



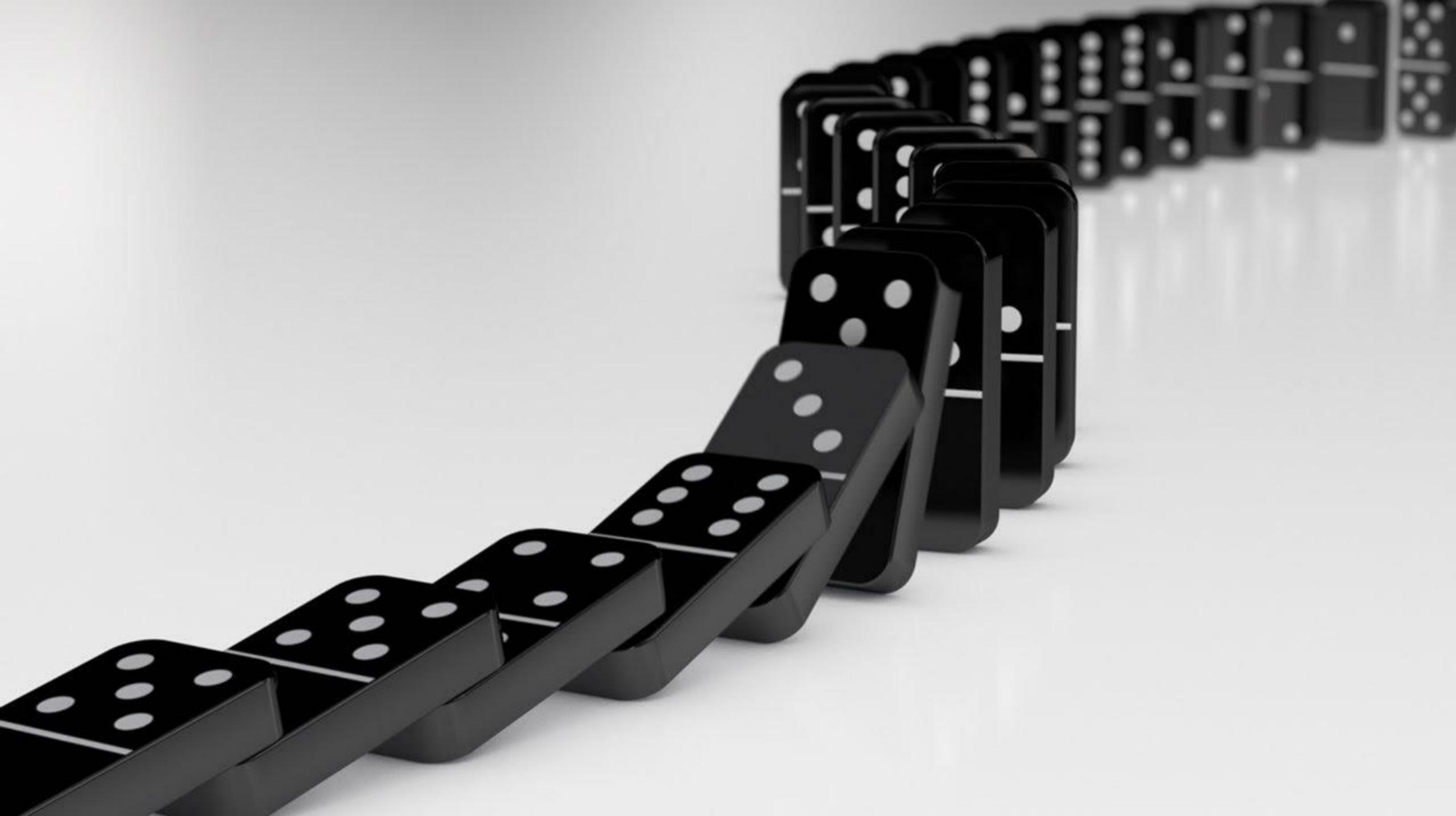
# **The European Union's New Architecture of Power**

