitution, must be reaffirmed, and defended,** particularly in the face of encroachment attempts by the institutions of the European Union, which are always tempted to challenge the specific nature of these collectivities. In the wake of the referendums that anchored New Caledonia in France, we cannot be satisfied with a status quo fraught with uncertainty. I want the issue to be addressed without preconceptions and with goodwill. To this end, I will be bringing together the representatives of all the parties involved to find innovative and sustainable institutional solutions.

Thirdly, the migratory pressure faced by some overseas collectivities needs to be brought under control. This is particularly the case in Mayotte, where nearly 75% of the population is of foreign origin. Naturally, the provisions of the referendum on immigration will apply overseas.

Fourthly, the continuing deterioration of the economic and social situation in our overseas collectivities calls for urgent, common-sense measures. For example, **as part of a 15-year program law, I intend to provide for better exploitation of the economic and mining potential of the communities in question**, to reintroduce and simplify the provisions of the Pons and Perben laws, which have lost their clarity, and to use tax incentives to encourage rental investment, build the port infrastructure needed to open up the economies of the areas concerned, and finally adapt environmental standards, which are all too often completely out of step with reality, to local circumstances.

Finally, I attach the utmost importance to ensuring that all aspects of the issue of the high cost of living in the overseas collectivities are addressed without delay. **Dock dues, for example, will be reformed.** Finally, our overseas compatriots will be given priority access to education and social housing in metropolitan France, and the successful adapted military service will be developed.

ENSURING STRONG ECONOMIC GROWTH FOR EMPLOYMENT, PURCHASING POWER AND THE COMMON GOOD

Our country's economic situation is hardly glowing, even though the leaders who have succeeded each other have all been presented as “economic Mozarts”. Two figures illustrate this state of affairs: a record public debt of €2,834.3 billion (an increase of 27% over the five-year period, or €597 billion, which is far from being the result of the health crisis alone), and a trade balance that is historically in deficit, reaching €77.6 billion over the last twelve months. The poor economic management of the health crisis, with unnecessary closures and a choice of debt rather than equity consolidation, has left our country in a very difficult economic situation, accentuating the extent of the decline that has affected our country for several decades.

But as in other areas, I do not believe in fatality and I believe that another policy is possible, a policy that will put the State back in its rightful place, that will preserve our social model and that will give our country the tools to face the challenges of the future calmly.

In the economic sphere, the role of the State is first and foremost to create a favourable environment for the development of businesses, the lifeblood of our economy, throughout the country; this is precisely what I hope to achieve through the establishment of a strategic State.

Firstly, **we need to reorientate our economy towards the principle of localism and economic patriotism.** In the wake of a health crisis that has starkly highlighted the dangers of monodialism

and our country's dependence on imports, the choice of localism is more necessary than ever in terms of sovereignty, sustainable development and, of course, employment.

To support this policy, the French people will be asked to get involved by mobilising their savings. These savings have now reached very high levels and it seems appropriate to direct them towards the economic development of our country. This is why I want to see the French Sovereign Fund (FSF) set up without delay, and its capital gradually increased during my term of office. Guaranteeing a return of at least 2% to the French people who invest in it, it will be dedicated to investment in the French economy, of course, but also in assets that are strategic to France's sovereignty abroad, such as energy commodities. Careful selection of investments will ensure that France has a long-term fund that will make a decisive contribution to growth, employment, and the well-being of the French people. The first use of The Sovereign Wealth Fund will consist of placing motorway companies in the hands of the public authorities, so that the fruits of the investments made are returned to the French people. As an instrument of the strategic State, the Sovereign Wealth Fund will also have to finance the ecological transformation expected by our compatriots and restore to basic research, research and development and innovation the human and material resources that will enable France to regain its place among the leading technological nations. **By investing in the FSF, every French person can become a shareholder in France, an investor and therefore a player in the country's development.**

To reinforce economic patriotism and underline its relevance, particularly in terms of growth, I will use the powerful lever of public procurement. In clear and assertive opposition to the dogmas of unrestrained globalisation, **national** (or European in certain cases) **priority will apply to public procurement.**

Secondly, it involves a policy of regional development and rebalancing: this is the famous demetropolisation that I want to implement. First and foremost, we will need to strengthen the network of transport infrastructure, but also this will enable public services to be re-routed and, at the same time, businesses that create activity and jobs to develop and set up. To this end, **I will be relaunching a dormant tool** that had already proved its worth, **the Prime d'Aménagement des Territoires.**

Thirdly, we need to maintain healthy competition for our businesses. Firstly, with regard to foreign markets. This will require a significant strengthening of import controls and an end to the practice of secondment, which is in reality a disguised relocation and a real drain on our

public finances. Secondly, on a national level, we need to launch a major simplification policy. Bureaucratisation affects VSEs and SMEs much more than large companies, and it is an illusion to think that those who have made things more complex will be able to make the expected simplifications, and secondly to put an end to this hyper-standardisation, often initiated by the European Union, which affects very small businesses to the detriment of large groups.

It is because VSBs and SMBs are the generators of tomorrow's jobs and the best way of ensuring that our regions are firmly rooted that they will be at the heart of my economic policy. They will therefore be the main beneficiaries of the reduction in production taxes that I intend to initiate in the first few months of my five-year term. **This will involve abolishing the Cotisation Foncière des Entreprises (CFE).** The abolition of the Contribution Sociale de Solidarité des Sociétés, C3S, will be reserved for relocation zones. Finally, to ensure that VSEs and SMEs take root over time in our economic landscape, I will be abolishing inheritance tax when they are passed on to the next generation; under a Dutreil pact, the conditions of which will be updated, the heirs will no longer pay tax if they commit to keeping the company for at least 10 years.

Finally, if we are to return to sustainable, deep-rooted growth, the State will need to take resolute action to boost household purchasing power. **The aim will be to restore between 150 and €200 per month, per household, in purchasing power,** in particular by reducing spending constraints.

A very significant effort will be made **on all energy products – petrol, heating oil, gas, and electricity** - which will be considered as basic necessities, for which **VAT will be reduced from 20% to 5.5%.** This permanent measure will immediately restore purchasing power to households, from the most modest to the middle classes. It will be combined with an immediate 15% reduction in motorway tolls and the privatisation of public broadcasting, enabling the licence fee to be abolished. The national priority that I intend to institute for access to social housing will also help to secure the incomes of our compatriots.

In order to raise wages, a win-win measure will be proposed to companies. As part of a company contract, they will be exempted from the increase in employers' social security contributions in the event of a 10% increase in all wages up to 3 SMIC.

Other measures aimed particularly at families, the elderly and certain professions, which will be presented later in this manifesto, will also have a significant effect on household purchasing power.

It goes without saying that such an ambition for prosperity cannot be achieved without a greater demand for justice. That's why **I want to see the abolition of the real estate wealth tax (IFI)**, which hampers the preservation and transfer of assets and removes the tax burden from fortunes made exclusively from securities, **and the introduction of a financial wealth tax (IFF)**. This tax, which
5 will target speculation, will include financial products, and works of art held for less than 10 years; to protect rootedness, the main or sole residence and professional assets will be excluded from the tax base. My intention is that the proceeds of this tax will be used to implement a family policy that will repair the damage caused by ten years of anti-family policies.

MAKING YOUNG PEOPLE THE PRIORITY OF THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

10 Hard hit by the health crisis, young people are sorely lacking in hope, which is a worrying indicator for our country. According to some studies, more than 80% of young people envisage their future abroad. Their low employment rate is not only a worrying indicator, but above all a threat to the preservation of our social model, which is based above all on contributions from the working population.

15 As far as employment is concerned, the existing schemes are not achieving the desired objective because the various economic players are not sufficiently mobilised. I want young people aged 16 to 25 to have the earliest possible access to the labour market. To this end, a voucher will be created for the benefit of apprentices and work-study students; paid in equal parts to the host
20 company and the young person being trained, the amount will be 5,700 euros per year for young people under 18, and 8,000 euros between the ages of 18 and 30. This will not only reward training companies for their contribution to the national training effort, but will also raise the pay of all French apprentices and alternating apprentices by almost 30%.

Furthermore, in order to support the value of work but also to relieve the financial burden on students' families, I will be introducing support for students who work during their studies. The
25 second is free transport at off-peak times for 18-25 year olds.

It was with this same idea of getting more young people into the labour market that I launched a major pension reform aimed at restoring greater fairness. Anyone who has started work before the age of twenty will be able to retire at the age of 60 if they have 40 years of contributions. For others, the vast majority of whom will have less physically demanding jobs, their retirement
30 age and length of contribution will depend on the age at which they started work.

Unprecedented arrangements will also be put in place for young people in work: exemption from income tax for all those under 30; exemption from corporation tax for all young people setting up a business, for a period of five years; I want our young people to set up their own business in France.

5 As President of the Republic, **throughout my term of office I will be committed to rewarding young people who are willing to work**, far from any pipe dream of welfare, because that is not a desirable horizon for any young person. By improving the management of our social protection model and giving them the means to invest in the national economy, I will give the French people back the levers they need to face the future with confidence.

10 REINFORCING OUR ENERGY INDEPENDENCE

An independent energy supply is a prerequisite for national independence. Up until 2007, General de Gaulle and his successors all preserved the technological jewel that is France's nuclear power stations, which guarantee the large-scale production of cheap, decarbonised energy. For electoral reasons, Emmanuel Macron has taken the opposite path, deciding to close the Fessenheim plant
15 too soon. Today, it is hard to see what France's energy policy is. He has failed to avert the threats to EDF's future posed by the same Commission and plans to privatise all of France's hydroelectric dams. Worse still, by taking the scandalous decision at the beginning of 2022 to force EDF to increase the quota of electricity sold at preferential rates to private electricity suppliers, in the name of a competitive ideology that has gone mad, Emmanuel Macron has continued his liquidation of
20 the industrial assets that have guaranteed our energy sovereignty for fifty years.

Yet energy independence is within our grasp, provided we take courageous decisions without delay, free from lobbies and the vagaries of the electoral calendar.

To achieve this, France's nuclear fleet will be preserved in its entirety and its lifespan extended, under the supervision of the Nuclear Safety Authority.

25 Secondly, I think it's imperative that French nuclear know-how (which is also vital to the effectiveness of our military nuclear power) be put to good use to renew our nuclear fleet without delay, and to resume studies on fast neutron reactors, which Emmanuel Macron has scandalously abandoned, and small modular reactors. **My ambition is not just to preserve French nuclear power, but to make it the backbone of our energy policy**, to the benefit of
30 consumers and the fight against global warming.

Thirdly, I hope that after more than ten years of procrastination, the issue of French hydroelectric dams will be settled once and for all, and in the national interest. This sector, which manages an easily controllable and flexible form of energy, is also responsible for 75% of the preservation of our country's drinking water reserves; it is therefore of strategic importance. All hydroelectric activities will remain in the public domain and controlled by EDF.

Finally, I would like to see an end to the real scandal represented by the proliferation of onshore, and soon offshore, wind turbines in our country. These machines, which are getting taller and taller, with increasingly wide concrete bases, operate only intermittently, escape the rules of competitive tendering in most cases and are financed by the consumer through a tax, the contribution to the public electricity service, which has increased by 650% since it was introduced in 2003. When you realise that the more wind turbines are built, the more electricity needs to be regulated, and that gas-fired power stations need to be operated, or even built, for this purpose alone, you realise the absurdity of the option so lightly adopted by successive governments. They have remained insensitive to the damage these industrial plants have done to our country's landscapes and built heritage. Similarly, they have remained insensitive to the visual and noise nuisance inflicted on our fellow citizens.

That's why **a moratorium on the construction of any new wind turbines, on land or at sea, will be introduced from spring 2022**, and their dismantling will gradually begin. Finally, there will be an end to the subvention of these intermittent energies.

