COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

Europe in May 2019: Preparing for a more united, stronger and more democratic Union in an increasingly uncertain world

The European Commission's contribution to the informal EU27 leaders' meeting in Sibiu (Romania) on 9 May 2019

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Foreword

In my 2017 State of the Union address, I suggested, as part of our Roadmap for a more united, stronger and more democratic Union, that Europe's leaders meet to prepare our future at 27 in Sibiu, Romania – a city with a unique story, representing Europe East and West, past and future. Our meeting there on 9 May, will be the moment to show what a united Union can achieve in the future, and this right ahead of the European Parliament elections between 23 and 26 May.

Over the last five years, we have been tested as we have grappled with a myriad of crises. But we have emerged stronger every time. And through it all, we have kept our relentless focus on delivering on the promises we made five years ago, when leaders set out, in the light of the outcome of the European Parliament elections, a strategic agenda for 2014 to 2019, which I shaped in parallel into the 10 political priorities for my Commission.

At the time, I said it was our last chance to show Europeans that their Union works for them. The Commission which I have the honour of presiding has lived and breathed this mission, listening to Europeans' hopes, fears and expectations. From bringing back jobs, growth and investment after the crisis to strengthening both solidarity and responsibility in our Union, to securing the same pay for workers doing the same work in the same place, we have acted where it counts the most.

We must now look forward, learning from our experiences and building on our successes. We must be even more ambitious and focused than ever before. Europe's leaders will start this reflection in Sibiu before agreeing on the next strategic agenda at the June European Council. This paper is the Commission's contribution to this process.

The duty of every generation is to change the destinies of Europeans for the better. To make good on our enduring promise of peace, progress and prosperity. This has been my vocation and my life's work. And it must continue to drive us all forward. As I stand in Sibiu with 27 European leaders on Europe Day, the anniversary of the Schuman Declaration, I will do so proud of our past, but even more determined and hopeful for our future.

European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker

Introduction

On 9 May 2019, EU leaders will meet in Sibiu, Romania, to reflect on our Union's political aspirations and prepare the 'strategic agenda' for the next five years. They will do so on the eve of the European Parliament elections where more than 400 million Europeans will take to the polls in the world's largest transnational democratic exercise. They will do so thirty years after the end of communism and the fall of the Berlin Wall and fifteen years after the unprecedented enlargement of our Union, which overcame our continent's painful division.

Today, **our Union provides peace, stability and prosperity across Europe and beyond,** in spite of our many internal and external challenges. Our Union stands resolutely for its principles of democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights, even as calls for strongmen and inward nationalism become louder. Our common history enables us to stand strong against such calls. This is the enduring quality of the European project and makes our model unique and worth defending.

After years of crisis, **Europe is bouncing back**. 240 million people are at work in Europe – more than ever before. Consumers and businesses can benefit from a single market that gives them greater choice and lower prices. Our reinforced single currency protects us from financial turbulence. Europe is unmatched anywhere in the world in ensuring that the benefits of our social market economy reach all parts of the population. Europe is working to keep its citizens safe – with more progress made on migration management, border protection and security in the last four years than in the twenty before. And Europe is a responsible global power, taking the lead in addressing climate change, advocating peace and sustainable development globally, promoting free and fair trade, and setting standards for human rights, working conditions, food safety and data protection.

As the world around us becomes ever more fractured and unsettled, never has preserving and furthering this progress been so important and yet so demanding. The challenges we Europeans collectively face are multiplying by the day – from global migratory flows, to increased competitive pressures on key economic sectors, heightened threats to our security and the rule of law, the pace of demographic and technological change, to ever more severe ecological perils. At the same time, the rules-based international order, for so long the indispensable framework for a prosperous and secure European Union, is now being called into question or even deliberately undermined by key actors.

These trends present as many opportunities as they do challenges. They serve as a stark warning: **for Europe to thrive, the EU's Member States must act together**. They must act together if they want to preserve our European way of life, sustain our planet, and reinforce our global influence. **Only by finding strength in unity, will Europe be able to influence the course of world events**. Sibiu is therefore an opportunity for EU leaders to demonstrate their unity and give a fresh outlook to our continent. They should do so by showing that they have listened to citizens' hopes, concerns and expectations; and that they are ready to act decisively and collectively to address them.

Today, the European Commission is making a number of recommendations for the next strategic agenda that will help our Union to do just that. As **policy and communication are the two sides of the same coin**, we are also setting out suggestions on how to better communicate our collective decisions to serve Europe's citizens and democracy. Both the priorities we set and the way we explain and engage with Europeans will be decisive in making our Union more united, stronger and more democratic.

Part I: The European Commission's contribution to the EU's strategic agenda 2019-2024

In a decade of unabated change and challenge, Europe has shown that it is able to deliver on its promise of peace, prosperity and progress for its citizens, proving the many prophets of doom wrong. Europe's economy and society have emerged stronger from testing times, though much work is still needed to ensure that our citizens feel safe and protected and the benefits of our common policies reach all parts of our Union.

This task is made more challenging by an increasingly uncertain and unsettled world around us. As new powers rise and as old ones tread new paths, the case for European cooperation and focused integration has never been more compelling nor more urgent.

With the European Parliament elections on 23-26 May 2019 and the change of political leadership of the EU institutions that will follow, the time has come for new policy orientations, new priorities and a new reform momentum. Only if the European Union proves capable of delivering on its common challenges will our continent master the world of tomorrow. Only if we are able to agree and implement common decisions quickly and effectively will we be able to meet citizens' expectations. This will require the collective efforts of the EU institutions together with all EU Member States, acting at national, regional and local level.

In the following section, we map out where Europe is today, how it can adapt to the changes underway and how it can shape those yet to come. On the basis of the experience of the past five years, we then set out a number of policy recommendations to help us achieve those goals.

I.1 Where the EU stands today

Five years ago, the European Council defined a broad strategic agenda for the Union in times of change[1]. This took further shape in the form of President Jean-Claude Juncker's 10 political priorities[2], developed during his electoral campaign and in dialogue with Member States and the European Parliament. The priorities focused on the things that matter most to Europeans: bringing back jobs, growth and investment, strengthening social fairness, managing migration, mitigating security threats, unlocking the potential of the digital and energy transitions, making the EU a stronger global actor, and reinforcing transparency and democratic legitimacy.

These **efforts have delivered tangible results for citizens**, despite unpredicted difficulties along the way, which continue to pose serious challenges for our Union.
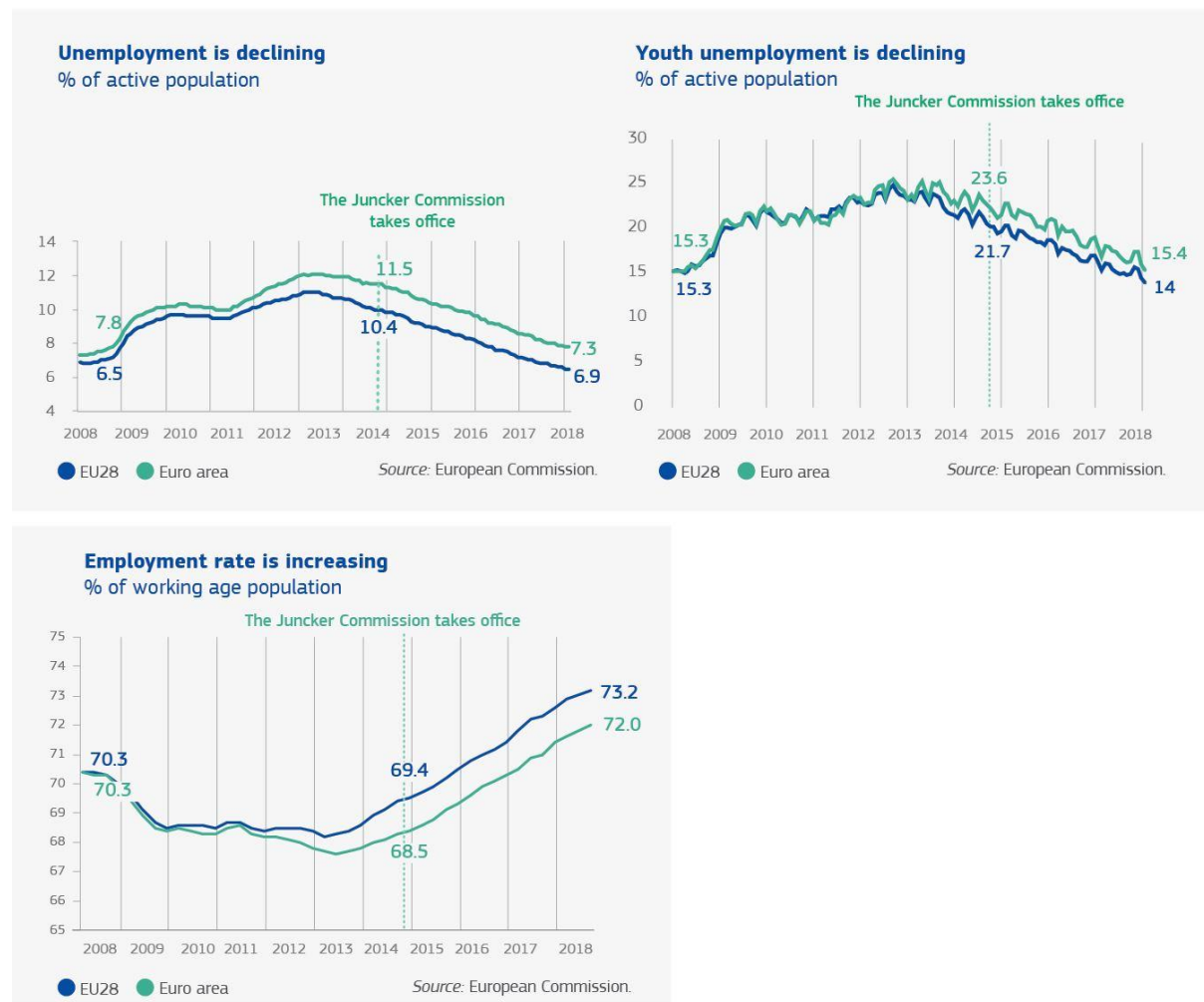
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[1] 'Strategic agenda for the Union in times of change', Conclusions of the European Council of 26/27.6.2014, Annex I
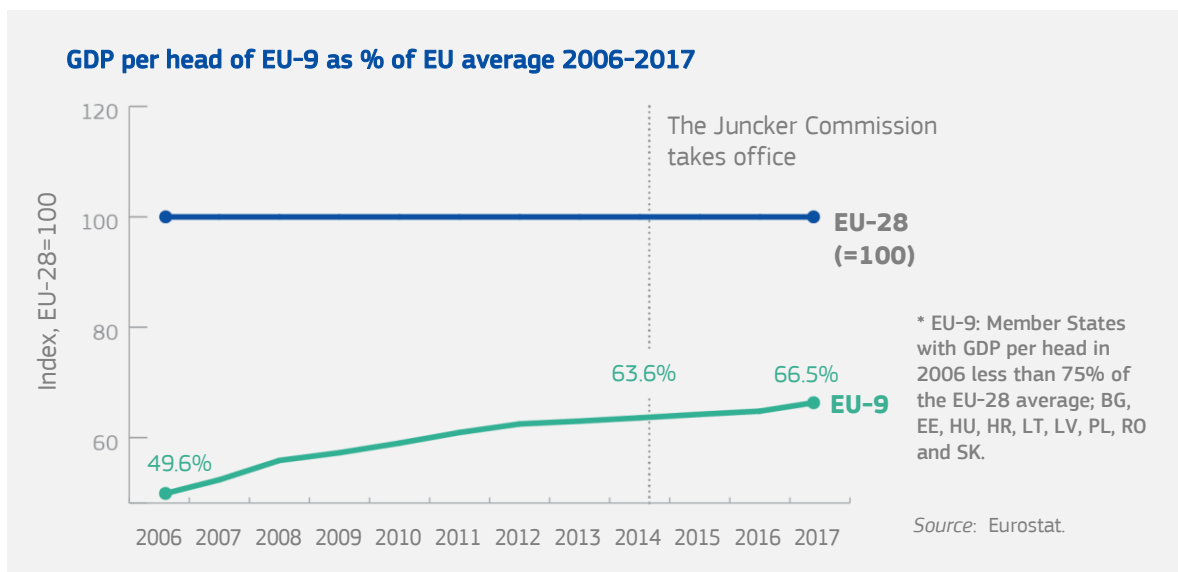
[2] 'A New Start for Europe: My Agenda for Jobs, Growth, Fairness and Democratic Change – Political Guidelines for the next European Commission', President Juncker, 15.7.2014
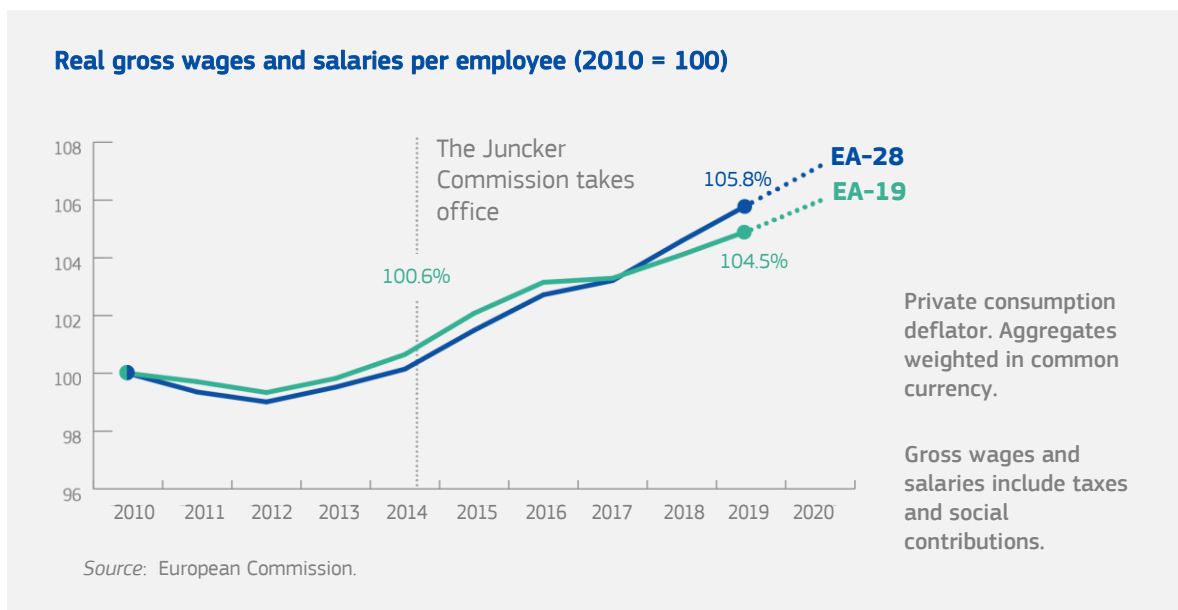
Europe's economy