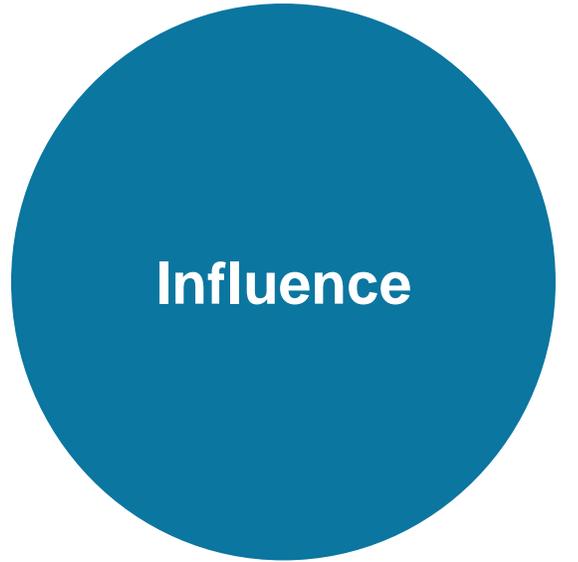
**How sovereignty, security,  
resilience and influence  
interact in an age  
of systemic instability**

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Alma Mater Studiorum University of Bologna

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16 March 2026





**REFRAMING SOVEREIGNTY**

## **Sovereignty then**

- Full control over territory
- Independence from external interference
- The ability to act alone

**To be sovereign was  
to be autonomous**







**Today,  
autonomy is  
structurally  
impossible for  
most states.**

**It is also  
impossible for  
the EU.**

**Sovereignty today  
is not the absence  
of dependence.**

**It is the capacity  
to decide despite  
dependence.**

**It is the capacity  
to decide under  
pressure.**





**National sovereignty is not lost to Brussels.  
It is pooled to regain leverage.**

**For Europe, sovereignty is not exercised alone.  
It is exercised at scale.**

**SYSTEMIC INSTABILITY**

**& THE 2026**

**EU INDEPENDENCE MOMENT**

**Conflicts  
& Security**

**Climate  
Change**

**Energy  
Transition**

**Poverty  
& Hunger**

**Food  
Insecurity**

**Migration &  
Social Inequalities**

**Natural Resources  
Shortages**



**Territorial  
sovereignty at  
stake**

**Economic  
integration as  
vulnerability**

**Great  
Power  
Rivalry**

**Human  
rights  
dismissed**

**Multilateral  
institutions under  
threat**

# Strategic Priorities

- Sustainable prosperity & competitiveness
- Defence and Security
- Social model & innovation
- Quality of life
- Democracy & rule of law
- Global engagement