20 AGRICULTURE MUST ONCE AGAIN BECOME THE INSTRUMENT OF FRENCH EXCELLENCE

The French tradition of strong, high-quality agriculture that protects the quality of life of our citizens and our landscapes has been undermined by decades of laissez-faire. The time has come to implement a common-sense policy in the interests of French farmers and the well-being of the population, who must be protected from any risk of food shortages.

This means that the millions of French people who go out every day to eat in catering establishments, a sector in which the quest for low prices favours imports, should be able to consume products from domestic agriculture. European regulations are too complex for this to be the case. That's why I want to see a new regulatory framework put in place to reverse this trend and ensure that at least 80% of French catering is supplied with food products from our own agriculture.

Farmers, who always lose out in commercial negotiations with distributors and manufacturers, are neither paid a fair price nor adequately insured against climatic hazards, so that in the event of prolonged crises their cash flow is unable to cope. I would like the State to be the direct recourse for validating minimum prices in the event of disputes during trade negotiations, and to be
5 the guarantor of funds dedicated to covering damages when these exceed the amounts guaranteed by existing schemes.

So, in addition to European aid, national aid is needed to revive the French sectors. The latest CAP reforms have drastically eroded the volume of agricultural aid, and only a few sectors now benefit from it. These measures need to be supplemented by counter-cyclical national aids and
10 income aids designed to revive the most threatened sectors, such as livestock farming and vegetable proteins. Finally, where necessary, investment aid should be increased.

What is at stake is nothing less than our country's food sovereignty. France is increasingly dependent on food imports. The State must work to turn around sectors in difficulty and protect agri-food companies from the threat of takeovers and dismantling by foreign groups.

15 In the same spirit, there is an urgent need to invest in slaughterhouses to improve working conditions for employees and ensure compliance with animal welfare standards. The rise of ritual slaughter is causing unnecessary suffering, an issue that no government has tackled. There have been too many scandals in this sector, and we need to put an end to them by improving safety conditions for staff, increasing the number of local abattoirs and mobile units, and
20 introducing slaughter practices that are compatible with the law, in agreement with the representatives of the religions concerned.

The quest for quality and food sovereignty also means combating products from nowhere. **The labelling of food products**, which currently applies only to fruit and vegetables, meat, and dairy products, **will become the rule for all products**, with a derogation granted by the European
25 Commission.

To the same end, it is important to improve the fight against fraudulent imports, which are damaging the health of the French and ruining our farmers. According to a Senate report, some 25% of imported agricultural products are of fraudulent origin. The European mechanisms for combating this fraud are unsatisfactory and are only triggered when major scandals occur. The
30 scale of the problem is making the headlines. I want our country to equip itself with the means to monitor the quality of products offered for consumption and, in the event of serious breaches, to impose sanctions on the countries responsible for these fraudulent practices. More generally,

imports of agricultural products that could not be grown or produced in the same way in France will be banned.

Finally, I believe it is vital to preserve agricultural land. This presupposes, on the one hand, that local authorities are obliged to recycle their industrial and commercial wasteland and, on the other, that projects linked to the remuneration of carbon storage are strictly supervised in scientific and financial terms. **It is also imperative to ban imports of raw materials derived from deforestation or any other practice that contravenes current standards.** The purpose of agriculture is not to produce energy.

Finally, as the number of farmers in our country has fallen dramatically, neither the quality of agricultural studies, nor funding and aid are enough to halt this decline. In the next five years, the retirement of a majority of farmers is likely to wipe out all agricultural activity in a number of our regions and further weaken certain professional sectors. It is up to the State to support young farmers, by giving them access to farmland and ensuring that prices paid to producers are increased. In my view, this is the only way to save the French model of small and medium-sized farms, which are an integral part of our heritage and civilisation.

The need for transmission

PROTECTING FAMILIES, THE BASIC BUILDING BLOCKS OF SOCIETY

As the first place of transmission, the family has been badly treated in recent quinquennia. And yet families are the first link in the national community, a link that I am determined to strengthen during my five-year term.

Families are indeed the roots of our social and civilisational model. At a time when the High Commissioner for the Plan is explaining that, in order to preserve it, the choice is between immigration and a higher birth rate, I am very clear that I am choosing the birth rate, the continuity of the nation and the transmission of our civilisation through our family model.

Firstly, French families should be encouraged to have more children. Financial considerations are often a barrier to having a child, so I propose to introduce a full tax share for the second child. I am also proposing, for all young couples wishing to buy a property, the introduction of a ten-year zero-rate public loan of up to 100,000 euros, with the outstanding capital wiped out as soon as the third child is born.

In the same spirit, in application of the principle of national priority mentioned above, family allowances will be reserved for families where at least one of the two parents is French.

For the many single-parent families, the great forgotten of the five-year term and very mobilised during the Gilets jaunes movement, I propose, for French families, doubling the family support allocation.

As the transmission of knowledge can only exist through the links between generations, **I want to strengthen the standard of living of our elders.** This will involve not only the re-indexation of pensions, but also the reinstatement of the half-payment for widows and widowers and the raising of all small pensions to €1,000.

10 The link between generations also means passing on wealth from one generation to the next. **I am therefore proposing to lower taxes on inheritance**, whether on gifts, where the tax allowance threshold will be €100,000 every 10 years, or on inheritance, where I am proposing to exclude property up to €300,000 from the tax base, thereby encouraging families to put down roots.

15 Moreover, to strengthen the link between generations, it's high time that the efforts made on behalf of the elderly by the 8 to 11 million caregivers were better recognised and paid for by the national community. This will involve better coverage of the loss of salary incurred by caring for a relative, and a substantial increase in the amount of leave available to caregivers over an entire career, from three to twelve months. An enforceable right to visits for hospital patients and Ephad residents will be created; the health crisis has led to profoundly inhumane situations on this issue.

25 Finally, the significant societal changes of recent years have had a particular impact on families and have deeply divided the French. I am committed to a moratorium of at least 3 years on these issues. At the end of a five-year term that has deeply divided the French, I do not wish to reopen a subject that could create new divisions in our country. Of course, this will not prevent us from respecting the law in force, particularly with regard to surrogate management, GPA, the ban on which could be strengthened. The French people will be able to use the Citizen Initiative Referendum that I will be setting up to take up these social issues.

RESTORING THE EXCELLENCE OF FRENCH SCHOOLS

Our country's situation in this area is a sign of the failure of policies pursued for more than half a century, and more seriously, the collapse of our education system is contributing to our country's decline, the extent of which was revealed by the crisis of 2020-2021.

5 Numerous international studies underline the fact that, over the last thirty years, the level of French pupils has plummeted in mathematics as well as in reading and written expression. What's more, even though education policies have been geared towards reducing inequalities for the past fifty years, these inequalities continue to grow. The result is that every year nearly 100,000 pupils leave the school system without any qualifications whatsoever.

10 This situation is no accident. It is the result of an ideology, implemented with the "collège unique" in 1977. It is exacerbated by an allocation of financial resources that defies common sense. Our country devotes too few resources to primary education and compensates for this lack of investment by allocating very large sums to secondary education because of the massive increase in access to collège.

15 What's more, the working conditions and pay offered to teachers by the state are pushing the French education system into decline. OECD figures are indisputable: French teachers earn a much lower hourly wage than their colleagues in comparable countries, while working more than them at primary and secondary level.

20 We urgently need to rediscover the excellence of French education, which has been one of our country's strengths for centuries. Firstly, priority will be given to French, mathematics, and history at primary level; to this end, the number of teaching hours will be significantly increased (since 1966, the number of teaching hours has fallen by 20%). The government's limited policy of doubling the number of pupils in the lower grades will be extended to twenty in primary and thirty in secondary. No doubt this will mean recruiting more primary school teachers in the first instance.

25 In the medium term, this effort will be offset by the drop in secondary school enrolments that will result from the abolition of the single collège and the development of vocational streams. Transferring the bulk of the effort to primary education is also a moral obligation, given the objectives of the far-reaching reform I am calling for.

30 We also need to put an end to the illusions of the single collège, which leads to a drop in the average level of pupil attainment and degrades teachers' missions and working conditions. The aim must be to ensure that pupils are well placed, and that they and their teachers are well looked after.

I propose that our country take its inspiration from the Swiss model: a level check at the end of primary school leading to level classes at the start of lower secondary school, enabling teaching to be adapted to the real needs of different groups. At the end of these three years, 80% of young people go on to vocational training by the age of 14. The results in terms of unemployment and matching skills to the needs of the economy are very satisfactory. As for the best students who go on to vocational training, they are offered, depending on the quality of their results, the opportunity to study at a university, if they so wish. Such a model should lead us to abandon the outdated objective of "80% of an age group taking the baccalaureate" and to replace it with two objectives: 40% of young people in vocational courses from the end of Year 9, and a match between training needs and the forecast requirements of the economy. In my view, vocational training should not be seen exclusively as preparation for manual occupations. It could include other professions, such as law, health, or personal assistance. There should no longer be one "queen stream" and the others. The time has come to break with misconceptions. What has general education become today, if not a synonym for training that no longer leads to employment?

At the same time, we need to review the pay scale for teachers, so that the French education system can once again become an attractive employer for the best of its students, and break out of the vicious circle in which it is trapped: working conditions and pay do not allow us to attract the required number of candidates, and the level of qualifications no longer guarantees the quality of the teaching provided, thus exacerbating the institution's decline. During my five years in office, the salary scale for teachers at all levels will be raised by 3% a year. This will bring them up to the OECD average. Finally, to reinforce the involvement of public authorities in the turnaround of our schools, the issue of school curricula will be referred to the legislator. When it comes to educational content, the Conseil Supérieur des Programmes draws up vague, sometimes folkloric precepts that leave teachers very confused and have the effect of increasing inequalities between schools. It is time for Parliament to set out, in a concise and restrictive manner, what is expected of each pupil at the end of each cycle, for the examination syllabus to be determined at national level, and for the law to lay down concrete teaching methods in order to limit inequalities between schools. The effective implementation of national directives will have to be better monitored, inspections will have to take place every two years and their results will have a real impact on career development, more so in any case than the grading of headteachers.

As I said earlier, overhauling the education system is a prerequisite for access to plentiful employment. It is also a prerequisite for the success of republican assimilation, which is more necessary than ever. Schools must once again become the crucible of assimilation in our country,

through the school curriculum, of course, but also through respect for the authority exercised over pupils. Significant and immediate penalties will be introduced for parents whose children fail to be punctual or show the respect due to national education officials.

MAKE IT RADIATE FRENCH CULTURE

5 I am convinced that French culture is rich, varied, and vibrant. It is based on an architectural, artistic, literary, musical, lyrical, and theatrical heritage that has few equals anywhere in the world.

This is why, without calling into question the support currently provided for the creation and promotion of the various sectors of cultural activity, and in particular the system of intermittent
10 entertainment workers, the emphasis of public policy will be placed on protecting and promoting our heritage, both tangible and intangible.

To this end, and to meet the expectations of our compatriots who show their attachment to our heritage at every opportunity, a National Heritage Service, open to young people aged 18 to 24, will be set up on a voluntary basis for a period of six months, renewable once, to work on the
15 restoration, protection, and promotion of our built and natural heritage.

With the same concern in mind, the taxation of historic monuments will be adapted to the needs of preserving these assets as part of the national heritage, to the constraints that are specific to them, and will encourage the transmission of these assets to future generations under improved conditions.

20 In addition, French culture, which is first and foremost linked to our language, must radiate throughout the world. In my mind, the Francophone Union that I want to set up must bring together all the countries that speak French, whatever continent they are on, and I want the content of this Union to be not only cultural, but also economic.

2022, A CHALLENGE FOR CIVILISATION

25 In the 1970s and 1980s, it was customary, in the run-up to every major presidential or legislative election, to assert that a "choice for society" was at stake. Those days are gone. What is at stake today, in the state our country finds itself in, is no longer a choice of society but an issue of civilisation.

The question posed to the French people is, in truth, a very simple one: do we resign ourselves
30 to the fact that our country is drifting down the slope of renunciation and decline? Or are we

ready for the leap of faith, the refoundation needed to reconnect with France's vocation as an example to the rest of the world and a homeland for a people once again in control of its own destiny?

