

Standing Together

A Relational Union — Images of 2040

These are imagined scenes from a possible future, not forecasts.

In this vision, Europe in 2040 has stepped out of the shadows of isolation and extraction to become a beacon of relational strength—a relational union inspired by summanitist elements.

What follows is imagery of what that might entail.

Life and lineage: A demographic rebirth

In the early 2020s, a demographic winter cast a shadow over our future, driven by a society where individuals felt so isolated that starting a family felt irrational and exhausting. In this imagined future, we picture a social contract rewritten so that bringing life into the world feels safe and deeply meaningful. We might see the broader European population stand around **722 million**, with some **500 million** citizens within the European Union, and annual EU births rebounding toward **5 million** a year. Families and communities could stay together and thrive because the “village” has been rebuilt—intergenerational co-housing, shared community care, and a culture that honors our roots. In such a picture, the union becomes attractive to young migrants looking to build a future while staying connected to their roots.

Flowing prosperity

While past projections warned that the EU’s share of global GDP would shrink, in this vision Europe’s economy might blossom to at least **€30 trillion**, growing at a steady rate that could approach **3.5% annually**. That path would rest on a profound truth: high social trust directly lowers transaction costs and fuels sustainable economic growth. The economy would act like a flowing river rather than a stagnant pond. We picture fair taxes on large accumulations of commercial land and capital discouraging the hoarding of vital resources, so wealth actively circulates. Corporations could be rewarded for protecting the ecosystems and communities they rely on, sharing the prosperity they generate. Citizens would no longer view themselves as passive taxpayers; they would be impact investors. State surplus might be actively reinvested into asset-based policies. Common goods—ranging from ecological capital, sustainable energy production and public waterways to digital open-source platforms—would not be viewed as dead state costs. They could be officially recognized on balance sheets as critical “relational capital,” forming the resilient floor that allows the entire society to flourish.

The human-machine partnership

Across agricultural, industrial, and logistics sectors, we imagine millions of autonomous robots and AI agents handling much of the burden of repetitive work. Freed from some of that toil, Europeans could reclaim the deeply human arts of empathy, motivation, creativity, and care. To keep technology safe, all AI models would be strictly governed by the “Five Essential Limits,” prohibiting mass surveillance, manipulation, or the destruction of dialogue. A dedicated European Human-AI Alignment Institute might continuously ensure that these tools serve as bridges between people, never as masters over them.

Bridges, not walls: geopolitics and the coral reef

In this picture, Europe has rejected the exhausted choices of being a closed-off fortress or a soulless global mall. Instead, borders could act as a healthy, living membrane—protecting civic trust while remaining open to genuine exchange. The union might form civilizational partnerships with its neighbors, forging strong, cooperative ties with countries like Turkey, Morocco, the broader Middle East, North Africa, Russia, and America. Migration would be circular and mutually beneficial; talented individuals from partner countries share their skills in Europe and return to enrich their home nations, replacing extractive “brain drain” with “brain circulation.” Inside the borders, millions could integrate through the “Coral Reef” model—sharing a solid foundation of mutual respect while celebrating vibrant zones of cultural mixing and dialogue.

Relational governance and justice

In streets and neighborhoods, loneliness would be answered with action. Citizens might use open-source platforms to map local needs, forming decentralized “care swarms” to help neighbors with eldercare, childcare, and local projects. Justice systems could transform as well. Alongside criminal laws, authorities might enforce a “noble code,” actively recognizing and rewarding people for certain prosocial activities or activities that build up their communities. Crucially, society would be anchored by the covenant of asymmetry: anyone possessing greater wealth, knowledge, or power carries a proportionally greater responsibility to uplift the vulnerable and build bridges of relationship.

The vitality of connection: physical and mental health

In this 2040 vision, Europe has recognized that the chronic “diseases of civilization”—such as severe anxiety, depression, and stress-induced inflammatory conditions—were largely rooted in the isolation of the atomic age. By weaving high-trust relational webs, citizens could naturally downregulate their biological threat responses, freeing up massive amounts of physical energy for immune function and cognitive repair.

Because strong social ties are among the greatest predictors of longevity, we picture Europe becoming something like a continent-wide “Blue Zone,” significantly expanding healthspan and dramatically easing the mental health crises of previous decades.

Peace: a more distributed immune system

Peace and security in Europe would no longer be defined merely by overwhelming firepower, rigid walls, or the threat of mutual destruction, but by “strategic coherence.” The safest societies are not the most guarded, but the most trusted. Rather than relying on a brittle, centralized shell, Europe might operate a “distributed immune system.” When bad actors or toxic behaviors emerge, the societal network could dynamically reconfigure to isolate, starve, and neutralize the threat without descending into authoritarian control. In this vision, such systemic resilience might lead to around a **15% reduction** in traditional security and violence costs. When harm occurs, accountability would focus also on repairing relational justice and the social fabric, bringing offenders into a circle of connection to understand their impact rather than casting them into the void of endless revenge. On the global stage, Europe could employ relational diplomacy, utilizing early-warning systems to track relational stress caused by ecological degradation or destructive polarization.

We picture Europe in 2040 redesigning its economic architecture so that prosperity flows like a healthy cardiovascular system rather than pooling in stagnant enclosures—engineered around relational realism and

maximizing the velocity of value.

Conclusion

In this imagined future, Europe has become a Relational Union in 2040—proof that our whole can be infinitely more powerful than the sum of our individual parts. By choosing courage over fear and connection over domination, we could build a civilization where everyone is supported, and everyone belongs.