Commission  
work **2026**  
programme





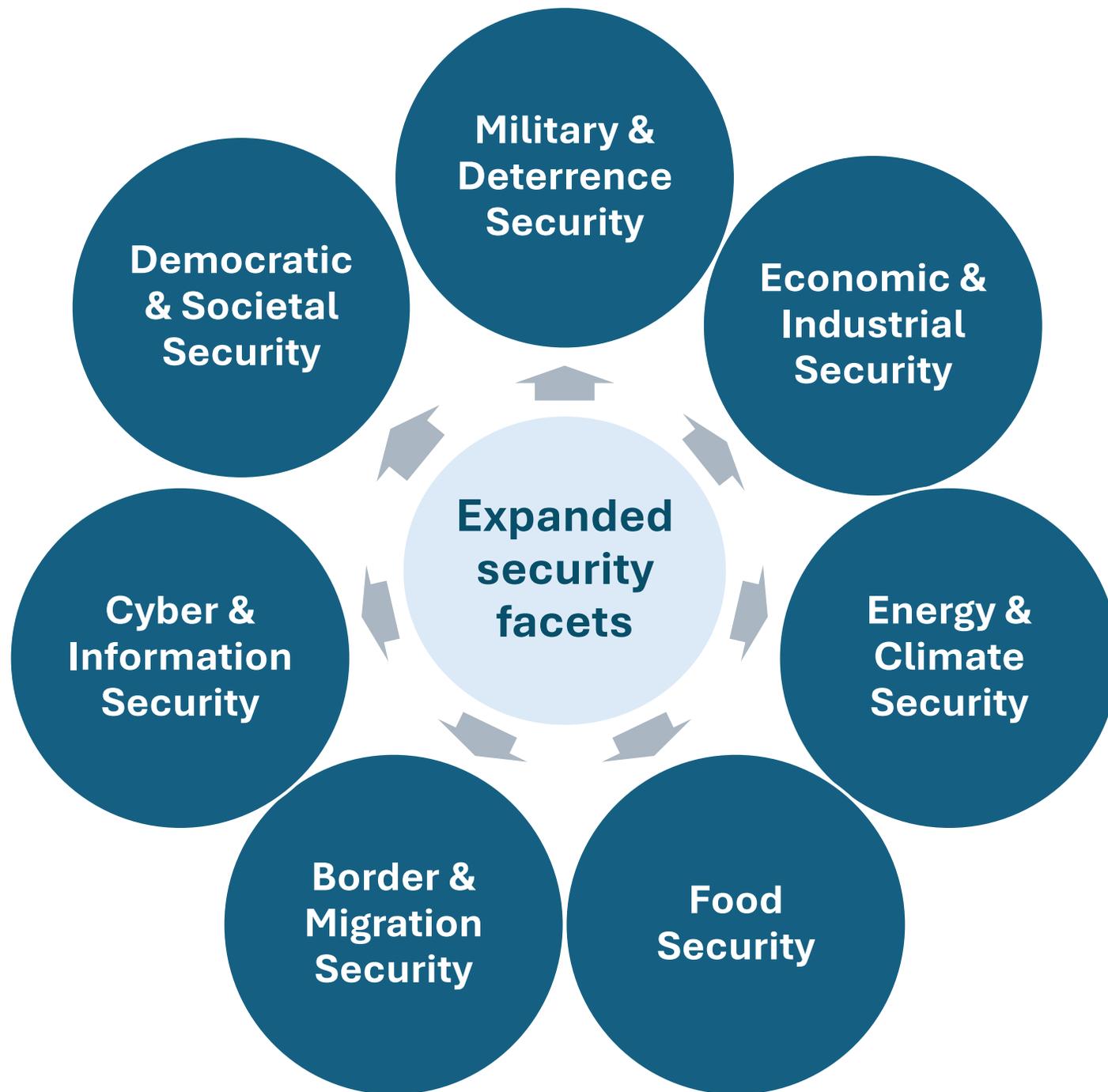
**SECURITY AS  
THE CONDITION  
FOR SOVEREIGNTY**

# Classical Security



**Condition: stable globalisation and predictable alliances**







62.78

**Interdependence creates cascading risks**

58.71



# **RESILIENCE AS SYSTEMIC CONTINUITY**



**Resilience is the  
ability of a system  
to absorb shocks,  
adapt, and continue  
functioning  
without losing  
political control.**