For my part, **I'm convinced that the spirit of renunciation is not the only way to achieve our goals in keeping with the French genius.** A new period must begin for France, a period of
5 imagination and determination. In a large number of areas, the results of the action I will be taking can be seen quickly: purchasing power will be increased, security will be improved, access to employment will be facilitated, justice will be made more effective, immigration will be halted, unemployment will be brought under control, and the spiral of debt and deficits will be broken. This will restore confidence. Other measures will have more gradual effects, but I'm sure they will
10 start to be felt quickly.

Our fellow citizens need to feel that the country is on the right track, that the horizon is brightening. They are well aware that not everything is possible at once, or immediately. They want the path to be clearly mapped out.

All men and women must be involved in the rebuilding of our country that I am calling for,
15 whatever party or tendency they belong to. It is not a question of governing for one social category against another, for certain regions against others, for certain interests against others. It is a question of bringing together - this is the example and the message left to us by the founder of the Fifth Republic - the greatest possible number of French people in the service of the recovery, without parochialism, with tolerance and understanding. Bringing everyone together, the French
20 is our common heritage. I will ensure that it is not torn apart or threatened.

I intend to invite our compatriots in all areas of national life to make a major effort to straighten up and pull together. **The national unity that I am calling for is the prerequisite for the civil peace to which I am viscerally attached.**

Aware of my responsibility to France, to the French people, to all the people of France, I want
25 to convince them that I will be able to understand their expectations and bring them together, while respecting their different convictions. I want to serve all the French people, driven by their shared love for the most beautiful country there is: France.

In 2022, a page in our country's long history will be turned. Another page will open, and it is still blank. It's up to us to write the first words, together.

Appendix II. Le Pen. 22 measures for 2022.

Original text: Le Pen, M. (2022). 22 mesures pour 2022. *M la France*. Available at: <https://mlafrance.fr/pdfs/22-mesures-pour-2022.pdf> (Accessed: 7 April 2024).

M la France: 22 measures for 2022

- 5 **1. Stop uncontrolled immigration by giving the French a say in a referendum.**
 - Put an end to settlement immigration and family reunification.
 - Only process asylum applications abroad.
 - Restrict welfare benefits to French nationals and make access to welfare benefits conditional on 5 years' work in France.
 - 10 - Ensure national priority access to social housing and employment.
 - Abolish residence permits for any foreigner who has not worked in France for a year.
 - Systematically deport illegal immigrants, delinquents, and foreign criminals.
 - Abolish the "droit du sol" and limit access to nationality to naturalisation on the basis of merit and assimilation.
 - 15
- 2. Eradicate Islamist ideologies and all their networks from national territory.**
 - Bill to combat Islamist ideologies.
- 3. Make security everywhere and for everyone a priority of the five-year term.**
 - 20 - Reinstate minimum sentences so that all criminals and delinquents are punished.
 - Eliminate any possibility of sentence reduction or adjustment, particularly for violence against the person.
 - Introduce a presumption of self-defence for law enforcement officers.
 - Speed up legal proceedings by doubling the number of magistrates.
 - 25 - Register street harassers as sex offenders.
 - Achieve 85,000 prison places by 2027.
 - Establish a real life sentence.
- 4. Reduce VAT from 20% to 5.5% on energy products (fuel, heating oil, gas and**
30 **electricity) as basic necessities.**

5. **Allow companies to increase wages by 10% (up to 3 minimum wage earners) by exempting this increase from employers' contributions.**
6. **Renationalise the motorways to reduce tolls by 15% and privatise public broadcasting to abolish the €138 licence fee.**
7. **Encourage young people's projects and their entry into working life.**
- Create a monthly training voucher worth between €200 and €300 for apprentices, work-study students, and their employers.
 - Exempt all young working people up to the age of 30 from income tax to encourage them to stay in France and start their families here.
 - Eliminate corporation tax for entrepreneurs under 30 for the first 5 years to prevent them from moving abroad.
8. **Support French families.**
- Introduce a full tax share from the second child onwards.
 - Double support for single mothers bringing up children, while tightening controls to prevent fraud.
 - Create a 0% loan for young French families, converted into a subsidy for couples having a 3rd child.
 - Build 100,000 new student accommodation units over five years.
 - Abolish direct inheritance tax for modest and middle-class families.
 - Exempt gifts from parents and grandparents to their children and grandchildren of up to €100,000 per child every ten years.
9. **Guarantee our elderly a peaceful and dignified retirement.**
- Reindex pensions in line with inflation to ensure purchasing power that reflects a lifetime's work.
 - Raise the minimum old-age pension to €1,000 per month and increase small pensions.
 - Reject any extension of the retirement age.
 - Allow those who started working before the age of 20 and have worked 40 years to retire at 60.
 - Restore the half-tax share for widows and widowers.

- Create an enforceable right to visits to establishments and significantly increase the presence of medical staff in nursing homes.

10. Finally guarantee the rights of our compatriots with disabilities.

- 5 - Deconjugate and upgrade the Disabled Adult Allowance.
- Launch a major plan on access to schooling for children affected by disability.
- Apply the law on access to all public places and transport.
- Revise and increase the duration of support for carers.

11. Introduce a Citizens' Initiative Referendum and introduce proportional representation.

12. Ensure our energy independence in order to lower energy bills for the French.

- Give back to households the 5 billion in subsidies paid out to wind farms in particular.
- 15 - Halt wind farm projects and gradually dismantle existing wind farms.
- Revive the nuclear and hydroelectric sectors and invest in hydrogen.
- Exit the European electricity market to restore decent prices.

13. Defend our farmers and quality food for all.

- 20 - Guarantee farmers prices that respect their work and put an end to the abusive margins of supermarkets.
- Ban imports of agricultural products that do not meet French production standards.
- Compel canteens to use 80% French farm produce.
- Implement a "slaughterhouse plan" to ensure dignified conditions and ban slaughter
- 25 without stunning.
- Generalise labelling of the origin and quality of food products.

14. Launch a €20 billion emergency support plan for healthcare.

- Stop the closure of public hospital beds and maternity units.
- 30 - Revalue the salaries of healthcare staff in line with their work.
- Invest in health technologies and repatriate drug manufacturing.
- Create geriatric emergency departments dedicated to our elderly.
- Abolish the ARS and reduce administrative posts in hospitals by 10% to free up resources for healthcare workers.

- Combat medical deserts by offering strong financial incentives to carers and increasing the number of nursing homes.
- Giving more importance to prevention, in particular by making school medical check-ups systematic once again.

5

15. Restore our education system so that it once again fulfils its mission of transmitting knowledge.

- Put the teaching of French, mathematics, and history back at the heart of the curriculum.
- Improve teachers' salaries and overhaul teacher training.
- 10 - Re-establish the authority of the educational institution by introducing uniforms in primary and lower secondary schools, while punishing absences and misbehaviour.
- Remove the bureaucracy of the Education National to free up financial resources, reduce class sizes and stop school closures.

15 **16. Abolish the IFI, which taxes people's roots, and create an IFF, a tax on financial wealth, to tax speculation.**

17. Promote access to property and housing for the French.

- Build 100,000 social housing units a year, including 20,000 for students and young workers.
- 20 - Launch a plan to rehabilitate old housing with effective aid.
- Create a Rent Guarantee Fund to protect landlords.

18. Implement economic patriotism to re-industrialise and produce wealth in France.

- 25 - Give priority to SMEs for public contracts.
- Make subsidies conditional on job creation as part of a regional development policy.
- Abolish the Cotisation Foncière des Entreprises (CFE), which penalises local SMEs and production taxes that hinder relocation.
- Protect our economy from unfair competition and review free trade agreements that do not respect France's interests.
- 30

19. Create a "French sovereign wealth fund" to increase the return on French people's savings and direct them towards strategic sectors and innovation.

20. Increase the defence budget to €55 billion by 2027.

- Strengthen our sovereignty and independence.
- Guarantee our soldiers the equipment and resources they need to guarantee and protect our national interests.

5

21. Create a Ministry of State for the Sea and Overseas Territories.

22. Create a Ministry for Combating Fraud (tax, social security contributions and benefits, imports, cartels, etc.).

10

Appendix III. Meloni 2022. Electoral program.

Original text: Meloni, G. (2022). Programma Fratelli d'Italia 2022. *Fratelli d'Italia*. Available at: <https://www.fratelli-italia.it/programma/> (Accessed: 7 April 2022).

The Program: Ready to lift up Italy

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Foreword

In a flight plan, a destination is identified, the route is plotted, and the departure is prepared. This is how every journey takes shape. Just like a government program.

5 In the pages that follow, you will find all the information you need to know about the flight plan with which Fratelli d'Italia and its president, Giorgia Meloni, intend to tackle the journey that the movement of Italian patriots and conservatives will undertake once in government of the nation. This is not a mere rhetorical exercise or a collection of good intentions, but a living and concrete project, stemming from a clear vision for the future of Italy.

10 The story behind this journey is told by the cultural identity and patriotic commitment that have always characterised Fratelli d'Italia's battles to redeem Italy from years of left-wing misrule.

Today as yesterday, we are determined not to give in to the economic, social, cultural, and political decline of the nation.

15 We are convinced that decline is not a destiny, but only the result of wrong and opportunistic choices of a political class that has given up on defending the national interest and, with it, families, and businesses.

20 The elections next 25 September will be decisive. We will finally have the opportunity to close a disgraceful historical phase: the one that in ten years has seen the birth of seven governments that were the result of palace games played on the heads of the Italians. A historical phase in which the Italian left has always remained in the rooms of power, even in defiance of the will of the people. It has certainly been an anomalous parenthesis of our democracy, which has generated a wound of representation, mortifying, and debasing the fundamental constitutional principle that "sovereignty belongs to the people".

25 The effects of the political instability that is characteristic of governments supported by heterogeneous and incompatible majorities are there for all to see: Italy has plunged into the abyss of a prolonged and perennial economic crisis, the financial picture has progressively deteriorated, fiscal pressure has steadily increased, the poverty rate has reached unacceptable levels, the middle class is increasingly struggling, social conflict is increasingly bitter, the productive fabric is less and less competitive, and the presence of the state is increasingly invasive and less respectful of the fundamental freedoms of citizens and businesses.

30 It is time for change. Fratelli d'Italia has shown that it is the only real credible alternative to the current leftist system of power.

For us, those who do business and create wealth are a resource to be exploited, not an enemy to be fought with bureaucracy and tax pressure. For us, work expresses the dignity of the citizen and is a value to be protected, not a concession of the state. For us, freedom and people's rights prevail over all ideological views. For us, respect for the environment and economic growth are not antithetical values, but complementary worlds that can and must find a home in an idea of compatible development. For us, the nation's natural resources and artistic heritage are heritages to be preserved and enhanced. For us, the family is the founding community of society, a sacred asset to be protected, not an old and outdated institution to be torn down.

For us, young people are the future of the nation, and therefore the priority of our actions. For us, Italy's western location is a natural choice, not a political calculation. Italy must once again hold its head high in international affairs, as a full member of the G7 and as a founding state of the EU and NATO, after too many years of marginality and subalternity imposed by the Italian left in government to please its European partners. The challenge before us is complex. We know that difficult years lie ahead and that only a government legitimised by the popular vote, together with a new national cohesion, will be able to lead Italy out of the crisis into which it has been dragged by short-sighted and irresponsible politics. We are not afraid. Fratelli d'Italia was born to defend and love the country. We are ready.

The program identifies 25 priorities for action; in addition to the mentioned proposals, focus and in-depth analyses are available on the dedicated website programmafidi2022.it.

1. BIRTH AND FAMILY SUPPORT

The family is the founding element of society and what makes “a nation truly sovereign and spiritually strong” (John Paul II). That is why it is necessary to reaffirm the central, educational, and social role it continues to play. Supporting childbirth means giving young couples the chance to build their family project; it means giving Italy hope by investing in the future.