The EU's ambitious agenda for jobs, growth and investment, along with efforts to deepen the single market and the European Central Bank's accommodative monetary policy have contributed to a robust economic recovery. Europe's economy has grown for six consecutive years. There are now 240 million people at work in Europe – more than ever before – and unemployment is at a record low this century, although it still remains high in some Member States, in particular for young people. Public finances have improved across the board. Poverty and social exclusion are now decreasing and there is more convergence amongst Member States. This is notably due to the positive impact of the EU's structural and investment policies. A stronger European financial sector is supporting credit and investment.

Unemployment is declining
% of active population

The Juncker Commission takes office

7.8   11.5   7.3
6.5   10.4   6.9

● EU28   ● Euro area   *Source*: European Commission.

Youth unemployment is declining
% of active population

The Juncker Commission takes office

15.3   23.6   15.4
15.3   21.7   14

● EU28   ● Euro area   *Source*: European Commission.

Employment rate is increasing
% of working age population

The Juncker Commission takes office

70.3   69.4   73.2
70.3   68.5   72.0

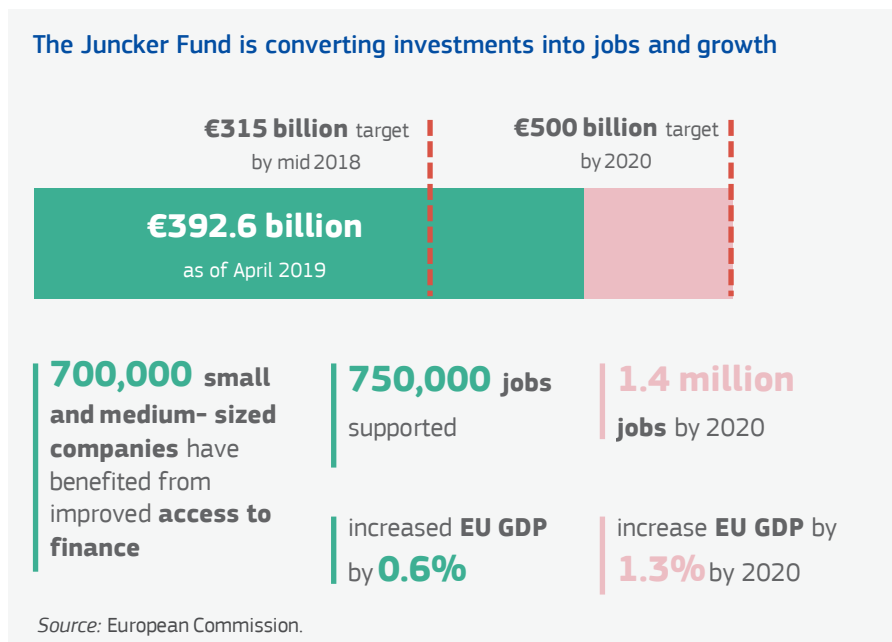● EU28   ● Euro area   *Source*: European Commission.

Less developed Member States are catching up with the rest of the EU. Between 2006-2017, their gross domestic product (GDP) per head grew at an annual rate of 4.5% compared to 1.4% in more developed Member States.

GDP per head of EU-9 as % of EU average 2006-2017

Index, EU-28=100

120

The Juncker Commission
takes office

100 — EU-28 (=100)

80

63.6%   66.5%

* EU-9: Member States
with GDP per head in
2006 less than 75% of
the EU-28 average; BG,
EE, HU, HR, LT, LV, PL, RO
and SK.

60

49.6%   EU-9

2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017

Source: Eurostat.

After a decline in wages in the aftermath of the crisis, there is now a strong upward trend for both the EU and the euro area, in particular since 2017. Wages are expected to increase further in 2019 in all EU Member States. This is a very solid basis for stronger domestic consumption and, in turn, stronger domestic growth, which is less dependent on external developments.

Real gross wages and salaries per employee (2010 = 100)

108

The Juncker
Commission takes
office

EA-28
EA-19

106

105.8%

104

100.6%

104.5%

102

Private consumption
deflator. Aggregates
weighted in common
currency.

100

98

Gross wages and
salaries include taxes
and social
contributions.

96

2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020

Source: European Commission.

The **European Fund for Strategic Investments,** launched in 2014 and known as the Juncker Fund, has triggered almost €400 billion in additional investments – exceeding its initial target by more than €70 billion. It has **supported jobs for 750,000 people in Europe**, improved access to finance for 700,000 small and medium-sized companies and increased Europe's GDP by 0.6%. The Juncker Fund is also an example of an innovative and more efficient way of using the EU budget to deliver on multiple policy objectives, such as innovation, the fight against climate change, connectivity or quality jobs.

The Juncker Fund is converting investments into jobs and growth

€315 billion target by mid 2018

€500 billion target by 2020

€392.6 billion as of April 2019

700,000 small and medium- sized companies have benefited from improved access to finance

750,000 jobs supported

1.4 million jobs by 2020

increased EU GDP by 0.6%

increase EU GDP by 1.3% by 2020

Source: European Commission.

Public support for the euro has never been higher. Our single currency is a source of economic protection and empowerment, with strong global standing. **175 million people in 60 countries outside the euro area use our currency** or have local currencies linked to it. This is also due to the fact that the euro is a very stable currency with an inflation rate of only 1.7% on average in its first 20 years.
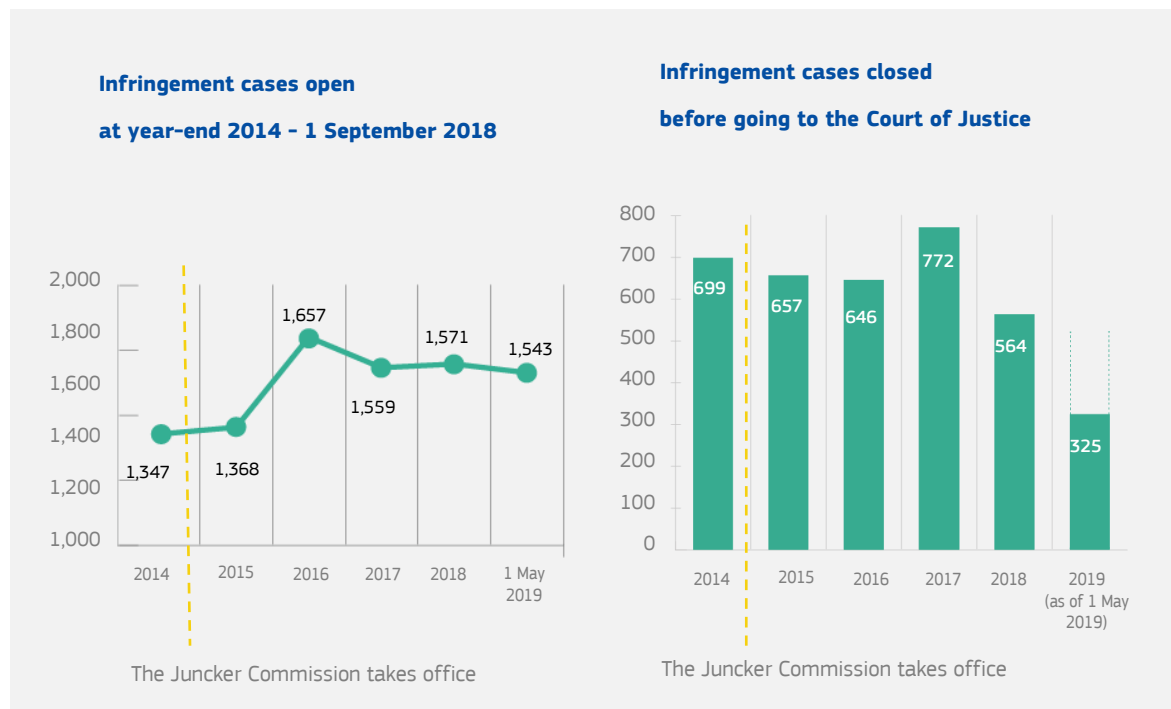
A strong currency requires sound economic policy and continuous efforts to carry out structural reforms in Member States. This is why the EU's mechanism of economic policy coordination – the 'European Semester' created in 2011 – has been strengthened over the years. It now also includes dedicated recommendations for the euro area and a stronger focus on social priorities and investment needs at Member States level. The Commission has also started providing technical support for structural reforms in Member States, spanning more than 700 reform projects in 26 Member States. These cover reform projects such as the digitalisation of public administrations or modern insolvency proceedings. Investing in people is a key component of Europe's resilience and future growth. This is why the European Social Fund has supported more than 15 million people to develop the skills they need for today's labour market.