# Why is resilience necessary for the EU?

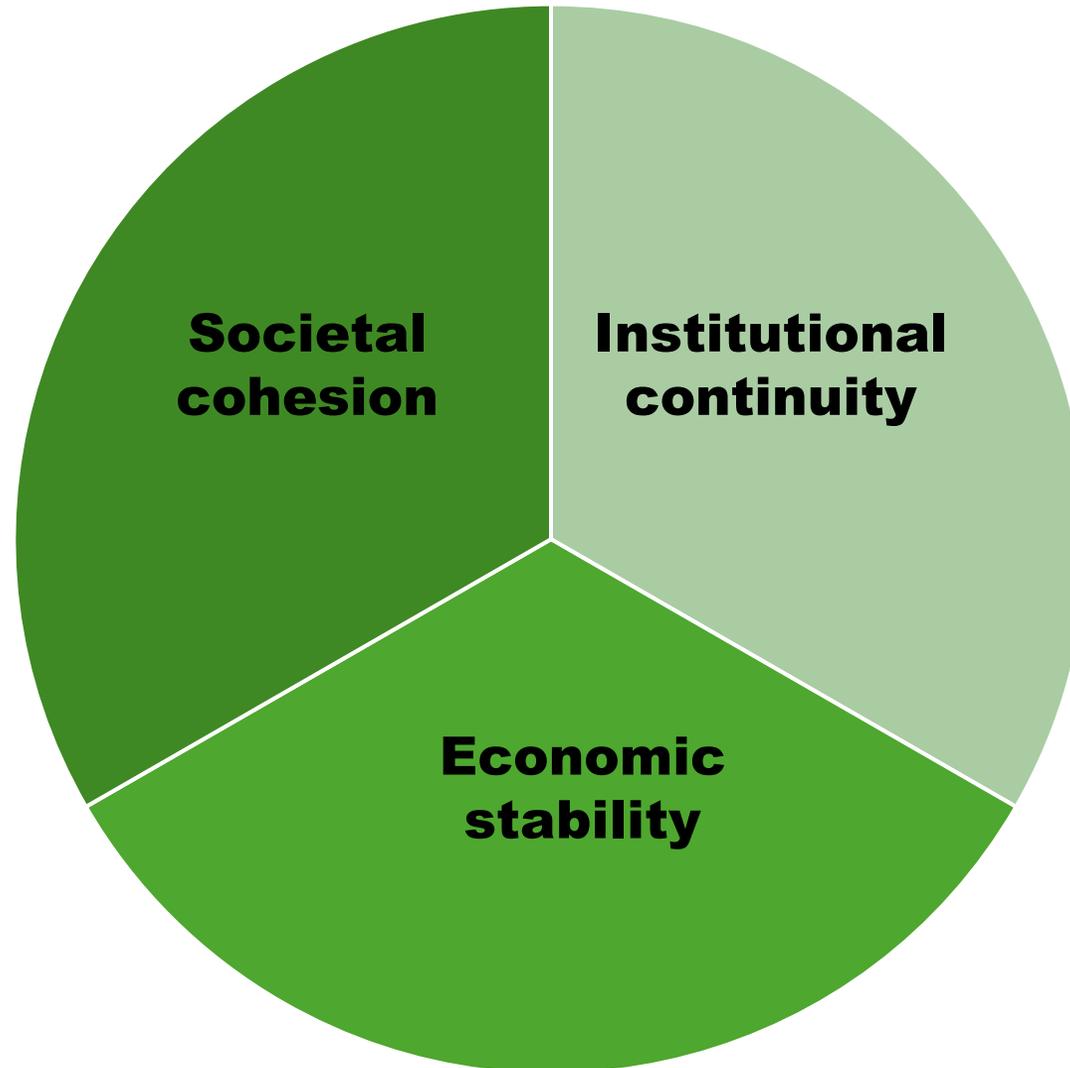
The European Union is internally integrated and externally dependent, hence exposed.

Interdependence cannot be reversed. Exposure must be managed.

Resilience is the condition that makes openness sustainable.



# Where resilience work



**Resilience has its limits...**



**INFLUENCE:  
SHAPING INTERDEPENDENCE  
TO PROTECT SOVEREIGNTY**



**Influence for the EU is not coercion.  
It is the ability to shape external  
environments for reducing vulnerability**

**The objective  
is no longer  
to shape the  
world.**

**It is to prevent  
the world from  
destabilising  
Europe.**



# How does the EU exercise influence?

## Regulation

Through high standards promoting democratic, environmental and social values.

## Market Access and Trade

Through rules into agreements that include value chains, dispute mechanisms, sustainability clauses, and regulatory cooperation.