Progressive introduction of the family quotient, i.e. a taxation system that takes into account the number of family members. Increase of the amounts for the single, universal allowance: up to EUR 300 per month for the first year of each child, up to EUR 260 from the second year of life until the age of 18 and maintenance of the current allowance until the age of 21. Reduction of the VAT rate on early childhood products such as nappies, baby bottles, artificial milk, and others. Support for municipalities to ensure free crèches open until shop and office closing

times, with a rotating opening system in the summer; increase of full-time places in primary schools.

Promotion of company shared and family crèches on the German Tagesmutter model. Concrete support for families with disabled dependents. Incentives for companies that hire new mothers and promote forms of work-life balance. Increase of the tax-deductible share of expenses incurred by families for the employment of caregivers for dependent persons, and deductibility of expenses incurred for domestic helpers. Strengthening the system of parental and maternity leave for employees and the self-employed.

Medical communication and information campaigns on the issue of fertility. Full implementation of Law 194 of 1978 on the voluntary termination of pregnancy, starting with prevention. Establishment of a fund to help single women in financial difficulties to carry a pregnancy to term. Promotion of baby-changing and breastfeeding areas in all accessible buildings to the public. Compulsory training of teaching and non-teaching staff in first aid and the Heimlich disruptive manoeuvre. Support for separated or divorced parents in economic difficulties.

Allocate more resources to the guarantee fund for the purchase of first homes for young couples of precarious workers. No new taxes on the first home and zero taxes on the first 100,000 euro for the purchase of the first home. The family home must be a non-attachable property: first home cannot be pledged, except in the case of non-payment of the mortgage, and provided that condominium obligations are met. Protection of private property and immediate eviction of unlawful occupation.

2. EFFICIENT USE OF PNRR RESOURCES AND EUROPEAN FUNDS

The PNRR represents a great opportunity for the modernisation of Italy and its infrastructure and for the economic recovery of the country. This is why it is crucial to make the best use of resources, taking into account the new context that has emerged following the war in Ukraine and the energy crisis.

The PNRR certainly represents a great opportunity for the modernisation of Italy's outdated infrastructure heritage, an unrepeatable opportunity for Italy that must be fully exploited. It is necessary to accelerate the implementation of the Plan in order to make up for the accumulated delay: strengthen the administrative capacity of the implementing bodies, with particular reference to the authorisation procedures for complex infrastructural interventions, simplify the

awarding processes, rationalise the structures in charge of project execution, and streamline standards and procedures. Put in place an appropriate program to revisit the competences of several ministries, streamlining their functions to make them efficient, and invest in the training of public employees.

- 5 Aimed at updating the PNRR in light of the crisis triggered by the conflict in Ukraine and the increase in raw material prices, reshaping the entirely Italian resources of the “Complementary Fund” and, for the European resources, proposing to the Commission to make specific changes within the limits set by Article 21 of the Next Generation EU Regulation.

10 The goal is to allocate more resources to energy supply and security, to free Italy and Europe from dependence on Russian gas, and to shelter the population and productive fabric from rationing and price increases.

15 Italy has a geographic location that allows it to channel the huge primary energy supply sources coming from North Africa and the eastern Mediterranean, becoming a real strategic hub: it is in the interest of the entire Union to diversify supply lines as much as possible to free itself from Russian dependence. This is also why the PNRR should be recalibrated in light of the new geopolitical scenarios.

20 Full use of European funds. Italy has always been a net contributor to the EU: we pour in more resources than we receive. Precisely because of this, the poor management of the European funds we have is no longer tolerable. A double mockery. We need to reverse this trend and make full use of all the resources put to disposition by Europe, exercising the substitutive power of the state and regions in case of delays in the spending of euro funds. To this end, we intend to reorganise and strengthen the structures for monitoring European resources to strengthen the constant verification of their use, adding tools to assist the state, regions and local authorities in the drafting and implementing projects.

25 **3. FAIRER TAXATION AND DEFENCE OF ITALIANS’ PURCHASING POWER**

We need a new fiscal pact for Italy. Not just a simple reform of the tax system, not just a program to simplify and reduce the asphyxiating tax burden that has become a brake on the nation's growth, but a much more ambitious challenge: to inaugurate a new era in relations between the tax authorities and taxpayers, inspired by mutual trust and the rebalancing of relations
30 *between citizens and the state.*

Reducing the tax burden on businesses and families through a reform in the name of fairness: reform of IRPEF with the gradual introduction of the family quotient; extension of the flat tax for VAT holders up to 100,000 euro turnover; introduction of the flat tax on the increase in income with respect to previous years, with the prospect of a further extension for families and businesses; gradual elimination of IRAP and rationalisation of micro-taxes. Dry coupon tax at 21% also for the rental of commercial property in disadvantaged and degraded areas. Raising the limit on the use of cash, bringing it in line with the EU average. No more short-sighted bonus policy, to be replaced by stable and lasting measures. Tax expenditures: revision and rationalisation of the system of deductions, deductions, and allowances.

10 Protecting the purchasing power of workers and families: de-taxation of overtime and “tips” in the tourism and administration sector; reduction of taxes on production bonuses; enhancement of corporate welfare and raising the threshold for de-taxation of fringe benefits; broadening the range of goods with reduced VAT, in particular with regard to shopping trolleys and baby products. Stability of tax legislation and prohibition of retroactive tax rules. Ensuring a fair and

15 non-burdensome tax system based on a tax-taxpayer agreement for the past.

For outstanding tax bills: "balance and waiver" up to €3,000 for people in difficulty and, for higher amounts, payment of the entire tax increased by 5% in lieu of penalties and interest, and automatic instalment over 10 years. For situations that precede the tax bill, the "Tax Truce" with the 5+5 formula: tax defined through an interlocution with the Financial Administration, flat-rate penalty at 5% and automatic instalment in 5 years. Due diligence of the tax collection warehouse of the Internal Revenue Service to enable the regularisation of past due.

20 Fighting tax evasion starting with total evaders, large companies, banks, and large VAT fraud. Evaluation of results and rewards on the basis of the amounts actually collected and not mere disputes. Reform of the tax control and removal of the reversal of the burden of proof;

25 introduction of the arrangement with the tax authorities also for small enterprises, artisans, tradesmen, and professionals; bringing together the regulatory framework of tax matters in a single code.

4. SUPPORTING THE ITALIAN ENTREPRENEURIAL SYSTEM

It is indispensable to remove the structural constraints that limit economic growth and to free Italy's productive forces, creating the necessary conditions for enterprises to develop and compete internationally. Laying the foundations for sustained and lasting economic growth of

the national system is the only way to ensure the well-being of citizens and improve the fundamentals of the Italian economy.

Support those who do business and create wealth and jobs in Italy. Restore an industrial strategy to Italy: encourage secure supply chains, particularly in strategic sectors, favouring supply chains that are not too extensive and agreements with allied and reliable nations. Support the reconversion of activities in difficulty in sectors that enhance the 'Italian brand' as a strength of our economy. Aim at the “blue economy”, i.e. the exceptional geographical location of Italy, a true natural platform in the Mediterranean, by bringing together all the economic sectors connected to our seas, from port activities to logistics, boating and fishing. Support and protect the productive fabric: incentivising the relocation of production activities in Italy and discouraging relocations; resolutely combating unfair competition and the elusive practices of transferring company headquarters to European tax havens; promoting instruments to stimulate and incentivise the channelling of private savings towards the financing of the real economy, particularly in SMEs; encouraging workers' participation in profits and corporate governance; facilitating business continuity through incentives and tax relief; encouraging generational change in the boards of directors of family businesses.

Rationalise the system of incentives for companies, which today consists of more than 1,400 national and regional subsidies. Facilitating access to the capital market by simplifying the requirements for those who decide to go public. Structural incentives and tax credits for technological investments and research and development expenditure. Strengthen the governance system for the management of company crises and reindustrialisation processes of areas and production chains. Facilitate access to credit for small and medium-sized enterprises by strengthening the SME Guarantee Fund.

Encourage the dimensional growth of small and medium-sized enterprises. Simplify regulations and bureaucracy for companies, reduce and speed up fulfilment of obligations, and introduce full and immediate offsetting of their receivables from the public administration against tax and social security debts.

5. MADE IN ITALY AND ITALIAN PRIDE

The world's love for Italy is called Made in Italy. A brand, a way of life, an economic and diplomatic opportunity for our country, which is too often neglected. Recognising the extrategic importance of our excellence also means promoting the role of Italy's ambassadors in the world of our compatriots living abroad.

Promotion of the *Made in Italy* brand, one of the best-known and best-loved in the world, and of Italian excellence in the fields of culture, food and wine, design, architecture, luxury and entrepreneurship, including through a government certification that enhances the value of Italian products, along the lines of the DOC brand. Real opposition to Italian sounding and all forms of falsification.

Creation of a large online platform as a showcase of certified “*Made in Italy*” products and promotion of trade tourism for those who come to Italy to buy our products directly. Establishment of the “Liceo del *Made in Italy*” to give quality and prestige to the working and cultural context of the “Marchio Italia”, by training students - even with internships and cultural exchanges abroad, through our diplomatic representations - both from the point of view of knowledge of top-level Italian production and the promotion of business activities oriented towards the foreign market.

Enhancement of the ICE Agency for the promotion abroad and the internationalisation of Italian companies, the commercial offices of embassies, the role of Chambers of Commerce and cultural institutes to help Italian companies find new opportunities internationally and face the challenges of the global market. Enhancement of the Italian language abroad, defence of Italianness, culture and Italian symbols in the world. Involvement, including economic, of communities of connationals living abroad for the promotion of *Made in Italy*.

6. SUPPORTING THE DIGNITY OF WORK

Returning work to its ethical function. We do not forget the fundamental principles of the Italian Constitution. Article 4: “The Republic recognises the right of all citizens to work and promotes the conditions that make this right effective. Every citizen has the duty to perform, according to his or her abilities and choice, an activity or a function that contributes to the material or spiritual progress of society”.

Reducing labour taxes by structurally cutting the tax and contribution wedge for the benefit of workers and companies. Rationalisation of the dozens of different types of employment incentives that currently exist and merging them into a few effective measures. Greater use of European funds to support the employment of disadvantaged persons, starting with the strengthening and extension to all disadvantaged areas of “Decontribuzione Sud”, making it structural through negotiations with the European Union. Progressive introduction of a bonus tax mechanism for labour-intensive companies, according to the principle ‘the more you hire the less tax you pay’.

Already in the immediate future, introduce a super deduction of labour costs for companies that increase employment compared to previous years. Reaffirm the “right to employability”: those who want to work must be able to do so, even in the forms and times they see fit. Help companies to hire, providing flexible tools that, at the same time, protect workers; revise the rules on fixed-term work contained in the so-called Dignity Decree; expand the possibility of using labour vouchers, especially in agriculture, tourism, and domestic work, strengthening all mechanisms to combat distortions and abuses.

Promoting the training and integration of young people into the world of work: relaunching apprenticeship contracts and apprenticeships with adequate safeguards; effectively launching the reform of Higher Technical Institutes; strengthening the system of post-diploma courses for job placement; promoting training in the STEM (*Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics*) disciplines, so as to facilitate the entry of young people into the world of work and fill the current shortage of qualified figures in these subjects. Reforming active policies for work: reorganise and strengthen the system of employment services and other public and private mediation tools between supply and demand; increase the involvement of the higher and university education system and companies. Combining the economic support of unemployment benefits with effective training and retraining measures; recognising workers' right to lifelong learning. Full use of European resources for vocational training and active labour policies. Safety at work: promote the safety of workers with adequate investment in prevention and training activities; revise the Consolidation Act on Accidents at Work.