Risks in the banking sector have decreased significantly. This is thanks to more stringent supervision and down to EU banks now holding many more liquid assets and euro area banks having reinforced their capital buffers by €812 billion since 2014. The number of non-performing loans is now close to pre-crisis levels. This enabled the Euro Summit in December 2018 to pave the way for the next steps of the Banking Union.

Robust enforcement of EU rules through single market tools and competition policy has protected citizens and businesses and spurred growth and innovation. The Commission has notably taken strong and effective action in face of breaches of EU law, taking firm measures when these could not be solved through dialogue[3]. This more strategic approach has seen an increased focus on systemic problems where the Commission's enforcement action can make a real difference. There are currently more than 1,500 infringement cases open across all Member States. The Commission is working hard with national authorities to resolve these, if

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[3] Commission Communication 'Better Results through Better Application', C(2016) 8600, 13.12.2016

possible before having to go to the Court of Justice of the European Union. A solution has been found for 500 infringement cases every year since 2014, 90% of the overall total. This shows the value of more effective interaction between the Commission and national authorities before the often time-consuming court stage is reached.

Infringement cases open at year-end 2014 – 1 September 2018

Infringement cases closed before going to the Court of Justice

The Juncker Commission takes office

The Juncker Commission takes office

The Commission has also closely monitored the application of the EU's commonly agreed **competition rules**. Whenever necessary, it took resolute action against anti-competitive mergers, cartels, the abuse of dominant positions or illegal state aid decisions. From 2015-2018, the total customer savings from antitrust and merger interventions by the Commission amounted to between €48 billion and €78 billion. For example, in 2016 and 2017 the Commission imposed a fine of €3.8 billion on the trucks cartel and in 2018 binding commitments on Gazprom to enable the free flow of gas in Central and Eastern Europe at competitive prices. Competition law enforcement has also been central to ensuring a level playing field in the EU's digital markets. The Commission fined Google three times between 2017 and 2019 for breaching EU antitrust rules, for a total sum of €8.25 billion. These breaches denied other companies the possibility of competing on merit and innovating, and deprived European consumers of the benefits of competition. Finally, the Commission's interventions in the area of state aid equally helped ensure a fair level playing field for all – also in the area of taxation. For example, in August 2016, the Commission found that Apple was granted illegal tax benefits, which led to a recovery of €14.3 billion by Ireland. At the same time, the Commission approved €1.75 billion in state aid from four Member States to an Important Project of Common European Interest to enable innovation in the microelectronics sector to the benefit of the whole European economy.
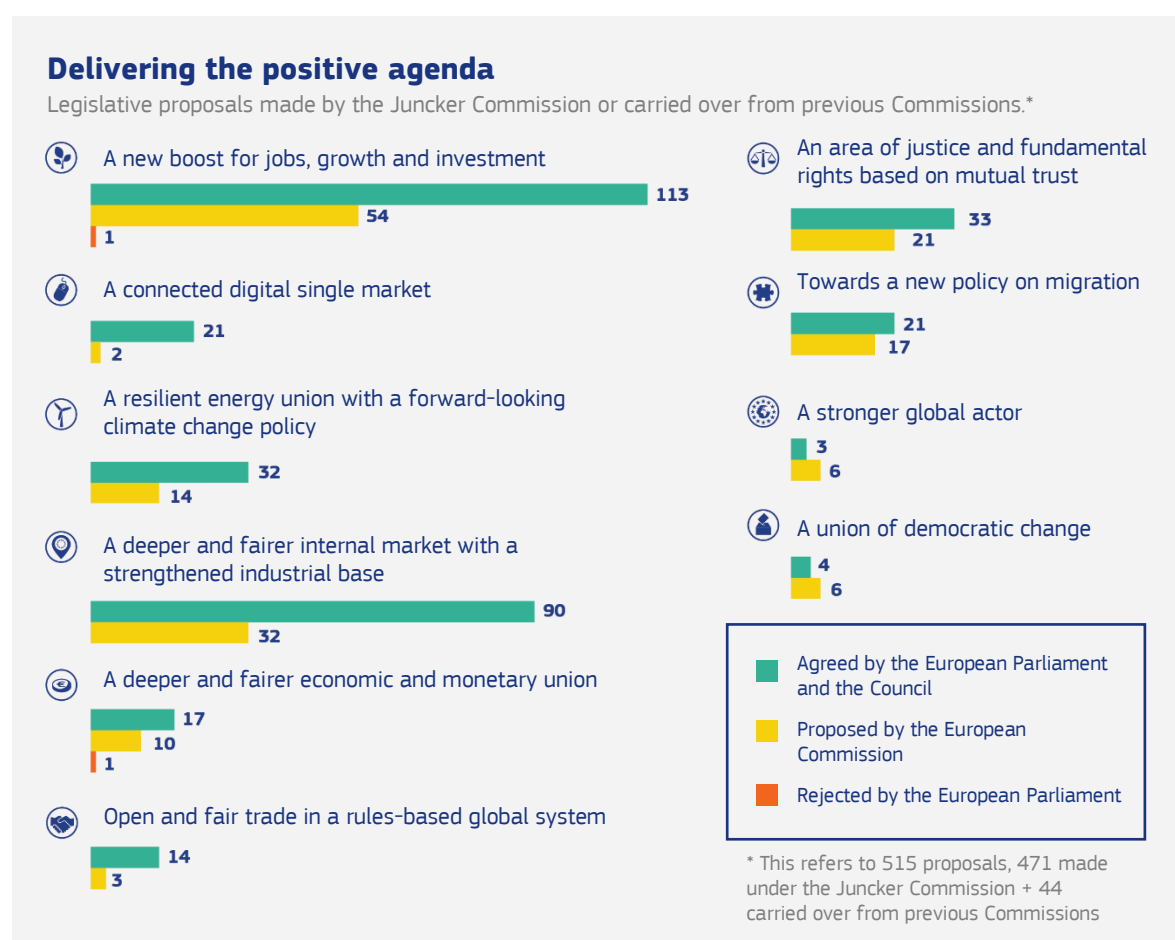
Delivery on the EU's strategic agenda 2014-2019

It is often said that the Union is too divided or too slow in delivering effective policy outcomes. This criticism ignores the fact that the EU is not a federal state. It is a system of multilevel governance that includes 28 democracies at national level, often with influential

democratic layers below that, and democratic processes between the EU institutions. Reaching a fair, balanced compromise therefore often requires time and for all to be willing to give and take. EU decisions naturally often take longer than those taken nationally. However, in spite of this unique political system and many additional challenges along the way, the EU managed to deliver on the commitments taken in 2014 in the European Council's strategic agenda and in the Juncker Commission's 10 political priorities.

By summer 2018, the Juncker Commission had tabled all of the legislative proposals it committed to at the start of its mandate. In total, the Commission made 471 new legislative proposals and carried over an additional 44 presented by previous Commissions. Of these, 348 proposals have been adopted or agreed by the European Parliament and the Council during the current mandate. This shows that **in 348 cases the Union was able to agree on moving Europe forward**. Remarkably, in around 90% of the cases, the final compromise was approved by consensus in the Council of Ministers, and thus supported by all 28 Member States. This is part of a clear trend. The number of cases where consensus is reached among 28 has gone up every year since the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon[4].

Delivering the positive agenda

Legislative proposals made by the Juncker Commission or carried over from previous Commissions.*

A new boost for jobs, growth and investment
- 113
- 54
- 1

A connected digital single market
- 21
- 2

A resilient energy union with a forward-looking climate change policy
- 32
- 14

A deeper and fairer internal market with a strengthened industrial base
- 90
- 32

A deeper and fairer economic and monetary union
- 17
- 10
- 1

Open and fair trade in a rules-based global system
- 14
- 3

An area of justice and fundamental rights based on mutual trust
- 33
- 21

Towards a new policy on migration
- 21
- 17

A stronger global actor
- 3
- 6

A union of democratic change
- 4
- 6

- Agreed by the European Parliament and the Council
- Proposed by the European Commission
- Rejected by the European Parliament

* This refers to 515 proposals, 471 made under the Juncker Commission + 44 carried over from previous Commissions

In all policy areas, significant progress has been made over the five past years. **20 key achievements** are listed in Annex III, while **10 key proposals that are 'unfinished business'** as they are still pending in Parliament and Council, are listed in Annex IV. The following policy developments should be kept in mind when designing the next strategic agenda:

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[4] Cf. the analysis of Nicolai von Ondarza, Jahrbuch der europäischen Integration 2018, p. 85 et seq. (p.91)

- The EU was able to deliver faster and more efficiently on its strategic agenda as the Juncker Commission was committed to better regulation from the outset. This was underpinned by **President Juncker's commitment to being 'big on big things and small on small things'** – a principle later endorsed by EU leaders in the Rome declaration of 25 March 2017[5]. This allowed for a more focused legislative agenda. The Juncker Commission **withdrew 100 legislative proposals** pending from its predecessor at the start of its mandate in an exercise of political discontinuity. Overall, it made **75% legislative proposals less per year** than the previous Commission. It also stopped making new legislative proposals as of summer 2018, which allowed Parliament, Council and Commission to devote all their energy to completing ongoing legislative procedures. The creation of the post of a First Vice-President in charge of better regulation – and the appointment of Frans Timmermans to this demanding position –, the stronger coordinating role of the Commission's Secretariat-General, the creation of the independent Regulatory Scrutiny Board and the work of the Task Force on Subsidiarity, Proportionality and 'Doing Less More Efficiently'[6] were key innovations that helped to implement and enforce President Juncker's 'big on big' principle.

- In the digital single market, the EU has been particularly successful over the past five years. Freed from **roaming charges**, citizens travelling to another EU country now use 12 times more mobile data than before. They are no longer subject to unjustified **location-based blocking of online services**. In addition, new **copyright rules** fit for the digital age were adopted to guarantee fair remuneration for creators, strong rights for users and responsibility for platforms. New portability rules agreed in April 2018 allow citizens to take their TV or streaming subscriptions with them wherever they go in the EU. 49% of subscribers have already made use of this in the first year since the rules came in. Of the 30 proposals made by the Commission to complete the digital single market, 28 were adopted by the European Parliament and the Council, while only two, on e-privacy and the cybersecurity competence centre and network, are still pending adoption.

End of roaming charges for all travellers in the EU

HISTORIC														
2007	2012	2015	2016 Domestic price + up to	2017 Domestic price	2008	2012	2015	2016 Domestic price + up to	2017 Domestic price	2007	2012	2015	2016 Domestic price + up to	2017 Domestic Price
€ 0.49	€ 0.29	€ 0.19	€ 0.05		€ 0.28	€ 0.09	€ 0.06	€ 0.02		€ 6.00	€ 0.7	€ 0.2	€ 0.05	
Voice call made (1 minute)					SMS sent					Data MB				

Source: European Commission.