## Connectivity and Infrastructure

Through transport corridors, energy grids, digital networks and supply chain diversification.

## Financial and Development Instruments

Through development cooperation, macro-financial assistance, and investment platforms.

## Geopolitical tools

Through sanctions, anti-coercion instruments, export controls.

# Regulation GDPR

Adopted in April 2016 to:

- Create one single set of rules for all EU member states to make business easier.
- Give individuals control over their digital footprint in an era of Big Data and social media.
- Force companies to take data protection seriously through the threat of heavy fines.





# Market Access and Trade

## EU-Mercosur Trade Agreement

In the making for more than 25 years.

It eliminates more than 90% of tariffs on EU exports.

Currently under review by the European Court of Justice.

Why is it important:

- not just market access,
- not just agriculture,
- system alignment.

Through trade agreements, the EU exports regulatory frameworks, partnerships, dialogue and investments.

# Connectivity and Infrastructure

## Global gateway

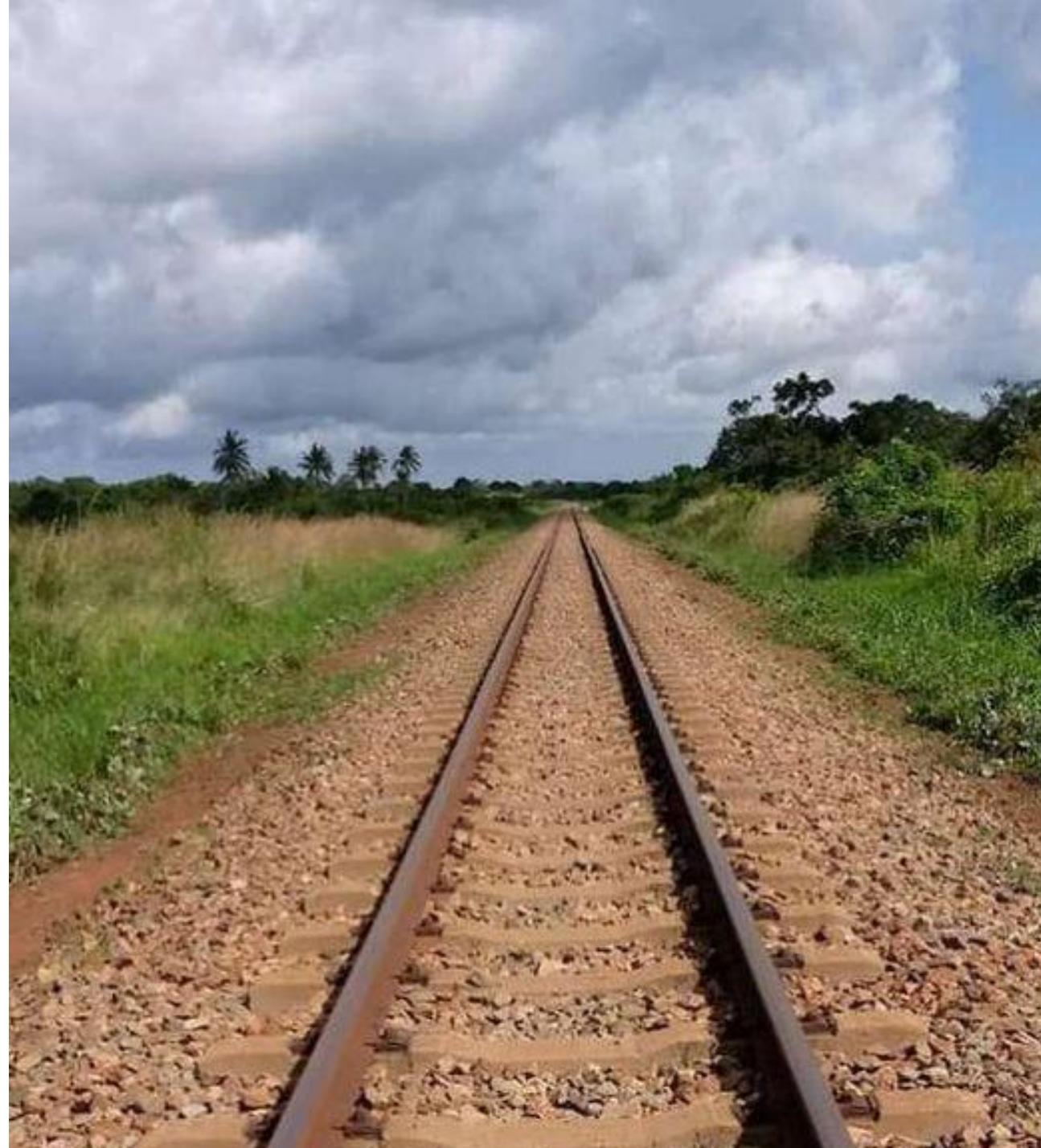
Launched in 2021.