Tackling poor work and the gender pay gap: broaden the application of collective bargaining agreements, guaranteeing fair wages and protections; promote second-level bargaining and proximity contracts; strengthen corporate *welfare*; fight against irregular work; support women's work and overcome the *gender pay gap* through measures that improve pay transparency and the establishment of a guarantor authority. Encourage voluntary agreement between workers and employers to allow the advance payment of a portion of the monthly salary, so that workers who request it can have part of their salary every 15 days. To give a new impetus to the world of craftsmen, neighbourhood trade, personal services, and VAT numbers, which represent a unique social and economic sector in Europe, by simplifying the increasingly complex formalities to which self-employed workers are subject and guaranteeing them the same protection and support as employees. No obligation for small businesses to accept electronic payments.

The fight against commercial abuse and unfair competition; compulsory guarantee of tax payment for non-EU citizens who want to open a business or SME in Italy. Eliminate the minimum INPS contribution for artisans and traders. Valuing and protecting the liberal professions as the intellectual capital of Italy: bureaucratic simplification, subsidiarity, law for fair and certain remuneration, greater protection, and social protection.

7. MAKE WAY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The new generations represent the future of our nation: investing in youth policies means releasing new energy, opening up to innovation, cultivating talent, producing development. In short, it means building our future.

10 Establishment of the “right to sport, art and culture”: every young person must have the opportunity to access any artistic and sporting discipline, even with direct support. Planning investments in new-generation sports facilities for every discipline. Equipped areas for sports in parks in all Italian municipalities. Create facilities where music, art, theatre, and dance can be practised easily. The school must become the nerve centre of the area and its community, the link between families and institutions, with openings in the afternoons and synergies with third sector organisations to expand the cultural and sports offerings. Establishment of scholarships for sporting and artistic merit. Promotion of healthy lifestyles to combat youth distress and deviance, such as drugs, alcoholism, pathological gambling, bullying and the spread of *baby gangs*.

20 Unrelenting fight against traffickers and dealers of recreational drugs. Information and prevention campaign on alcohol and drug use and sexually transmitted diseases. Program for recovery from pathological addictions, also in cooperation with the therapeutic community circuit. Eradicating the scourge of youth unemployment: zero taxes for the first three years for young people under 30 who set up their own business and incentives for companies that hire young people. Strengthening the system of business incubators for start-ups set up by young people, guaranteeing adequate space, services, support, and advice at zero cost for the start-up phase.

Strengthening of funds for young self-entrepreneurship and streamlining of access procedures. Strengthening of the State to guarantee fund for the mortgage on the first home of young couples and reduction of taxes on the purchase of the first home. Promoting and supporting experiences abroad for young Italians. Strengthening of the city to activate citizenship through the promotion and encouragement of training in first aid, civil protection, firefighting, land defence

and road safety. Evaluation of the generational impact of laws and public interventions in order to verify their sustainability and to “secure” the future of young Italians.

8. RELAUNCHING SCHOOLS; UNIVERSITIES AND RESEARCH

5 *Italian public education has a great history. Schools prepare the future of a nation, the entry of young people into the world of work, economic growth, and the awareness of being citizens and part of a community. The university is the training ground for the ruling classes and, with the world of research, constitutes an indispensable strategic resource for tackling the great challenges of our age.*

10 Putting merit back at the centre of the school and university system, for pupils and teaching staff. Combating early school leaving. Updating school curricula, protecting classical subjects, and strengthening the teaching of science subjects in all schools, starting with mathematics. Achieving the goal of full mastery of the English language for all students, also by encouraging part of the training abroad. Enhancement of technical institutes and reform of transversal courses for skills and orientation (Pcto). Reintroduction of work-oriented study courses.
15 Establishment of the *Made in Italy* high school. Extraordinary intervention on school construction, for safe, modern, and eco-sustainable schools.

20 More sports in schools, with new facilities, swimming pools and gyms. Full and complete possibility of purchasing and using textbooks in electronic format to reduce the cost borne by families. Launching a debate with the school world in order to verify the feasibility of reducing the school curriculum by one year, for the same amount of tuition, total hours, to allow young Italians to graduate at 17-18 years of age, as already happens in several Western states, and thus access university or the world of professional training and work earlier. Bridging the gap between job demand and school supply, encouraging the training of specialised technicians. Protection of private schools and freedom of educational choice for families, also through the
25 introduction of vouchers that can be spent freely in the various school facilities.

Enhancement of the teaching profession: combating historical precariousness and teaching discontinuity; continuous training for teachers; progressive alignment of teaching salaries to the European average. Affirm the principle that education takes place primarily in the classroom and that homework should be handled with measure and common sense. Collaboration between
30 private individuals, local authorities, schools, and universities to ensure that students have adequate spaces where they can study outside school hours.

Fostering an increase in the number of university graduates in Italy. Diversity reform: students graduate earlier, and the university is more interactive. Revision of the current 3+2 system. Reform of the right to study, stop regional differences and strengthen subsidies and scholarships. Post-Covid rent fund for returning students. Increased housing, medical care, and essential health services for off-site students. Listening desks and peer tutoring for students with disabilities. Internationalisation, protection of humanistic knowledge and support for Stem disciplines. Strengthening of dual language courses. Pre- mise funds for universities that immediately place students in employment. Protection of the right to study by strengthening scholarships for the most deserving and reintroducing and strengthening the system of honour loans for university students. Strengthening of post-graduate orientation and matching paths between new graduates and companies.

Ensuring merit in access to university careers. Revision of the teacher evaluation system. Reform of the system of access to the number of universities and reform of the law on specialist medical training, through a system that provides for selection from the second year onwards. More investments in research, digitisation, and technology transfer. Fostering synergy between universities and privates in research and patents. Ten-year programming of research and innovation funding. Relaunching the figure of the researcher.

9. FOR A TRUE WELFARE STATE THAT FORGETS NO ONE

A just state guarantees a social protection network to support the weakest and those in difficulty, also thanks to the vast world of the third sector and intermediate bodies. Real national solidarity must be rediscovered, combating any distortions.

Construct a universal social security model for all workers: establish an unemployment benefit for the self-employed that follows the same rules as the benefit for employees; strengthen ISCRO and broaden the number of beneficiaries. Abolish the Citizenship Income in order to introduce a new instrument that protects those with no income, who are really fragile and unable to work or difficult to employ: the disabled, the over 60s, families with children. For those who are able to work, training courses and strengthening of active labour policies. Raising minimum and social pensions.

Launch of an extraordinary public housing plan with a system of public-private synergies. Incentives for the employment of people with disabilities. Structural and progressive increase in disability pensions, which cannot be lower than other existing forms of social assistance, so that the wide range of beneficiaries can enjoy better, more decent living conditions that respect

the dignity of the person. Strengthening of the measures for the right to education of persons with disabilities and specific learning disorders, also with an adequate increase in the number of “support teachers” and educational tools for autonomy and communication. Abolition of architectural barriers for a concrete transformation of the territory and urban environments, both
5 public and private, aimed at guaranteeing full accessibility and mobility to citizens with disabilities. Introduction of greater protection in favour of frail, immunocompromised and severely disabled workers. Completion of the regulation of "family caregiver” by ensuring concrete economic support measures for those entitled.

Support for third sector organisations, in particular those engaged in assisting people in
10 economic and housing difficulty. Strengthening the universal civil service by allocating additional resources.

10. THE RIGHT TO A PEACEFUL OLD AGE

*Just as young people represent our future, so the elderly represent our history: a heritage of experience, skills, talents that has contributed to the birth and growth of our nation. The elderly
15 are the real glue of Italian families and, in the period of crisis we are going through, they have also proved to be a precious economic security. It is our duty to ensure everyone the right to a peaceful old age.*

Flexibility when leaving the labour market and easier access to retirement, while promoting generational change. Stop the automatic adjustment of the retirement age to life expectancy.
20 Renewal of the “Women's Option” measure. A pension system that also guarantees the younger generation and those who will receive their cheque only on the basis of the contribution-based system. Recalculation, above a high threshold, of 'golden pensions' that do not correspond to contributions actually paid. Adjustment of minimum and social pensions, to restore dignity to people who experience daily difficulties and risk ending up on the margins of society.

25 Revaluation of pension benefits paid to cope with monetary devaluation. Deductibility of domestic work of nurses and caregivers. Combating scams aimed at the elderly and intrusive sales promotions. Introduction of an intergenerational solidarity mechanism, with tax relief for pension income recipients and for the over-65s who incur direct and indirect health care costs for patients under 36, school and university education, amateur sports practice, rents for
30 residential use, purchase of the first home. Supporting municipalities for the construction of new social centres for the elderly and incentives to carry out activities for psychophysical

wellbeing in them. Encouraging social housing activities for the over-65s and intergenerational cohabitation.

11. HEALTHCARE AT THE SERVICE OF THE PERSON

5 *According to the WHO, health is “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being” and not simply “the absence of disease or illness”. It is time for public health to return to caring for the wellbeing of the citizen in its entirety, offering proximity, within a reasonable timeframe, and quality solutions. The pan-democratic emergency must be overcome, with a clear understanding of the importance of health care for our nation, through a new vision of wellbeing that derives from prevention, from an efficient territorial care system and from*
10 *attention to all illnesses.*

Overcoming the stalemate of the pandemic: restoration of ordinary services and screening procedures, strengthening of pre-medicine with a bonus mechanism for access to the health care system for those who follow a regular and agreed health monitoring pathway. Reduction of waiting list times. Creation of an independent administrative health guarantor authority, with
15 powers of inspection and reporting to the competent authorities, to which each citizen can turn for lack of quality or lack of access to services. Promoting synergy between primary care physicians and the hospital system in the territory, including through a centralised, computerised regional reservation platform for diagnostics and hospitalisation, with the possibility for primary care physicians to make a certain number of urgent reservations at
20 hospitals and diagnostic centres. Possibility for citizens to allow general practitioners, nurses, and pharmacies to access their Electronic Health Record as well.

Incentivising the spread and development of telemedicine, home care and territorial garrisons in inland areas with low population density. Reducing inequalities between regions in the provision of healthcare services and the Essential Levels of Care (LEA). Extending the
25 Essential Levels of Care to essential dental care. Overcoming the system of access to faculties with planned and limited number of students: access for all to the first year and selection for passing to the second year. Strengthening the figure of the school psychologist. Increase and utilisation of the Fund for the treatment of persons with autism spectrum disorders.

Updating the national oncology plan. Creating 'cardio-protected cities', promoting the
30 equipping, maintenance and recharging of defibrillators in Italian municipalities. Constantly updating pandemic and emergency plans. Counteracting Covid-19 and new threats through structural measures, such as controlled mechanical ventilation in schools and offices, and

increased transport. No compulsory vaccination against Covid-19, but information, promotion, and recommendation for vaccination, in particular for at-risk age groups and fragile situations. Full freedom of choice between vaccines authorised by Ema and Aifa and recalls.

5 No reintroduction of the green pass and the possibility of *screening* in at-risk environments to protect fragile individuals. Establishment of an inquiry commission on the medical and economic management of the Covid-19 pandemic as well as on adverse vaccine reactions.

12. IN DEFENCE OF FREEDOM AND THE DIGNITY OF EACH

10 *Ensuring the effectiveness of civil and social rights, respect for the freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution and the dignity of persons is the precondition for the full realisation of the principles of any democratic system.*

No to the introduction of instruments of mass digital control and pressure on individual freedoms or *scoring* mechanisms, such as the Chinese-style “points citizenship”. Counteracting the arbitrary censorship of social networks and ensuring respect for the free expression of thought by large communication platforms. Ensuring maximum security in the protection of
15 personal data. Ensuring equal opportunities for all citizens to emerge and assert themselves socially and professionally. Overcoming the 'glass ceiling', an invisible barrier that hinders women's assertion in the world of work. Fighting the pay gap between men and women and the pink tax, the odious practice of charging higher prices for products aimed at women.