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[5] Cf. Rome Declaration. Declaration of the leaders of 27 Member States and of the European Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission, 25.3.2017: 'We want the Union to be big on big issues and small on small issues'
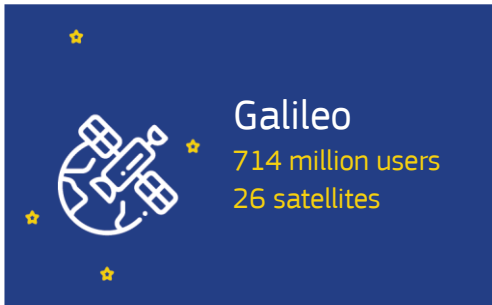
[6] See Report on the Task Force on Subsidiarity, Proportionality and 'Doing Less More Efficiently', 10.7.2018, and the Commission Communication on 'The principles of subsidiarity and proportionality: Strengthening their role in the EU's policymaking', COM(2018) 703 final, 23.10.2018

- There has been notable progress on climate action, energy policy and the circular economy. The EU played a central role in negotiating **the 2015 Paris Agreement** and triggered its entry into force through its own ratification. Europe's clean energy transition is now well under way. For example, all **Clean Energy for All measures** were agreed by the European Parliament and the Council. This will boost the transition towards renewable energy sources, increased energy efficiency and a better-connected European energy market. As part of our commitments under the Paris Agreement, the EU will cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40% by 2030. EU initiatives, including our Plastics Strategy and the ban on single-use plastics, are making Europe a global pioneer in transitioning towards a more circular economy. Efforts to diversify energy imports and to strengthen the EU's common energy market are starting to bear fruit. At the start of the mandate, six Member States (Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland, Sweden) were fully reliant on a single provider of gas. Today, only Finland is still in this situation, with gas only accounting for a limited part of its total energy mix. This will make us less dependent on energy imports, spur the energy transition and will help us deliver on our climate goals.

- In seemingly controversial policy areas, the EU has been able to take remarkable steps forward over the past five years. In the area of **social policy**, the EU has taken united and determined action to ensure that our labour market and welfare institutions are future-proof and fully support our social market economy. Of the 25 proposals made by the Commission – from the **reform of the Posting of Workers Directive** and the **European Labour Authority** to the **European Accessibility Act, work-life balance** and **better working conditions** and **access to social protection** – 24 were agreed. Only the proposal on the reform of social security coordination is still pending. The **European Pillar of Social Rights**, jointly proclaimed by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission in Gothenburg on 17 November 2017[7], provides a compass for renewed convergence towards better working and living conditions across the continent. Progress has also been made in the **field of taxation**. Out of 21 Commission proposals made, 14 have been agreed, including the proposals on tax transparency, anti-tax avoidance, and value added tax. Other important proposals such as the Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base or the Digital Tax are still pending.

- 57 of the proposals currently still pending relate to the **next Multiannual Financial Framework** (2021-2027) and the spending programmes for different policy areas. The Commission made all of these proposals in May and June 2018. While partial agreements have been reached between the European Parliament and the Council on 11 of these, they all remain pending, as agreement on the overall Framework is needed before any of the sectoral programmes can be finalised. The European Council of December 2018 concluded that an agreement should be reached by autumn 2019.

- Investing in people is a priority under the current strategic agenda. The **Erasmus+ programme** and its predecessors have already given 10 million people the opportunity to study, train or volunteer abroad. Launched just over two years ago, the **European Solidarity Corps** has shown how engaged and civic-minded young people in Europe can be – over 120,000 have registered their interest and around 14,000 have

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[7] Interinstitutional Proclamation on the European Pillar of Social Rights, OJ C 428, 13.12.2017, pp. 10-15

already started volunteering. This figure is expected to reach 23,000 by the end of 2019.

- **Copernicus and Galileo**, the EU's earth observation and location space services, are now operational and set to bring tangible benefits to the single market. They contribute to economic growth and support our work in areas such as climate change, agriculture, oceans, transport, digitalisation, border surveillance, security, and defence. The Galileo space programme keeps Europe in the space race and shows the true value of European sovereignty. **No single Member State alone could have put 26 satellites in orbit for the benefit of over 700 million current users worldwide**.

Galileo
714 million users
26 satellites

- Substantial progress has been made on the **Capital Markets Union.** Out of 13 proposals made by the Commission, only 2, on crowdfunding and third-party effects on assignment of claims, are still pending. With the new **Prospectus Regulation**, companies and especially small and medium-sized enterprises will find it easier to raise funding on capital markets. The **pan-European personal pension product and measures to improve the EU's market for cross-border investments** provide citizens with new saving and investment opportunities and contribute to deeper and more liquid markets.

- Since November 2014, the EU has concluded and started implementing **new, balanced trade agreements**, of which the Economic Partnership Agreement with Japan – the EU's largest bilateral trade agreement ever – and the EU-Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement stand out. Trade agreements with 13 other countries have also entered into force. Over the same period, the EU finalised trade agreements with Eastern and Western African Communities, Singapore, Vietnam and Mexico; launched new negotiations with Australia, Chile, Mexico, New Zealand and Tunisia and continues to negotiate with Mercosur, Indonesia, as well as with China[8] on a Comprehensive Agreement on Investment. The greater transparency in the negotiations introduced by the Juncker Commission proved to be key to their success.

- To ensure a level playing field for all in global trade, **trade defence instruments** have been modernised. These now allow the EU to respond more effectively to unfair trading practices. The new **cooperation mechanism for screening of Foreign Direct Investments** helps us identify cases where foreign investments threaten our security. Only 3 out of 17 proposals on trade are pending adoption (protection against extraterritorial legislation, control of export of dual-use items and international public procurement).

- To protect citizens' fundamental right to privacy, the EU has set global standards with the **General Data Protection Regulation**. To improve Europeans' security online and in the real world, EU countries are now cooperating against **fraud and**

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[8] Joint Communication of the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy 'EU-China – A strategic outlook', JOIN(2019) 5 final, 12.3.2019

counterfeiting of non-cash means of payment. The **Cybersecurity Act** introduced European certificates for connected products and services. **New rules on combatting terrorism, the Passenger Name Records for air travel, bomb-making ingredients and firearms** help prevent terrorist and criminal acts. The new **European Public Prosecutor's Office**, being currently set up with 22 Member States, will investigate criminal cases involving EU funds or cross-border value added tax fraud.

- EU action has delivered **tangible results on migration**, notably under the pressure of the 2015 crisis, though not without controversy. Increased cooperation with countries of origin and transit through the Partnership Framework has helped the EU secure new readmission arrangements and is helping third countries address the root causes of migration. The **EU-Turkey Statement** and the envelope of €6 billion for the **EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey** support Turkey in hosting close to four million refugees. The EU's engagement with Turkey has also helped reduce irregular and unsafe border crossings into the EU and to cut the number of lives lost at sea. Today **the number of irregular arrivals has returned to pre-crisis levels**. Arrivals in the Central Mediterranean are down by 80% compared to 2016 and by 90% in the Eastern Mediterranean compared to peaks in 2015. EU operations have helped save 730,000 lives since 2015. Thanks to **EU resettlement programmes**, over 50,000 of the most vulnerable in the Middle East and in North and Sub-Saharan Africa have been given refuge in the EU since 2015. Under the EU's emergency relocation mechanism set up by the Council in 2015, almost 35,000 asylum seekers – all those eligible – were successfully relocated from Italy and Greece to other EU Member States. The **EU Trust Fund for Africa** – worth €4.2 billion – is helping to address the root causes of forced displacement and irregular migration and is contributing to better migration management.

Source: European Commission.

- By establishing the **European Border and Coast Guard** and expanding its capacity to 5,000 border guards by 2021 and 10,000 by 2027 at the very latest, all Member States have taken additional joint responsibility for the protection of the EU's external borders. In addition, the EU's external borders have been strengthened by the introduction of an **Entry/Exit System** and a **European Travel Information and Authorisation System**.

- With the **RescEU programme**, the EU created an additional reserve of assets, including firefighting planes and helicopters to help Member States when needed. The programme also drastically increases financial support (e.g. for adaptation, repair and operational costs) for assets registered in the European Civil Protection Pool and helps cross-border information and knowledge sharing on disaster prevention. It also improves coordination with the European Union Solidarity Fund, which has helped people in disaster stricken regions, paying out more than €2 billion since November 2014.

- Despite the scale of the challenges linked to migration and security, the **Schengen** area of free movement of persons has been preserved. However, today several states still maintain temporary internal border controls, putting into question the proper functioning of the Schengen area in the long term, as well as its benefits for Europe's citizens and economy. The **Commission's 'Back to Schengen' Roadmap**[9] of March 2016 continues to require further determined work by Member States to reinforce mutual trust and to return to a situation of open, internal borders across the EU.

- The EU has become a stronger global actor. It has in particular strengthened its partnership with Africa through the **Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs** of 2018. By leveraging €44 billion in investments until 2020, the EU's **External Investment Plan** is delivering concrete results in Africa and the Neighbourhood countries in support of reforms, investments in infrastructure and finance for small and medium-sized companies. The EU has also renewed its efforts to deliver stability in its neighbourhood. Through its firm and credible enlargement policy, the EU exports stability and promotes political, economic and social transformation in the **Western Balkans**. The EU has given new impetus to this agenda with the 2018 Western Balkans strategy.

- Since 2014, spurred by President Juncker making defence a priority in his political programme, the EU has made unprecedented progress on security and defence. **Permanent Structured Cooperation**, bringing together 25 Member States to deepen defence cooperation within the Union framework, will be a driver for further progress. The recently agreed **European Defence Fund**, as well as its precursor programmes, promote a strong, innovative and efficient defence industry and increase the EU's autonomy.

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[9] Commission Communication 'Back to Schengen – A Roadmap', COM(2016) 120 final, 4.3.2016

Duplications in European Defence Spending

	EU	U.S.
Duplication of System in Use		
Number of types of weapon system*	178	30
Examples:		
Main battle tanks	17	1
Destroyers/frigates	29	4
Fighter planes	20	6
*For selected weapon systems categories		
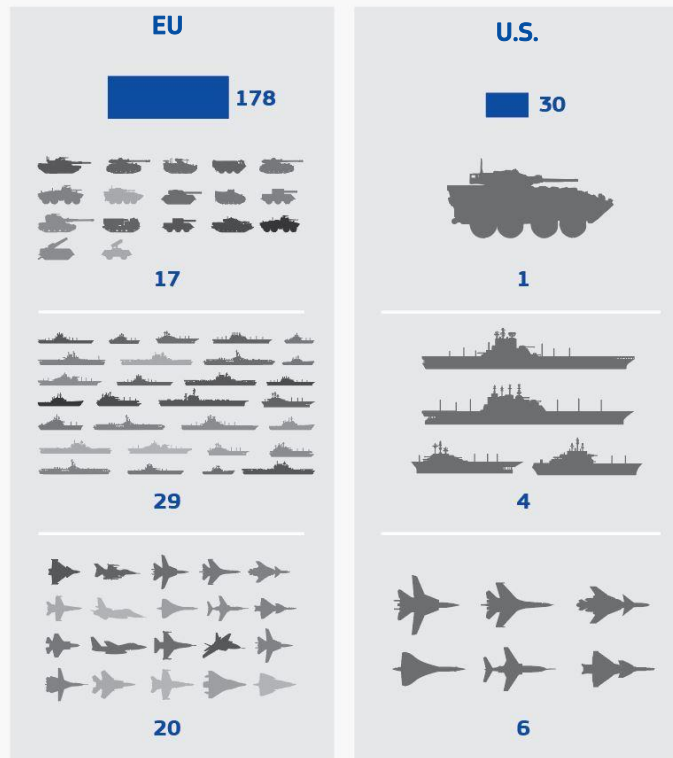
Source: ESource: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (2016 data), International institute for Strategic Studies (Military Balance 2017), European Political Strategy Centre, Munich Security Report 2017.