It is fully aligned with the UN's Agenda 2030.

It mobilizes up to €300 billion in investments to support EU partners across the world in the areas of:

- digital
- climate and energy
- transport
- health
- education and research

The Global Gateway is not development policy:  
it is externalized security policy.





# Financial and Development Instruments

## Mattei Plan

Launched at the Italy-Africa Summit in Rome in January 2024 to deepen long-term political, economic, and development partnerships with African countries.

Initial allocation of €5.5 billion, designed to act as a catalyst for larger investments around 6 pillars:

- Energy
- Agriculture
- Education & Training
- Health
- Water
- Infrastructure

# Geopolitical tools

## EU Sanctions against Russia

Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the EU deployed large-scale sanctions targeting:

- Financial institutions
- Energy exports
- Technology transfers
- Individuals and entities

The EU has adopted 19 comprehensive packages. As of late February 2026, a 20th package is currently under discussion.



# Limits of EU influence

- Internal fragmentation
- Ideological fragmentation
- Complex decision-making
- Limited hard power
- Competition from other powers
- Hyper-regulation and delivery gaps





**How Europe can decide, act,  
and matter in a world of  
permanent instability?**

**Influence** allows the EU to shape the environment in which shocks occur, rather than merely reacting to them.

**Resilience** is what ensures that those choices survive shocks.



**Sovereignty** means the capacity to decide under pressure.

**Security** is the condition that allows political choice to exist.

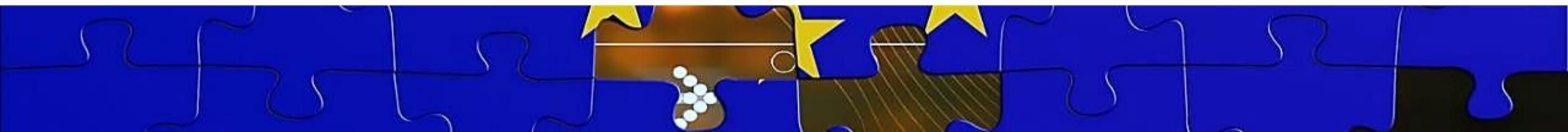


**Influence is not unlimited.  
It depends on unity, credibility, and delivery.**

**And unity is increasingly difficult in a fragmented political landscape and an unstable international system.**



**As a result, European integration is evolving.  
Not toward uniformity but toward differentiation.**







An aerial, top-down view of a modern architectural structure. The building's facade is composed of a complex, lattice-like pattern of light-colored, possibly metallic or stone, beams that create a series of irregular, interconnected shapes. The structure is set against a backdrop of a city street with greenery and other buildings. The overall color palette is dominated by light blues, greys, and greens, with a slightly desaturated, artistic feel. The text "Thank you" and the email address "saracarrer@hotmail.com" are overlaid in white on the central part of the image.

**Thank you**

**[saracarrer@hotmail.com](mailto:saracarrer@hotmail.com)**