20 Combating all forms of discrimination, promoting, and supporting pathways to emancipation from cultural stereotypes that see women in a condition of subordination. Protecting human life from its inception. Tightening penalties for forced marriages and female genital mutilation. Combating all discrimination based on people's sexual and sentimental choices, upholding the law on civil unions, while reaffirming the ban on homogenous adoptions and the fight against all forms of surrogate motherhood, in the supreme interest of the child. Updating of legislation
25 on domestic and gender-based violence (Code Red): autonomous application of the electronic bracelet, independently of any personal precautionary measures, always allowing the victim to equip him/herself with a device for alerting and requesting help in case of a stalker's violation of distance. Strengthening measures against paedophilia and online child pornography.

13. CULTURE AND BEAUTY, OUR RENAISSANCE

30 *Italy is known and appreciated throughout the world as the Nation of art and culture, as the home of beauty. It is our duty to protect and enhance the immense heritage we are heirs to.*

Supporting and protecting Italian culture, our artists, our creators of imagination means projecting the new Italian Renaissance into the future.

Promotion of Italian culture through the enhancement of cultural, artistic, historical, archaeological, ethno-anthropological, archival, and biographical assets. Protection of professionals in the cultural sector and private entities involved in the management of public or private assets. Introduction of tax deductions for individual cultural consumption. Digital innovation for cultural heritage, so as to make it fully accessible also through social and multimedia platforms. Enhancement and expansion of the Unesco heritage also as a vehicle for tourism promotion. Subsidiarity and a new public-private relationship especially to allow the opening of cultural assets that are currently closed to the public.

Reform of the Single Fund for the Performing Arts (Fus) and simplification of the bureaucracy related to public funding. Protection of the Italian audio-visual industry and development projects for the digital creative industry. Relaunch of the Italian artistic ecosystem also through the organisation of festivals abroad. Redevelopment of suburbs and villages also through street art and the valorisation of the immense heritage preserved in deposits and museums and currently not usable. New centrality for the music industry and the world of entertainment, theatre, and dance. Protection of historical residences.

Creation of a new Italian imaginary also by promoting, particularly in schools, the history of Italy's greats and historical re-enactments. Enhancing the Jubilee 2025 and Rome as the Capital of Christianity. Countering cancellation cultures and iconoclasm that undermine the symbols of our identity. Promotion of small municipalities and deep Italy rich in excellence. Re-introduction of the 2 per mille for third sector organisations that deal with culture.

14. TOURISM AND OUR HAPPY GROWTH

No other country in the world can boast the artistic, historical, cultural, and natural heritage of Italy. Ours is indisputably the most beautiful country on the planet. Taking a trip to Dante's homeland is every foreigner's dream. Yet Italy has so far failed to adequately exploit its vast potential in the tourism and accommodation sector.

Enhancing and promoting a diversified tourist offer. Create an innovative campaign to further promote Italian beauty in the world by supporting Italy's presence at major international events. Create coordination between regional promotions and the promotion of Italy abroad. Protecting boating and seaside businesses: 8,000 kilometres of coastline and 300,000 employees in the

sector are a heritage that must be defended against any form of unfair expropriation. Support for mountain tourism. Support for the digitalisation of the entire tourism and culture sector. Eradicate the phenomenon of unauthorised accommodation through clear regulation. Complete the reform of the tourism professions. Update the Tourism Code.

- 5 Combating degradation and breaking down architectural and sensorial barriers that limit and de-qualify the tourist offer. Introducing a bonus mechanism for tourism enterprises that invest in accessibility and services for families. Overcoming the seasonality of tourism employment through the reduction of labour costs in the longest contracts, in order to guarantee the worker a redundancy rate throughout the year. Investing in sustainability and digitisation of the sector.
- 10 Refinancing of tax credit for the redevelopment and purchase of tenant facilities. Supporting the sector to combat high bills. Investing in large events and at the same time cautiously promoting small local events.

15. AGRIBUSINESS PILLAR OF THE ITALIAN SYSTEM

Agriculture is one of the pillars of our nation, and its potential must be protected and developed, with the right balance between man and the environment. An example of excellence, it is a priceless heritage and constitutes the fulcrum of the Italian brand and value of the real economy. Protect the land and those who work it by restoring impetus to the sector and protecting the entire agri-food chain.

15

Relaunching the production and quality of Italian agri-food, fishing, and quality livestock farming. Countering the introduction of any product classification tool that is detrimental to Italian agri-food (Nutriscore), promoting the Mediterranean diet and quality agri-food against synthetic foods. Fight against unfair competition phenomena that penalise our agri-food brand (Italian sounding).

20

Invest in research, boosting agro-industry, which is crucial for innovation and the protection of biodiversity. Stimulate coordination with European institutions to limit the food exposure of the continent to the rest of the world. Combating the proliferation of surplus animal species, which damage biodiversity and agriculture. Eradication of swine fever and support for affected farms. Promotion of supply chain contracts that put the farmer at the centre and reduce the gap between production costs and the selling price of the product. Stabilisation of the extraordinary measures taken in the context of the commodity crisis. Safeguard, protect and rationalise agri-food markets, which are fundamental logistical and distribution platforms.

25

30

Efficiency in water resources by preparing a “reservoir plan” to combat drought, redevelopment, and expansion of water networks. Construction of new and more powerful desalinators to produce water for agricultural purposes. Support for the floriculture sector, an agricultural sector of excellence. Enhancement and protection of the fishing sector, entrepreneurs and their seafarers, preservation of fish stocks and protection of national production.

16. IN DEFENCE OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND NATURE

"I am me plus my environment and if I do not preserve the latter, I do not preserve myself," wrote Ortega Y Gasset. Loving the environment in which we live does not only mean defending it from climate change, pollution, and the destruction of biodiversity: it is the only way to save ourselves and our children from the disappearance of all that is beautiful in the world and of life as we know it. So, either we will take care of the environment or everything else will not matter.

Update and operationalise the National Climate Change Adaptation Plan. Combat droughts and pollution of our waters and, at the same time, clean up rivers and lakes. Saving the sea and coastline, protecting them from coastal erosion, cleaning up coastlines and seashores from litter and ecomonsters. Realise the objectives of the environmental and ecological transition of the NRP by safeguarding the production system affected by years of crisis, with particular attention to industrial sectors that are difficult to reconvert (e.g. automotive).

Play an active and proactive role in the coming months in Europe during the negotiations of the Fit for 55 packages, with the aim of defending and protecting the interests of the national industrial and production system. Plant trees to create 'green belts' in cities and promote the creation or renovation of gardens, urban gardens, parks, forests, and nature reserves to be managed by associations and adopted by schools. Tougher penalties, including fines, for arsonists. Strengthening of public transport and sustainable mobility, incentives for energy efficiency in residential and commercial buildings.

Promoting in Europe the policy of “civilisation duties” against products from non-EU countries that do not respect our environmental protection standards. Protecting the landscape and territory from neglect, abandonment, and seismic and hydrogeological risks. Closing the waste cycle and introducing the principle that “the more you differentiate, the less you pay”. Progressive substitution of polluting products with other bio-degradable ones and promotion of forms of recycling-reuse, such as vacuum packing. To protect animals: harsher penalties for

crimes against animals; training and information campaigns on respect for animals; stopping the illegal trade in puppies from Eastern Europe; re-awareness of the social and therapeutic role of pets. Protection of species and biodiversity.

17. CLEAN, SAFE AND AFFORDABLE ENERGY

5 *Italy, the homeland of Alessandro Volta, Enrico Mattei, and innovation, must once again play a leading role in the energy field, promoting environmental sustainability and, at the same time, lowering energy costs for companies, local authorities, and households.*

Immediate establishment of a crisis unit on energy and high energy bills. Combat financial speculation on commodity costs and establish a European cap on gas prices to curb energy bills.

10 Decoupling the electricity price from the gas price through a regulatory change in the functioning of the Single National Energy Exchange and the Single National Price. Total transparency on energy prices, disaggregating them by production type, through an immediate reform of the Gestore Mercati Energetici. Sterilisation of state revenues from energy and fuel taxes and automatic reduction of VAT and excise duties. Support for households and businesses
15 against high energy bills, with tax credit mechanisms and targeted direct interventions, also using the resources from taxation of the extra profits of energy companies. Introduction of 'subsistence utilities' for situations of economic hardship: minimum level of electricity and gas guaranteed even in case of arrears.

Immediate steering committee for the implementation of development strategies energy
20 compatible with our production system and useful to prevent possible crises. Europe-wide strengthening of the *RepowerEu* to overcome energy dependency on Russia.

Maximum diversification of supply sources from abroad, focusing on the 'Mediterranean corridor' and making Italy the European energy *hub*. Creation of new gas pipelines, starting with the connection with Spain, and expansion of existing ones.

25 Diversification of energy sources through the construction of new strategic infrastructures, such as regasifiers, and exploitation of resources in our territory, starting with gas deposits: reactivation and modernisation of existing plants and construction of new ones for the production of energy from clean and safe sources. Investing in research into the latest generation of nuclear power. Decisive increase, in line with international and NRP objectives, of energy
30 production from renewable sources by cutting red tape in authorisation procedures and launching the energy community system.

Creation of an Italian and European production chain for renewables, grids, and storage, implementing scientific and technological research. Development of smart cities to make consumption more efficient. Energy efficiency, starting with public real estate. Promotion of virtuous behaviour that combines environmental education, energy, and economic savings.

5 Preparation of an emergency plan to deal with unexpected and prolonged energy blackouts.

18. BUILDING ON INVESTMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Spending on public investment in Italy is among the lowest in Europe, and the few resources available are often not utilised. This is due to administrative inefficiency, but also to the too many 'no' votes that have conditioned our country's choices in recent years. It is time to change gear.

10

New impetus and revitalisation of investments in road, rail, port, and airport infrastructure. Making Italy competitive with other European countries through the modernisation of the infrastructure network and the realisation of major works. Strengthening the high-speed network to connect the entire national territory from the North to Sicily and from the Adriatic to the Tyrrhenian Sea.

15

Plan and implement works and interventions to address and solve major emergencies such as environmental emergencies, hydrogeological instability, and drought. Quickly use the available resources to guarantee the reconstruction and safety of the areas hit by seismic events and natural disasters, ensuring concrete support for the restart of local economies and through concrete tax benefits for those who invest and do business in those territories. Digitisation of the Boot, guaranteeing public, competitive, and secure infrastructures.

20

Strengthening and development of digital infrastructures and extension of ultra-wideband throughout Italy. Protection of national strategic infrastructures: guaranteeing public ownership of the networks on which companies will be able to offer services under free competition, starting with the communications network. Safeguarding the national interest, also from an economic point of view, for public infrastructure concessions, such as motorways and airports. Protection of strategic companies through proper recourse to golden power.

25

Put in place an appropriate program to revisit inter-ministerial competences and rationalise the related functions, also by investing in the training of public officials pending. Building bonuses: preservation of existing situations and reorganisation and harmonisation of incentives for the upgrading, securing and energy efficiency of public and private buildings.

30

19. TRANSPORT FOR FASTER, MORE CONNECTED, SMARTER ITALY

A competitive Italy must be accessible, intermodal, fast, smart, and sustainable. Many citizens of inland areas and so-called “weak demand” areas, commuters, and others, still live in a situation of isolation and marginality. Accessibility must be guaranteed by an efficient and safe transport system, from high-speed to local and proximity mobility.

Realise a new National Mobility Plan as a guideline for regions and metropolitan areas. Strengthen the “Rail Care” by giving more impetus to the modernisation of trains, railways, and stations. Extension of the high-speed and high-capacity networks. Recovery of the infrastructural backlog in Southern Italy. Effective connection of local territories to eliminate commuters' inconveniences, guarantee the liveability of large urban centres and repopulate inland areas. Strengthening local public transport, also by favouring the ecological replacement of the fleet, and non-scheduled transport, through a clear distinction between taxi and bus services and a new regulation on technological apps operating in the sector. Provide measures for people with disabilities, guaranteeing their right to mobility.