- As part of efforts to make EU policy-making more transparent and accountable, the **European Citizens' Initiative** was reformed to make it more user-friendly. The process has been simplified and a collaborative platform now offers practical support to organisers. This has contributed to 14% more registered initiatives and 80% less initiatives not being registered during this Commission compared to the previous Commission[10].

- In the course of this mandate, no Commission proposal was rejected by the Council, while **two proposals were formally rejected by the European Parliament**. The first rejection concerned new rules proposed for genetically modified organisms (GMOs) that would have allowed individual Member States to ban GMO food and feed on their territory. The second proposal sought to reallocate funds (e.g. from regional development, agriculture or fisheries funds) to add to the Union's support for structural economic reforms. In some other cases, work has effectively stopped, even if there has been no formal rejection. Examples include a proposed reform to bring more transparency and accountability to the committees of national representatives who oversee the Commission's implementing powers (known as 'comitology' – effectively blocked in the Council) and the proposed European services e-card (which the relevant European Parliament committee opposed, but on which the full Parliament has never voted).

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[10] During this Commission, 33 initiatives were registered compared to 29 in the previous Commission, while only 4 initiatives were not registered during this Commission compared to 20 in the previous Commission

Keeping strategic focus through challenges and times of crisis

Over the last five years, in addition to delivering on its strategic agenda, the EU has had to face several crises. This required **new forms of governance and management at EU level**. The Commission anticipated this need by fundamentally changing its own structure in November 2014, and by strategically focusing on fewer priorities and less legislative proposals. By tasking Vice-Presidents to head up project teams around specific policy areas related to the 10 political priorities, and by creating dedicated Commission services and Task Forces for new challenges, President Juncker allowed the Commission to deliver on the EU's strategic agenda in an efficient and understandable way. He did so by breaking down silos between policy areas and promoting a broader, more comprehensive policy perspective.

Preventing 'Grexit': In the first months of its mandate, the Juncker Commission had to deal with a renewed crisis when Greece failed to complete its second programme and the danger of a 'Grexit' became real for several weeks. During the whole first half of 2015, President Juncker, his Vice-President for the Euro and Social Dialogue and his Commissioner for Economic and Fiscal Affairs were in continuous negotiations with the new Greek government, the euro area Member States, the European Stability Mechanism, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund to prepare the ground for a new Stability Support Programme. This was agreed at a Euro Summit on 12/13 July 2015. For the first time, the programme was submitted by the Commission to an ex-ante social impact assessment. The Commission also designed a plan to help Greece stabilise its economy and maximise the use of EU funds to boost jobs, growth and investment. The EU mobilised up to €35 billion for Greece under various funding programmes for the period 2014-2020, which triggered an estimated 2% GDP increase in Greece. The Commission, through its new Structural Reform Support Service created in 2015, provided and coordinated far-reaching technical support to help Greece build the necessary administrative support for its reforms. At a critical juncture in July 2015, the Commission, through a short-term loan, helped mobilise €7 billion in bridge financing under the European Financial Stabilisation Mechanism, effectively preventing Greece from crashing out of the euro area by accident. In August 2018, Greece successfully emerged from the three-year Stability Support Programme, which had provided a total of €61.9 billion in loans based on the implementation of a comprehensive and unprecedented reform programme. Now this reform momentum needs to be maintained. However, the efforts of the Greek people, the support of the Commission and the solidarity of the other 18 euro area Member States put an end once and for all to all 'Grexit' speculations.

Migration: In 2015, the most severe refugee crisis the world has seen since the Second World War took hold, with immediate and far-reaching implications for the European Union. In anticipation of this challenge, President Juncker appointed, for the first time, a Commissioner for Migration. He also entrusted his First Vice-President with coordinating all the necessary work, both in its internal and external dimensions, bringing together all Commissioners and Directors-General. Working closely with President Juncker, this facilitated the coherent delivery of the EU-Turkey Statement and the preparations of the related EU-Turkey summits. Since the 2015 European Agenda on Migration, the EU has taken decisive steps in three key areas: working with partners outside the Union, protecting our external borders and working inside the Union. The EU beefed up its operational capability to support Member States in managing migration. This included reinforcing its agencies and providing rapid and effective operational and financial support to Member States under pressure – notably to Greece and Italy.

Trade tensions: In a world of increasing trade tensions, the Juncker Commission has taken a number of steps since 2017 to strengthen the legitimacy and inclusiveness of negotiation and adoption processes in trade policy. All negotiating texts – including recommendations for new negotiating authorisations, draft negotiating directives, negotiating text proposals, round reports and the results of ongoing negotiations – are published. The Commission created an Advisory Group on trade agreements to allow it to engage with civil society and gather different perspectives and insight more easily from a wide and balanced group of stakeholders, ranging from trade unions, employers' organisations, consumer groups and other non-governmental organisations. The Commission also introduced a new approach towards its bilateral trade and investment agreements. Negotiations for trade agreements cover areas where the EU has exclusive competence, while negotiations for investment protection agreements cover both areas where the EU has exclusive competence and areas where the EU shares competence with Member States. The Economic Partnership Agreement with Japan was the first to successfully follow this new approach.

On 25 July 2018, President Juncker and President Trump agreed to launch a new phase of close friendship and strong trade relations between the United States and the EU. They agreed on a Joint EU-U.S. Statement, preventing an escalation in trade tensions and setting out a positive transatlantic trade agenda. They decided to immediately set up an Executive Working Group of their closest advisers to carry this joint agenda forward. In the Commission, the work of this group is supported by all Commission services and coordinated by the Secretariat-General. As a direct result, no new tariffs were imposed so far and the EU and the U.S. are working towards eliminating all existing industrial tariffs and improve cooperation. In April 2019, the Council gave the Commission a mandate to negotiate an industrial tariffs agreement and an agreement on conformity assessments with the U.S., thereby implementing the Juncker-Trump Statement.

Security: In the aftermath of the horrific terrorist attacks in Paris in 2015, the Commission adopted the European Agenda on Security to guide the EU's response to the complex and rapidly evolving security environment. By appointing a Commissioner for the Security Union, empowered to coordinate work on security across all policy areas with the support of a dedicated Task Force of experts from all relevant Commission departments, President Juncker ensured a coherent, efficient and cross-cutting approach. The various measures adopted aim to address the cross-border challenges of terrorism and organised crime by improving information exchanges, strengthening cybersecurity, as well as operational cooperation between law enforcement authorities and with EU agencies. The new measures have also provided national law enforcement authorities with the tools needed to effectively fight terrorism, cross-border crime and cybercrime, and have strengthened the EU's resilience against those threats.

Brexit: In January 2013, then Prime Minister Cameron announced his intention to organise an in/out referendum on the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union. Upon the United Kingdom's request for a 'new settlement', submitted in November 2015, President Juncker set up a Commission Task Force, led by Jonathan Faull, an experienced Director-General, on 'strategic issues related to the UK referendum'. On behalf of the EU, this team prepared new arrangements for the UK's membership. In February 2016, this led to a new set of arrangements responding to the United Kingdom's concerns, which included a legally binding decision by EU Heads of State or Government, meeting within the European

Council[11]. All EU27 Member States unanimously supported these new arrangements, as did the United Kingdom. In spite of these efforts, 51.9% voted on 23 June 2016 in favour of leaving the EU versus 48.1% voting in support of remaining a member of the EU.

Following the referendum, President Juncker immediately created a dedicated Commission 'Article 50 Task Force' to prepare the expected negotiations with the United Kingdom on its withdrawal from the European Union. He appointed Michel Barnier, a former Vice-President of the Commission and former French Minister for Foreign Affairs, as Head of this Task Force and as his Chief Negotiator. The Council swiftly appointed the Commission as the EU negotiator. Negotiations only started in June 2017, however, as the United Kingdom only formally notified, under Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union, its intention to leave the Union in March 2017. This was closely followed by a general election. An agreement ensuring the United Kingdom's orderly withdrawal was then negotiated, alongside a political declaration setting out the elements for an ambitious, broad, deep and flexible partnership. The Commission ensured that negotiations were conducted in full transparency throughout, and in close cooperation with the EU27 Member States and the European Parliament. Both the withdrawal agreement and the political declaration on the future relationship between the European Union and the United Kingdom received the unanimous support of all EU27 Member States as well as of the government of the United Kingdom. In parallel to the negotiations, the Commission also prepared, starting in December 2017, for a 'no deal scenario'. A dedicated 'Brexit Preparedness Group' was set up in its Secretariat-General and prepared more than 90 stakeholder notices and 19 legislative proposals to make sure that the EU27 was well prepared for the undesired, but possible, disorderly withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the Union.

Altogether, the Commission spent 4 months negotiating new arrangements with then Prime Minister Cameron and 18 months negotiating the withdrawal agreement and the political declaration with Prime Minister May. The creation of specialised teams within the Commission to deal with matters pertaining to the United Kingdom ensured that these negotiations did not distract attention from work on the EU's positive agenda. This allowed the Commission to fully focus on delivering on the EU's strategic agenda without interference from the volatility of the Brexit negotiations. The European Council fully supported this approach. As stated in paragraph 27 of the guidelines for the Brexit negotiations adopted by the European Council (Art. 50) on 29 April 2017: 'The European Council remains committed to drive forward with ambition the priorities the Union has set itself. Negotiations with the United Kingdom will be kept separate from ongoing Union business, and shall not interfere with its progress.'

I.2 Europe's challenges in the global context

We live in an age of transitions. Globally, we are moving towards a multipolar system which must accommodate different interests and aspirations. Economically, we are on course for greater pressure on ever more finite resources and exponentially rising international competition. This is coupled with the legitimate aspirations of all to have a stake in the prosperity of the future. Technologically, we are shifting towards a paradigm in which human capabilities will be increasingly enhanced by machines.

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[11] 'A New Settlement for the United Kingdom within the European Union', OJ C 69I, 23.2.2016. The European Council agreed in February 2016 that the set of arrangements in the New Settlement will cease to exist should the result of the referendum in the United Kingdom be for it to leave the European Union
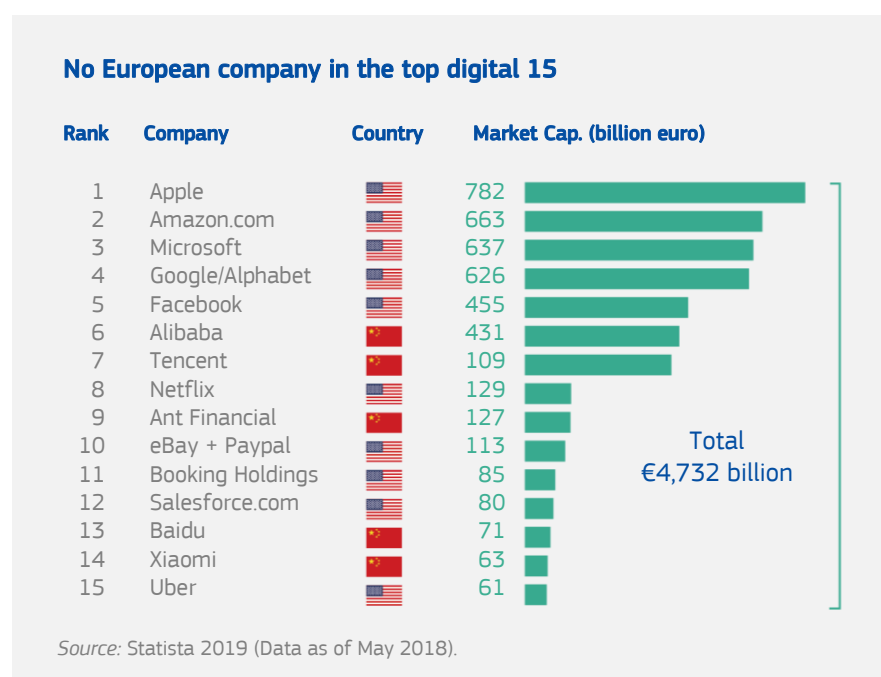
Changing economies and worlds of work, changing climate and changing geopolitics are already shaping our Union and will be major drivers for our future. These must be at the forefront of leaders' minds when they decide, in the light of the outcome of the European Parliament elections, on our level of ambition and our priorities for the next five years and beyond.