Invest in smart roads and sustainable mobility. Replace the current concept of “minimum services” with a system of “Essential transport levels” that ensures territorial continuity for inland, mountain and island areas. Support freight transport by road, also by incentivising the exchange of the circulating fleet as part of a sustainable ecological transition for companies. Strengthen intermodality also with a view to the *Blue economy*, which we will promote with the “Italy port of Europe” project in order to become a leading player in the Mediterranean Sea. Build the bridge over the Strait of Messina, a symbolic and strategic work for the development of the Italian transport system.

Incentivising the development of the airport system by revising the National Airport Plan, on the basis of which the most correct and efficient role of the national airline can be established. Efficiently connect the entire Italian territory to Europe, making trade faster and more fluid, achieving the historic result of bridging the gap between the north and south of the country.

20. SOUTH AS A GROWTH OPPORTUNITY FOR ITALY

Lifting Italy up again starting from the South as the driving force for the development and revitalisation of the entire nation is the priority on which the measures to eliminate inequalities, create jobs, develop modern infrastructure, and guarantee social security and quality of life in the South will be based.

The great challenge of energy independence and decarbonisation of energy sources is played out in the South. Make the South the protagonist of Italy's energy and ecological transition, enhancing the potential of renewable energies in the region and improving the competitiveness of companies. Investing in social infrastructure such as schools, kindergartens, and nursery schools. Strengthening the culture of legality. Strengthen actions to combat early school leaving and ensure a stronger link between school, university, and the world of work.

Make the “Decontribution South” measure structural, strengthen and extend it through a serious dialogue with the EU Commission. Focus cohesion policy on real works and strategic projects through simplification, skills, and planning. Reduce the number of investment programs and increase the efficiency of cohesion policies. Due diligence on all national and EU resources earmarked for territorial cohesion to verify the concrete implementation status of activities, also with a view to the use of new resources in the 2021-2027 programming period. Introduce simplified procedures and reduced taxation for companies investing and operating in economically depressed areas.

Reversing the trend of depopulation in the South with ad hoc measures and incentives for residency, also exploiting the opportunities offered by distance working. Reward mechanisms to promote the return of young excellences forced to move away from their homeland, bringing elsewhere a wealth that is the fruit of the investments in the South. Define the Essential Levels of Services (LEP) to guarantee the full respect of citizens' social and civil rights and not force those living in the southern regions to resort to “health emigration”. Enhance the excellence of “Made in the South” products and strengthen the welcoming economy. Guarantee full security and legality to those who live and work in Southern Italy.

21. STOPPING ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION AND RESTORING SECURITY TO CITIZENS

Security is the basis of social coexistence and guarantees development and well-being. Between old and new forms of crime, Italy is increasingly insecure. Illegal immigration threatens the security and quality of life of citizens. Our cities are degraded and unlivable. Suburbs and historic centres are the scene of squatting, violence, and drug dealing. We need a strong political turnaround to ensure legality within our borders, to redevelop our territories and to strengthen the national, social, and economic fabric.

Relentless fight against all mafias, terrorism, and corruption. Ensuring legality and social cohesion by strengthening the network of prefectures as representatives of the State in the

territory. Adaptation of the organisation, equipment and legal protection of the police, fire brigade, local police, and armed forces for territorial control. Strengthening “Operation Safe Streets” and reintroducing the neighbourhood policeman. Fight against degradation, no lawlessness enclaves.

- 5 Tougher rules for offences against decorum. Combating baby gangs and petty crime. Combating drug dealing and the spread of drugs by all means, including through prevention and information campaigns. Incentivising public lighting and commercial and hospitality activities in disadvantaged and degraded areas. Immediate eviction of people occupying private homes. Preventing and combating violence against women and minors. Strengthening of cyber security
- 10 measures and systems. Prison plan, greater focus on the prison police. Combating irregular immigration and orderly management of legal flows. Promoting the social and labour inclusion of legal immigrants.

Defence of national and European borders as envisaged by the Schengen Treaty and requested by the EU, with border control and blocking of landings to stop, in agreement with the North

15 African authorities, the trafficking of human beings; creation of hot-spots in non-European territories, managed by the EU, to assess asylum applications and fair distribution only of those entitled in the 27 member countries (so-called naval blockade). Flow Decree as an instrument of international cooperation, management of regular entry into Italy. Incentivising the return Italy of Italians abroad and Italian nationals. Agreements between the EU and third States for

20 the management of the repatriation of clandestine and irregular immigrants, making co-operation agreements conditional on the willingness of the States of origin to repatriate. Countering the activities of NGOs that promote illegal immigration. Maximum intransigence against all forms of anti-Semitism, racism, and Islamic fundamentalism.

22. FAIR AND SWIFT JUSTICE FOR CITIZENS AND BUSINESSES

25 *"That which is not also just cannot be truly honest", wrote Cicero. Honesty and justice are concepts that come together and represent the pole star that charts the course. What is needed is a justice reform that puts an end to the distortions we have witnessed in recent decades and combines the necessary guarantees with fairness and speed of trials. Italy deserves a fairer justice system that is close to citizens and businesses.*

- 30 Reform of the judiciary and judicial system: separation of careers between investigating and judging judiciary, with limited competitions and no transfer of functions. Reform of the judiciary council with the election of its members to defeat the current power-sharing that has

severely undermined the independence and authority of the judiciary. Stop the revolving doors between the judiciary and politics: the magistrate who enters politics is no longer a guarantee of impartiality and neutrality, therefore, a strengthening of the Cartabia reform on this aspect is necessary.

- 5 Revision of out-of-tenure appointments in order to bring as many magistrates as possible back to the performance of their duties and to support the work of the public prosecution service in guaranteeing justice. Civil and criminal trial reform oriented to provide effective guarantees for the parties, equal treatment, and reasonable duration. Certainty of punishment: no to “empty prisons” measures, yes to the conclusion of bilateral agreements for foreign prisoners to serve
10 their sentences in their home states.

New prison plan and increase in prison police personnel and equipment.

- Increase in the staffing of courts and public prosecutors' offices. Digitisation of justice and increase in the use of mediation. Reform of the judicial geography in accordance with the principles of territorial decentralisation and proximity justice. Elimination of Juvenile Courts
15 and establishment of specialised sections in each court, also to avoid cases such as the “Bibbiano system”. Reform of tax justice: no more magistrates appointed by the MEF and no more reversal of the burden of proof. Stabilisation of the honorary judiciary.

23. GIVING CREDIT TO FAMILIES AND BUSINESSES

- Banks must go back to being the safe deposit box of Italian savings, a flywheel of development
20 and welfare. For this reason, it is necessary to strengthen the instruments to protect savers and to guarantee better access to credit for small and medium-sized enterprises. Indeed, the role of banks will be central to getting the real economy moving again, to the extent that they return to providing financing to businesses. At the same time, measures should be put in place immediately to combat usury, a phenomenon that affects ever larger segments of the population.*

- 25 Facilitating access to credit for families and businesses. Protection of the Italian banking system at European level, by opposing rules and parameters that are penalising the characteristics of our financial system. Favouring a traditional banking activity that is attentive to the needs of the territories. A cap on dividends and an automatic cap on the salaries of managers and senior executives, aligning them with existing limits in the PA, for banks aided with public resources.

- 30 Publication of the list of large insolvent debtors of banks rescued by the State. Simplification of prospectuses for financial products that may be inappropriate for savers. Regulatory

intervention to overcome bureaucratic delays and red tape that hinder the filing of usury complaints; broadening the range of potential beneficiaries of the Solidarity Fund for Usury to include families and individuals. Provide an effective support network for debtors that, with a view to prevention, allows them to orient themselves at the first signs of crisis without waiting for difficult situations to worsen. Free families and businesses from debt slavery by allowing them to redeem impaired debts (NPLs) sold by banks to third parties, paying 20 percent more than the price assessed by the institution itself at the time of the transition. Right to current account for all citizens secured by the Postal Circuit.

24. PRESIDENTIALISM, GOVERNMENT STABILITY AND AN EFFICIENT STATE

In the last 20 years, Italy has had 11 different governments. An instability that weakens us in international relations and penalises Italians, because governments that last so short do not have a long-term vision, but only seek easy consensus in the short term. This is also why Italy has been growing less than the European average for decades. Political instability is also one of the main factors in our economic decline. Ensuring stable governments through presidentialism is not an abstract measure: it is the most powerful economic measure Italy needs.

Presidential reform of the State, in order to ensure governmental stability and a direct relationship between citizens and those who lead the government. Virtuous implementation of fiscal federalism and autonomies, with complete definition of the essential levels of services and proper functioning of the equalisation fund, to ensure national cohesion and unity. Transfer of powers to Roma Capitale, with resources, powers, and legal status in line with the main European capitals. Enhancement of the role of local authorities and protection of mountain and island specificities.

Equal dignity between public administration and citizens. Digitisation of PA procedures and the possibility of concluding files online for businesses and citizens. Mandatory “measurable efficiency program and objectives” in the Integrated Activity Plan (Piao) of administrations. Efficiency of the PA. Delegation, deregulation, and simplification of administrative language, with reduction of burdens for citizens, households, and businesses. Implementation of the use of public-private partnership.

Establishment of public tutors to provide bureaucratic support for the start-up of craft and commercial activities. Rigour in the timing of payments of public contracts, respecting of the

European average. Recognition of a positive rating for companies that comply with deadlines and contract conditions in public procurement. Simplification in the awarding of contracts and improved controls during the execution phase. Full, complete, and immediate compensation of debts and credits with the public administration.

5 **25. ITALY PROTAGONIST IN EUROPE AND THE WORLD**

The cradle of western civilisation, an economic and cultural power, a founding state of the European Union and the Atlantic Alliance: after too many years of marginalisation under left-wing governments, Italy must once again become a protagonist in Europe, the Mediterranean and the international chessboard.

10 For a foreign policy focused on protecting the national interest and defending the homeland. Full respect for our international alliances, also by adjusting defence allocations to the parameters agreed in the Atlantic Alliance. Side by side with our international allies in supporting Ukraine in the face of aggression by the Russian Federation. Relaunching the system of European integration, for a Europe of Homelands, founded on the interest of peoples and
15 capable of facing the challenges of our time.

Defence of Europe's classical and Judeo-Christian roots and its fundamental values of freedom, democracy, solidarity, subsidiarity, and justice. Promote common EU defence policies and the establishment of a “European pillar” of NATO, indispensable pillars for the security and independence of the continent. Supporting our Armed Forces, no cuts to the workforce and
20 overcoming precarious employment. Enhancing the training courses of academies and military schools. Relaunch of a national space policy.

Defence of the “sixth domain”, that of knowledge, in the “new Cold War” of disinformation. Revision of the Stability Pact and European economic governance, in order to guarantee growth and full employment policies. Countering unfair competition from European tax havens.
25 Restore centrality to the Mediterranean in Italian and European policies. A “Mattei formula for Africa”: promoting an “Italian model” of investment and co-operation for development, respectful of the environment and peoples.

Appendix IV. Meloni. 15 priorities for 2022.

Original text: Meloni, G. (2022). Programma Fratelli d'Italia 2022. *Fratelli d'Italia*. Available at: <https://www.fratelli-italia.it/programma/> (Accessed: 7 April 2022).

The vote that unites Italy

5 The program: The priorities in 15 points

Fratelli D'Italia: The patriot movement in 15 priorities

1. THE MOST IMPRESSIVE FAMILY AND BIRTH SUPPORT PLAN IN ITALY'S HISTORY

Free day-care centres open until closing time of stores and offices and with a rotating opening system in the summer period for working mothers. Childhood income with family allowance of €400 per month for the first six years of life of each dependent child. Family quotient in taxation. Deductibility of domestic work. Parental leave covered up to 80% and equalisation of protections for self-employed women workers. Incentive for companies that hire new mothers and women of childbearing age. Protection of working mothers and incentives to companies for in-house day care centres. Deductibility of the cost and elimination of VAT on early childhood products. Intervention on the cost of artificial milk. Defence of the natural family, fight against gender ideology and support for life.

2. ITALY FIRST AND ITALIANS FIRST

Defence of our national sovereignty. Rediscussion of all EU treaties starting with the fiscal compact and the euro. More politics and less bureaucracy in Europe. Supremacy clause in the Constitution to block agreements and directives harmful to Italy starting with Bolkestein and the Dublin Regulation. Safeguarding the national interest in foreign policy and adjusting Defence appropriations to average Western parameters. Greater consideration of Italian communities abroad, protecting Italianism in the world also as a valuable tool for facilitating diplomatic, economic and trade relations with foreign states. Defence of our strategic assets and productive capacity from foreign aggression, starting with the protection of ENEL, ENI, FERROVIE DELLO STATO, FINCANTIERI, GENERALI, LEONARDO, POSTE, as well as logistics, technology and transportation networks and infrastructure.

3. PRIORITISING SAFETY AND LEGALITY

Support for law enforcement and the armed forces: decent salaries and overtime, adequate allocations of personnel, means and technologies useful in combating crime and terrorism, toughening of penalties for violence against a public official, revision of the so-called torture law. Control of the territory also with the contribution of the army. Closure of nomadic camps
5 also to eliminate the phenomenon of toxic fires in large cities. Securitisation of 50 percent of assets taken from the underworld to finance a fund for the security and defence sector. Certainty of punishment: no to 'empty prisons' decrees, stop automatic sentence discounts and construction of new prisons. Attention to the living and working conditions of prison police. Support for victims of crime. Separation of the careers of investigating and judging magistrates.
10 Respect and enhancement of the duties of justices of the peace and honorary magistrates. Immediate deportation for foreigners who commit crimes and execution of the sentence in the state of origin. Law saying that defence is always legitimate. Fight against terrorism. Fight against all mafias, fight against corruption.

4. COUNTERING IRREGULAR IMMIGRATION AND NO TO IUS SOLI

15 Border control and naval blockade with immediate repatriation following agreements with North African states. Expulsion of illegal immigrants and stop the business of reception. Abolition of the Italian-only anomaly of the indiscriminate granting of self-styled humanitarian protection and asylum only for women, children and families truly fleeing war. Regular immigration quotas through the flows decree only for nationalities that have demonstrated
20 integration and do not create security problems. Italians first in access to social services and public housing. No to *ius soli* and any form of automatism in obtaining citizenship. Promotion of an international investment plan in Africa to combat hunger and poverty and limit the push for emigration.

5. PROTECTION OF OUR IDENTITY FROM THE PROCESS OF ISLAMIZATION

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Prohibition of funding of places of worship by fundamentalist states. Countering fundamentalist proselytising that fuels terrorism and introducing the crime of Islamic fundamentalism. Roll of imams and mandatory sermons in Italian. No yielding to those who would like to eliminate the symbols of our Christian tradition, ban the nativity scene, or remove crucifixes from public
30 places. Ceiling on the maximum number of foreign pupils per classroom and integration policies that do not lead to the birth of ghetto neighbourhoods on the model of the Parisian

banlieues. Attention and support for discriminated and persecuted Christian communities around the world.

6. LESS TAXES AND LESS BUREAUCRACY

5 Less state in non-essential areas. Less bureaucracy, regulatory and administrative machine simplification. Ban on the use of foreign terms in official and regulatory acts. Modernisation of public administration and introduction of a real meritocracy. Fight against waste. Tax cap in the Constitution and tax calendar: any new or increased tax must be introduced with at least two years' notice. State deficit allowed only to finance public investment. No more vexatious state and tax oppression: tax litigation reform with deletion of the aberration of reversal of the burden of proof. Tax peace for all small taxpayers in economic hardship through a generalised concordat. Real abolition of sector studies and “split VAT payments” for SMEs and freelancers. Raising the “minimum regime” to €50,000. Abolition of the cap on the use of cash. Financial compensation in case of “crazy” tax bills or bills. Fight against evasion starting with that of big business and banks. *Flat tax* from now at 15 percent for households and businesses on incremental income from the previous year and thereafter for the entire income produced.

7. STRONG DEFENCE OF *MADE IN ITALY* AND OUR BUSINESSES

20 Economic policy based on defending Italian labour, industry and agriculture from unfair competition and penalising EU directives. Support for industrial and agricultural production recognisable as brand Italy and gradual reconversion of production exposed to indiscriminate competition. Incentive to the consumption of agricultural products at zero kilometres. Support for those who do not relocate abroad, SMEs and quality craftsmanship as a feature of Italy's productive strength. Stopping the racket of commercial squatting and clandestine workshop-sheds especially Chinese.

8. REVITALISATION OF THE NATIONAL ECONOMY STARTING IN SOUTHERN ITALY

30 Invest in modernising the nation and on digital capacity. Ensure the general conditions for business activity and to attract foreign investment: efficient civil justice; streamlined bureaucracy; adequate logistics and infrastructure system; fair taxation. Extraordinary plan to upgrade and modernise commuter transportation. Multi-year plan to give southern Italy the infrastructural, logistical, and economic conditions necessary for the growth and development of the territory, not from a solely southernist perspective, but as a necessary factor to jumpstart

the entire national economy. Super deduction for northern companies that open branch offices in the South. Fight against crime, control of the territory. Zero taxes for businesses operating in the most deprived areas. Taxes at 10% for Italian and foreign retirees who move residence to Southern Italy.

5 **9. SUPPORT FOR JOB CREATORS AND SELF-EMPLOYMENT**

Defence of labour and fight against unemployment. Reduced *flat tax* only for firms producing in Italy with local labour. Super deduction of labour costs for labour-intensive firms. Incentive for worker participation in business profits as the best antidote to offshoring. Strengthening intermediation tools between labour supply and demand with greater involvement of public and private entities. Protection of the professions and enhancement of self-employment. Single system of social shock absorbers for all workers. Defence of small business.

10. CULTURE AND BEAUTY AT THE HEART OF ITALIAN IDENTITY

To defend beauty as a distinctive element of our cities and our territory. Rebuilding and giving new vitality to our immense artistic heritage and transforming the suburbs from places of neglect and decay into neighbourhoods with identity and a sense of belonging where we can live with pride and build the future with confidence. Combat squatting, occupations, and degradation. Enhancing the Italy of the diffuse historical and archaeological museum, theatre, music, popular traditions also through the deductibility of expenses for personal cultural consumption. Italy temple of beauty and culture as a driving force for the tourism sector. Strengthening of public-private subsidiarity instruments. Reintegration of 2xmille to cultural and social promotion associations. “Long-term rental” to foreign museums of our unused historical and artistic material with revenue and publicity benefits for our cultural heritage. Extraordinary plan for the maintenance of our cities, redevelopment of the suburbs, landscape and sites of monumental interest including through building replacement. Priority for responsible reconstruction of earthquake-affected areas.

11. POVERTY ALLEVIATION, EFFICIENT SOCIAL POLICIES AND HEALTH PROTECTION

No to the welfarism of citizenship income. Concrete economic aid to those who are unable to work for objective reasons: children, the disabled, those over sixty with no income. Increase of minimum pensions and doubling of disability allowance. Real recognition of the social function of those who care for a dependent family member (caregiver), with concrete labour and

regulatory protections. Health Pact between the state and citizens with forms of incentives, including tax incentives, for those who carry out proper and periodic preventive health care. Guarantee the right to health with the improvement and extension of health care services. Modification of the pension system: overcoming the Fornero Law and new economically and socially sustainable welfare reform with equal conditions for all generations: abolition of the automatic adjustment of the retirement age to life expectancy, flexibility of the retirement age and the possibility of a retirement pension with 41 years of contributions. Housing plan to address the housing emergency with social mortgage and rent-to-own. Care for the neediest with hot meal and dormitory for all but stop the begging racket. Strengthening subsidiarity. For a qualified, sustainable and value-generating Third Sector: call a “States General” to amend the current reform. Inclusion of sports in the Constitution as an essential tool for physical and mental well-being, value enrichment, combating youth deviance, and guaranteeing motor activity from elementary school to old age.

12. FOR YOUNG PEOPLE'S RIGHT TO THE FUTURE

For a National Youth protagonist in the fate of Italy. Efficiency of the educational pathway to make Italian youth competitive with their European peers; abolition of the “Good School” and overcoming alternating schoolwork; concrete system of university and work orientation. More respect and protection for the teaching staff; more resources for training and updating teachers, including on the use of the latest technological tools. University reform: 4-year study cycle; abolition of the entrance test lottery and introduction of a system of access by real merit at the end of the first year common to several faculties; full coverage of scholarships to the deserving. Youth employment incentives. Support for self-employment and the development of business and professional incubators. Zero taxes for youth enterprises. Guarantee fund for first home loans for young couples. Strengthening active citizenship through mandatory training in first aid, civil defence, firefighting, land defence, road safety. Promotion of correct lifestyles; fight against alcoholism, drugs, and drug traffickers; prevention and recovery also in collaboration with the therapeutic community circuit.

13. PROTECTION OF LAND, NATURE, AND ENVIRONMENT

For a sustainable Italy. Defence of the territory, landscape and nature attacked by neglect and abandonment, the main cause of fires and hydrogeological disruption. Securing of areas at greatest seismic risk. Enhancement of National Parks and their proper and balanced tourist use. Training in environmental protection from the school years. Progressive banning of non-

biodegradable materials. Support for renewable energy and research in this field with the aim of bringing Italy as close as possible to energy autonomy. Conversion of production activities with a high environmental impact. Waste tax calculated on the basis of the quality and quantity of waste produced to strengthen separate waste collection. Protection of our seas and restoration of our coasts also through an extraordinary plan of building replacement to rid them of “ecomonsters”. Preservation of rural culture and the activities that carry it. Proper management of wildlife and environmental heritage. Goal of zero-impact cities also through the creation of 'urban forests' and support for sustainable mobility. Code for the protection of domestic and companion animals.

10 **14. BANKS SERVING HOUSEHOLDS AND BUSINESSES**

New parliamentary inquiry committee to shed full light on banking scandals and protect savers. Make Bankitalia and Consob supervision effective by pursuing any conflict of interest. Separation of commercial and investment banks also to encourage lending to households and businesses. Cap on dividends and salaries for banks aided with public resources. Making public the names of the main insolvent debtors of state-aided banks, prosecuting bank directors and managers responsible for misconduct against savers. Strengthen the public nature of the Bank of Italy including by nationalising ownership shares held by private banks. Reaffirm public ownership of gold reserves and their total return to the country.

15. FOR A STRONG GOVERNMENT AND EFFECTIVE INSTITUTIONS.

20 Presidential reform of the Republic with direct election of the head of state or government. Responsible federalism; bringing the powers, resources, and assets of Rome Capital up to the standards of major European capitals; strengthening and enhancing local autonomies and the powers of mayors. Anti-turncoat and anti-turncoat mandate constraint. Overcoming perfect bicameralism and reducing the number of parliamentarians.

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Appendix V. Election poster 1. Meloni 2022.



Fratelli d'Italia. (2022). [Facebook]. 29 July. Available at:

https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=604520394375946&set=pb.100044539714966.-2207520000&type=3&locale=it_IT (Accessed: 17 April 2024).

Appendix VI. Election poster 1. Le Pen 2022.



Loaëc, M. (2022). Présidentielle 2022: 5 choses à savoir sur Marine Le Pen avant le 1er tour. *TF1 Info*. 5 April. Available at: <https://www.tf1info.fr/politique/election-presidentielle-2022-5-choses-a-savoir-sur-la-candidate-du-rassemblement-national-marine-le-pen-2215749.html> (Accessed: 17 April 2024).

Appendix VII. Election poster 2. Le Pen 2022.



Le Pen, M. [MLP_officiel]. (2022). *La France n'a jamais été aussi fracturée, aussi divisée. Le temps de l'unité nationale est venu. Je veux gouverner avec tous les Français, pour tous les Français.* [Image attached]. [X]. April 12. Available at: https://twitter.com/MLP_officiel/status/1513802106393739267 (Accessed: 17 April 2024).