From the many challenges that will affect Europe in the medium to long-term, four developments stand out. How we anticipate and prepare for them will determine whether we are able to turn them from challenges into opportunities.

Digitalisation

Digitalisation and new technologies will revolutionise the way we live and work. New opportunities will emerge, in particular in the areas of health, mobility, industry and science. They hold major potential for Europe's future competitiveness and growth. At the same time, digitalisation entails risks, particularly for widening the digital skills gaps and deepening social and regional divides within Europe.

Growth in data outpaces that of processing capacity, making artificial intelligence increasingly important to interpret and exploit data flows. Europe finds itself in a global competition to control both technology and data. Technologically advanced companies, in particular from the United States and China, have rapidly become the largest businesses in the world and are shaping new global value chains. Their products and services are redefining the way Europeans live, work and consume.

No European company in the top digital 15

Rank	Company	Country	Market Cap. (billion euro)
1	Apple	🇺🇸	782
2	Amazon.com	🇺🇸	663
3	Microsoft	🇺🇸	637
4	Google/Alphabet	🇺🇸	626
5	Facebook	🇺🇸	455
6	Alibaba	🇨🇳	431
7	Tencent	🇨🇳	109
8	Netflix	🇺🇸	129
9	Ant Financial	🇨🇳	127
10	eBay + Paypal	🇺🇸	113
11	Booking Holdings	🇺🇸	85
12	Salesforce.com	🇺🇸	80
13	Baidu	🇨🇳	71
14	Xiaomi	🇨🇳	63
15	Uber	🇺🇸	61

Total €4,732 billion

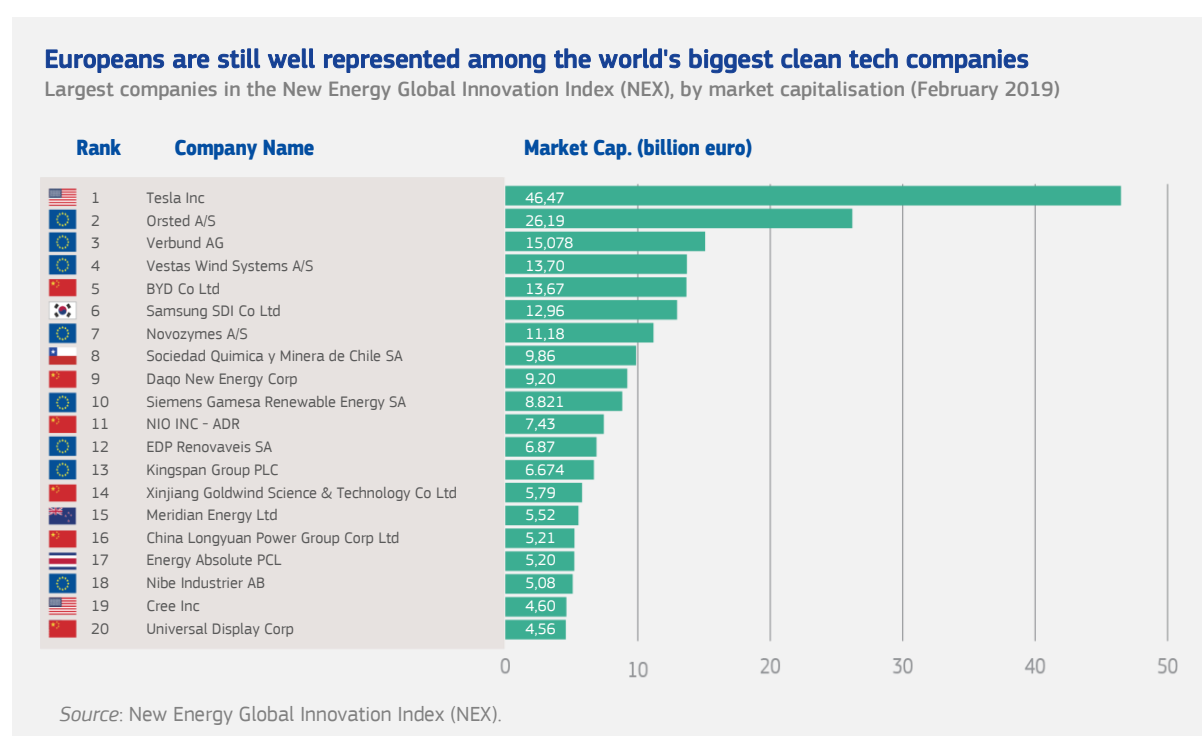*Source:* Statista 2019 (Data as of May 2018).

Europe has no lack of innovative digital business ideas but few of our innovative European companies scale up and expand in Europe or shape these global markets. The level of ambition of other major players, who often benefit from state support, lower standards or lower tax rates, presents a risk to Europe's influence on global technological developments. They also challenge our values, ethical principles and our interests on issues, such as data economy, security and privacy and undermine the security of the digital supply chain.

Climate change and environment

The impact of climate change is becoming increasingly visible with growing risks for global prosperity, sustained standards of living and security. The clamour for action from Europe and across the world is growing louder by the day, with the impact of climate change and the measures taken to address it being felt increasingly by everybody in their daily lives. This requires determined but fair and balanced policy measures.

To meet the ambitions of the Paris Agreement, the global clean energy transition needs to be dramatically sped up. Major investments will be required and the financial sector must play its part. But there can be no greater return on investment than a clean planet, reduced energy import dependency, sustainable economic growth and an increased uptake of clean energy and efficiency solutions. European companies are among the leaders in the world as regards clean tech. This makes climate change not only a challenge, but also a business opportunity if addressed in the right manner.

Europeans are still well represented among the world's biggest clean tech companies

Largest companies in the New Energy Global Innovation Index (NEX), by market capitalisation (February 2019)

Rank	Company Name	Market Cap. (billion euro)
1	Tesla Inc	46,47
2	Orsted A/S	26,19
3	Verbund AG	15,078
4	Vestas Wind Systems A/S	13,70
5	BYD Co Ltd	13,67
6	Samsung SDI Co Ltd	12,96
7	Novozymes A/S	11,18
8	Sociedad Quimica y Minera de Chile SA	9,86
9	Daqo New Energy Corp	9,20
10	Siemens Gamesa Renewable Energy SA	8.821
11	NIO INC – ADR	7,43
12	EDP Renovaveis SA	6.87
13	Kingspan Group PLC	6.674
14	Xinjiang Goldwind Science & Technology Co Ltd	5,79
15	Meridian Energy Ltd	5,52
16	China Longyuan Power Group Corp Ltd	5,21
17	Energy Absolute PCL	5,20
18	Nibe Industrier AB	5,08
19	Cree Inc	4,60
20	Universal Display Corp	4,56

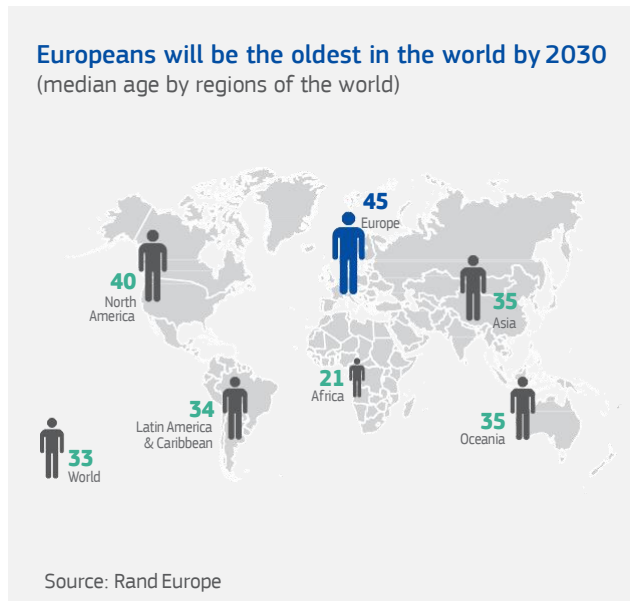*Source*: New Energy Global Innovation Index (NEX).

Climate change also brings challenges and risks to social equality that need to be addressed to ensure a fair transition for workers and citizens, in particular for coal and carbon-intensive regions. The transition will have global economic, social and geopolitical impacts affecting partnerships and EU foreign policy.

Beyond climate change and energy, the depletion of natural resources beyond the limits of our planet leads to environmental degradation threatening our ability to meet the needs of future generations. This overuse of natural resources also threatens our economy, which is dependent on imports of raw materials. To address climate and environmental challenges, we also have to transition to a circular economy, protect ecosystems and biodiversity, make our food system sustainable and limit deforestation.

Demography and society

The effects of demographic change will be the root cause for some of the most predictable challenges our Union and its Member States will face in the medium-term future. Thanks to the high quality of life and overall wellbeing, Europeans' life expectancy continues to
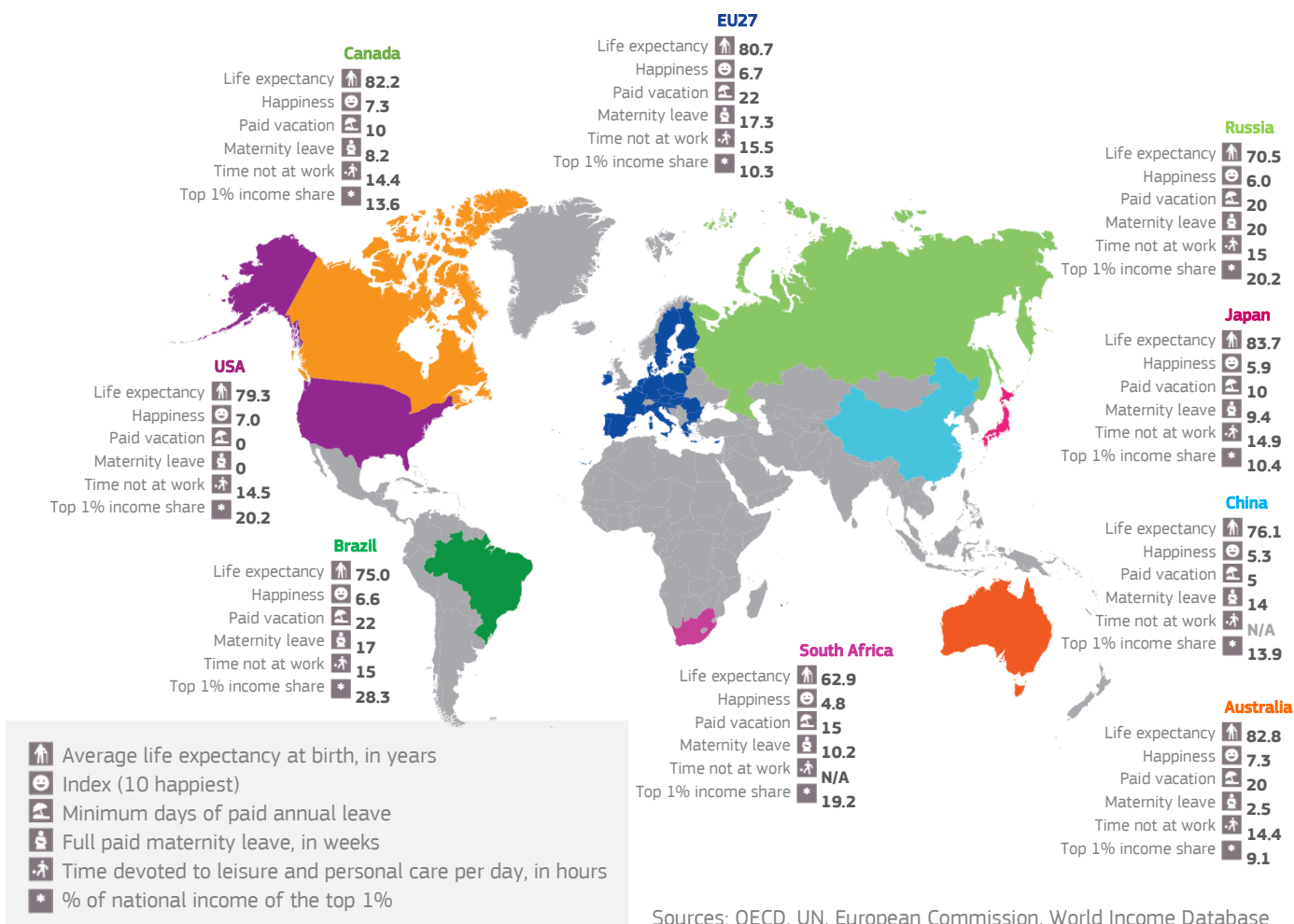
increase. By 2030, Europe will become the first continent with a median age of about 45. While a longer life expectancy as such is a very positive development, it also puts pressure on health care and welfare systems, raises unprecedented issues in terms of inter-generational fairness and will have a lasting impact on our societies as a whole.
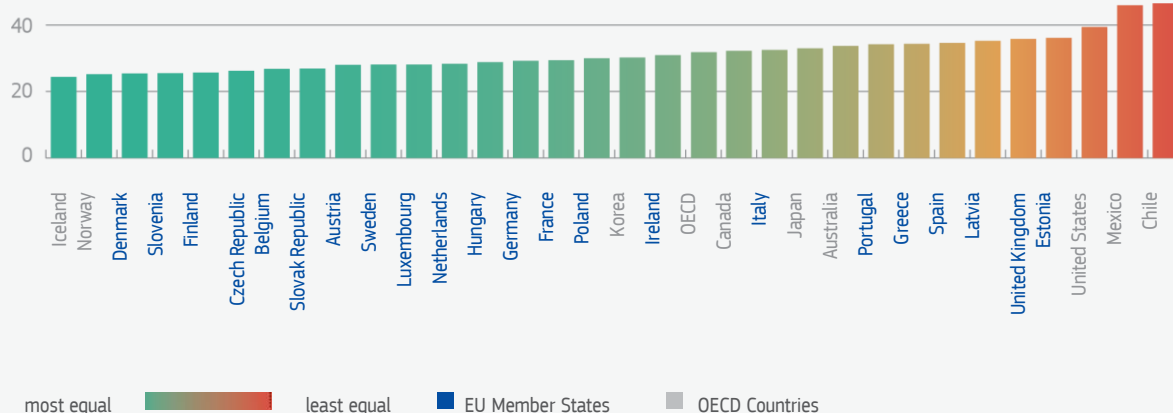
Europeans will be the oldest in the world by 2030
(median age by regions of the world)

40 North America

45 Europe

35 Asia

21 Africa

34 Latin America & Caribbean

35 Oceania

33 World

Source: Rand Europe

At the same time, an overall lower birth rate is likely to cause the EU population to decline by 2050. While the EU population today represents 6.7% of the world population, it will account for 6.1% and 5.4% in 2030 and 2050 respectively. Strong population growth in other parts of the world, diverging welfare standards, and the impact of climate change and conflicts is likely to further increase migratory pressures, from Africa and beyond.

Europe is a world leader in quality of life

2016 or latest available data

Canada
Life expectancy	82.2
Happiness	7.3
Paid vacation	10
Maternity leave	8.2
Time not at work	14.4
Top 1% income share	13.6

EU27
Life expectancy	80.7
Happiness	6.7
Paid vacation	22
Maternity leave	17.3
Time not at work	15.5
Top 1% income share	10.3

Russia
Life expectancy	70.5
Happiness	6.0
Paid vacation	20
Maternity leave	20
Time not at work	15
Top 1% income share	20.2

USA
Life expectancy	79.3
Happiness	7.0
Paid vacation	0
Maternity leave	0
Time not at work	14.5
Top 1% income share	20.2

Japan
Life expectancy	83.7
Happiness	5.9
Paid vacation	10
Maternity leave	9.4
Time not at work	14.9
Top 1% income share	10.4

Brazil
Life expectancy	75.0
Happiness	6.6
Paid vacation	22
Maternity leave	17
Time not at work	15
Top 1% income share	28.3

China
Life expectancy	76.1
Happiness	5.3
Paid vacation	5
Maternity leave	14
Time not at work	N/A
Top 1% income share	13.9

South Africa
Life expectancy	62.9
Happiness	4.8
Maternity leave	15
Time not at work	10.2
Top 1% income share	N/A
	19.2

Australia
Life expectancy	82.8
Happiness	7.3
Paid vacation	20
Maternity leave	2.5
Time not at work	14.4
Top 1% income share	9.1

Legend:
- Average life expectancy at birth, in years
- Index (10 happiest)
- Minimum days of paid annual leave
- Full paid maternity leave, in weeks
- Time devoted to leisure and personal care per day, in hours
- % of national income of the top 1%

Sources: OECD, UN, European Commission, World Income Database

Europe is home to the most equal societies in the world

Iceland, Norway, Denmark, Slovenia, Finland, Czech Republic, Belgium, Slovak Republic, Austria, Sweden, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Hungary, Germany, France, Poland, Korea, Ireland, OECD, Canada, Italy, Japan, Australia, Portugal, Greece, Spain, Latvia, United Kingdom, Estonia, United States, Mexico, Chile

most equal — least equal — EU Member States — OECD Countries

Note: This graph shows the distribution of income between individuals using the Gini coefficient where 0 represents perfect equality.

Source: OECD, latest available data

21

Improving welfare and ensuring access to high quality, inclusive education, professional retraining, social protection and public services are pressing concerns for Europeans. Access to social and affordable, energy-efficient housing is a challenge. Around 10% of households in the EU spend over 40% of their income on housing costs.

The welfare gap between Member States is generally narrowing. Europe is by far the leading continent in the world when it comes to progress made towards reducing inequalities.

At the same time, the welfare gap risks widening within Member States, notably between urban areas and rural, more remote regions. While challenging, economic modernisation will provide opportunities for faster regional development and job creation. Technology and automation will continue to profoundly change the way we work, make products and deliver services. Many younger Europeans will work in professions that do not exist today and most workers will need to change jobs and renew their skills many times during their careers.

An increasingly multipolar world

Europe and the rest of the world are facing an increasingly complex and volatile security environment. New powers are seeking their place on the global stage, while existing powers are withdrawing or even disrupting the rules-based international system. The multilateral and rules-based global order is under severe strain at a time when it is needed more than ever.

In recent years, the European Union's **security environment** has changed dramatically. Many of the current challenges to peace and security in Europe originate from instability in the EU's immediate neighbourhood and changing forms of threats.

With the spread of digital technology, hybrid threats and threats to critical infrastructure are becoming increasingly common. The risk of malicious cyber activities and targeted disinformation campaigns by foreign actors to influence public support or to undermine our democracies is growing. Increasingly more groups, both at home and abroad, use modern channels of communication to spread various forms of radical ideologies that have a divisive effect on our societies and spread instability worldwide.

The threat of terrorism is unlikely to dissipate in the near future. More groups, both at home and abroad, use modern channels of communication to spread radical ideologies that have a divisive effect on our societies and spread instability worldwide. The recent attacks in Sri Lanka and Christchurch, New Zealand, have illustrated the pivotal role of the internet in allowing terrorist organisations to radicalise, recruit, facilitate and direct terrorist activity. The rapid detection and removal of terrorist content online is crucial and can only be addressed effectively at European and global level, which is why the Commission made proposals to do just that.

Economic competition is also increasing in the EU's neighbourhood, Africa and across the globe. As primary resources become increasingly scarce, competition for those resources, and fresh water or food in particular, is likely to intensify and amplify security threats. Social and economic fragility around the world, caused by national governments' inability or unwillingness to provide basic services or social equality, further fuel instability and security threats. In this rapidly changing global landscape, Europe and Africa in particular have much to gain from increased economic and political ties. As other global players increase their focus on the continent, Europe works with Africa on the basis of a partnership of equals and should seek to further increase investment and trade.

More competition for influence in Africa

Change in imports to Africa, 2006 –2016
Change in exports from Africa 2006-2016

Source: Brookings based on IMF, Direction of Trade Statistics, 2017

25.5%	European Union
6.4%	United States
12.7%	China
1.5%	Brazil
4.6%	India
0.9%	Indonesia
0.6%	Russia
0.8%	Turkey

Share of total imports from Africa (%)

23.2%	European Union
13.5%	United States
12.9%	China
2.7%	Brazil
8.7%	India
0.9%	Indonesia
0.1%	Russia
0.3%	Turkey

Share of total imports from Africa (%)

At the same time, geopolitical dynamics underline the role of the European Union as a reliable and stable partner and as promoter of the multilateral order to an increasing number of countries. The EU, for instance, played a crucial role in the conclusion and implementation of the Iran nuclear deal to bring long-term stability and prosperity to the region. The EU defended the rules-based international order through its robust response to Russia's annexation of Crimea and destabilisation of Eastern Ukraine. It has sought to bring stability, peace and security to the Sahel Region, Libya and Afghanistan. It supported the role of the United Nations, not least by playing a leading role in international climate talks leading to the Paris Agreement and in the 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda.

I.3 Policy Recommendations for the next strategic agenda

In March 2017, ahead of the 60th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome, the Commission published its White Paper on the Future of Europe[12]. It outlined five possible scenarios for the EU's future at 27. This was the starting point for a wide-ranging debate on the future of Europe which now can inspire the main policy priorities of the strategic agenda 2019-2024. The Commission strongly promoted citizens' participation, developing new forms of citizens' dialogues and citizens' consultations, making the debate more flexible and interactive, bringing it online and reaching out to a wider and more diverse audience.

Future of Europe – Reflections and scenarios for the EU27 by 2025
(from the Commission's White Paper on the Future of Europe, March 2017)

Scenario 1: Carrying on. *Problems are tackled as they arise and new legislation is rolled out accordingly. Speed of decision-making depends on overcoming differences of views.*

Scenario 2: Nothing but the single market. *The focus is on deepening the single market. The EU27 do not work together more than they currently do in areas such as migration, security or defence.*

Scenario 3: Those who want more do more. *The EU27 proceeds as today, but where certain Member States want to do more, they work together. Others may join later.*

Scenario 4: Doing less more efficiently. *The EU27 focuses its attention on a limited number of priorities, where it acts swiftly and has strong implementation and enforcement tools.*

Scenario 5: Doing much more together. *Member States decide they can only tackle challenges at 27 and allocate more power and resources to collective decision-making across the board. Decisions are taken faster and are more rapidly enforced.*

Hundreds of thousands of citizens of different nationalities, ages, religions and from across the political spectrum have taken part in close to 1,600 town-hall style debates in city halls, universities and other places all across our Union. More than 80,000 people have also responded to the online questionnaire on the future of Europe, drafted by a citizens' panel of 96 European citizens.

Eurobarometer opinion polls confirm that **citizens' priorities have shifted over the past years, in view of new challenges and the changed global context**.

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[12] European Commission, White Paper on the Future of Europe: Reflections and scenarios for the EU27 by 2025, COM(2017) 2025, 1.3.2017. The White Paper was followed by 6 Commission Reflection Papers:
- Reflection Paper on the Social Dimension of Europe, 26.4.2017 (prepared by Vice-President Valdis Dombrovkis and Commissioner Marianne Thyssen)
- Reflection Paper on Harnessing Globalisation, 10.5.2017 (prepared by First Vice-President Frans Timmermans and Vice-President Jyrki Katainen)
- Reflection Paper on the Deepening of the Economic and Monetary Union, 31.5.2017 (prepared by Vice-President Valdis Dombrovskis and Commissioner Pierre Moscovici)
- Reflection Paper on the Future of European Defence, 7.6.2017 (presented by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini and Vice-President Jyrki Katainen)
- Reflection Paper on the Future of EU Finances, 28.6.2018 (presented by Commissioners Günther Oettinger and Corina Crețu)
- Reflection Paper 'Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030', 30.1.2019 (prepared by First Vice-President Frans Timmermans and Vice-President Jyrki Katainen)

'What do you think are the two most important issues facing the EU at the moment?'
(Maximum two answers in a list of fourteen proposals)

59

58

46

44

38

34

27

21

15

14

8

4

5

40% IMMIGRATION

20% TERRORISM
19% THE STATE OF PUBLIC FINANCES
18% ECONOMIC SITUATION
16% CLIMATE CHANGE
13% UNEMPLOYMENT

2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018
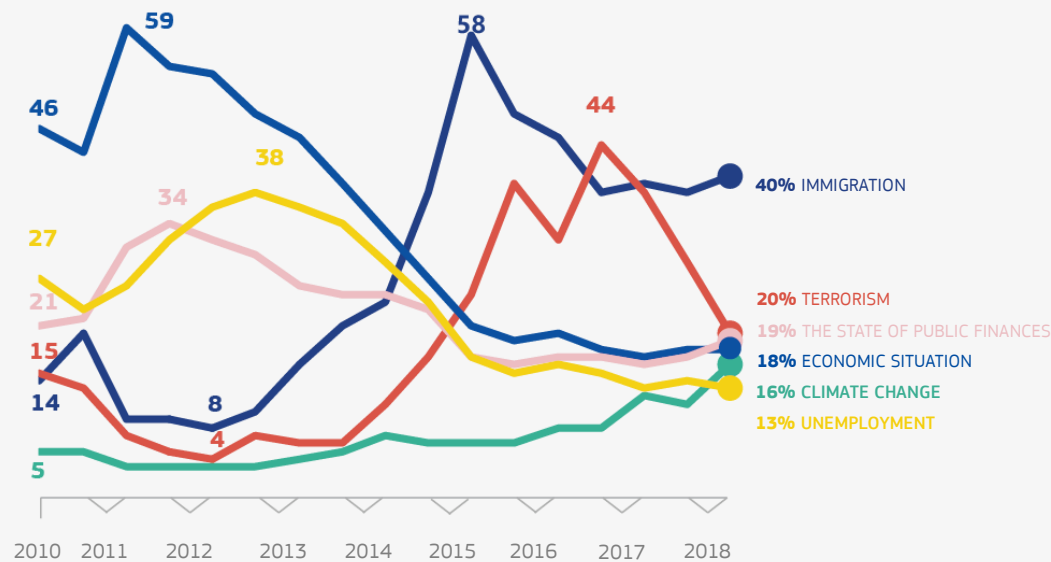
Note: Data are in percentage of EU-total respondents. Only the six most frequently chosen answers are represented in the graph.

Source: Eurobarometer, autumn 2018

Building on the progress our Union has made in recent years, listening to citizens' views and in the light of the outcome of the European Parliament election, the EU's strategic agenda for 2019-2024 is the right moment to address the challenges and opportunities Europe faces today. The EU now needs new, ambitious, realistic and focused goals for the next political cycle. Everything we do should help put Europe's economy, society and environment on a sustainable path. To make our Union more united, stronger and more democratic in an increasingly uncertain world, future action should, in the Commission's view, focus on five dimensions. The Commission has also published four communications on strengthening our decision-making powers in key policies areas[13].

Protective Europe

The European project has brought peace and prosperity for over seven decades. The European way of providing peace and security is a careful mix between targeted civilian and military measures: this is what makes the European Union such a unique security player in the world. Global peace requires global action and, as the most successful peace project in history, the EU must play its role in full. Wherever possible, we must help to prevent violent conflict. When this is not possible, and when EU values and interests are at stake, we must act early and decisively through an integrated approach.

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[13] Commission communications on: 'A stronger global actor: a more efficient decision making for EU Common Foreign and Security Policy', COM(2018) 647, 12.9.2018; 'Towards a more efficient and democratic decision making in EU tax policy', COM(2019) 8, 15.1.2019; 'More efficient decision-making in social policy: Identification of areas for an enhanced move to qualified majority voting', COM(2019) 186, 16.4.2019; 'A more efficient and democratic decision making in EU energy and climate policy', COM(2019) 177, 9.4.2019

We should pursue our efforts to build an effective and genuine **European Security Union**. Terrorism and security are top concerns for EU citizens. Given the increasingly cross-border nature of threats, the Union has an important role to play in enhancing internal security. We must use European resources more effectively by pooling efforts in the prevention of and fight against terrorism, organised crime, cybercrime and hybrid threats. Citizens' security can be improved through interoperable information systems and a modernised legal framework for cooperation, such as better access to electronic evidence.

We should also move towards a genuine **European Defence Union** taking forward the building blocks put in place over the last years to make defence cooperation within the EU the norm rather than the exception. The EU should focus on areas where cooperation can result in clear benefits, such as in defence industry and research, cyber-defence, military mobility, hybrid crisis management, and missions and operations abroad. This will allow Europe to take further responsibility for its own security, improve its strategic autonomy and in doing so strengthen the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

We need to be more proactive in managing **migration**. This requires comprehensive action at every level and a genuine EU approach built on the sharing of responsibility and on solidarity between Member States. A well-functioning asylum system is one that recognises common needs and common obligations so that Europe can fulfil its responsibilities towards those in genuine need of protection, whilst swiftly returning those with no right to stay. Effective protection of the EU's external border means a fully operational European Border and Coast Guard, which should reach its target of 10,000 European border and coast guard officers as soon as possible and by 2027 at the very latest. Europe must continue to promote a much-needed integration policy at all levels to ensure inclusive and cohesive societies. Equally, managing migration is closely linked to ensuring that we preserve the major achievement of free movement inside the Schengen area through reliable and predictable rules. We also need to recognise that a coherent approach on legal migration is increasingly essential, with legal pathways, including resettlement, reducing the incentive to use smuggling routes to Europe. Cooperation with partner countries is essential to address the root causes of migration, help refugees, deal with mixed-migration flows, tackle smuggling and ensure that return and readmission work. To provide effective assistance to people in their home countries, humanitarian, development and political instruments need to be coordinated, as already advocated by the EU Global Strategy[14] drafted by the High-Representative/Commission Vice-President Federica Mogherini.

Competitive Europe

We need to focus **research and innovation** on the ecological, social and economic transitions and related societal challenges. We also need to leverage Europe's scientific strengths into leadership in breakthrough and disruptive innovation. This means EU-wide measures with ambitious goals for issues that affect us daily, such as skills development, the fight against cancer, harmful emissions, and the state of the oceans, including plastics. The EU, its Member States and industry should partner up to invest in projects and focus financial resources and skills on cutting-edge research and innovation projects spanning from resource and innovation to deployment. The Commission proposed to allocate €100 billion to research and innovation under the next EU budget. EU cohesion policy funds will mobilise similar amounts to support the innovation in all regions of Europe. The use of these funds should be

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[14] 'Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy', June 2016

closely aligned with our industrial policy and with reforms identified in the context of the European Semester of economic policy coordination.

We need to invest in key European digital capacities, so Europe can become a world leader in digital transformation. We need to work together to **boost Europe-made and human-centric artificial intelligence**. This work should be guided by the Commission's strategy on artificial intelligence[15] and the coordinated plan prepared with Member States to foster the development and use of artificial intelligence in Europe. Joint measures are required in four key areas: increasing investment, making more data available, fostering talent and ensuring trust. The EU should develop and promote human-centric and ethical approaches in technologies at both EU and international level. Stronger coordination is essential for Europe to become the world-leader in developing and deploying cutting-edge, ethical and secure artificial intelligence. This needs to be accompanied by efforts to build European world-class super computers and cyber strategic capacities.

We need to prepare our technological and industrial future in a more strategic way. A **modern industrial policy** will provide the necessary infrastructure, incentivise innovation, facilitate the uptake of new technologies, foster a smart regulatory ecosystem, and support industry at large. It would build on the single market and focus on strategic value chains[16], such as manufacturing sustainable batteries in Europe. As part of this, we should be ready to take immediate action if internal or external competitors distort the level playing field. The EU should develop new tools to address the distortive effects of foreign state ownership and support. At the same time, EU competition rules remain the bedrock for fair competition to the benefit of consumers, choice and innovation. To take into account new technological developments, notably the increased dependence on data access across industrial sectors, it is important that they stay up to date[17].

We need to upgrade, modernise and fully implement the **single market** in all its aspects, removing any artificial distinction between traditional brick-and-mortar and digital markets. We need to heed the multiple calls by the European Council to complete and deepen the single market, notably by tackling the more difficult areas, such as services which account for 70% of our GDP (and where we are falling behind some competitors in productivity). A deepened single market, with an integral digital economy dimension based on data protection, will enable businesses to scale up and trade across borders. New consumer protection rules fit for the digital age, improved protection of whistle blowers and more effective enforcement will strengthen consumer trust. Enforcement in the field of competition is key to strengthening the competitiveness of European companies globally by incentivising investment and the quest to improve their business models. The modernisation of corporate taxation and value added tax rules will enable business to seize the full potential of the single market.

We need to continue to foster growth and ensure sustainable prosperity by further deepening the **Economic and Monetary Union**[18] and strengthening structural reforms at national level. With new members likely to join the euro area over the next five years, the EU and euro area

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[15] Commission Communication 'Artificial Intelligence for Europe', COM(2018) 237 final, 25.4.2018

[16] EU Industrial Policy after Siemens-Alstom: Finding a new balance between openness and protection, European Political Strategy Centre, 18.3.2019

[17] See the report, commissioned by Competition Commissioner Margrethe Vestager, 'Competition policy for the digital era', 2019

[18] Continuing on the path set out already in the Five Presidents' Report 'Completing Europe's Economic and Monetary Union', published in June 2015

will progressively grow to become the entire Union's single currency area as intended. We should therefore further reinforce the banking system and accelerate the integration of our capital markets. A deep and liquid European capital market will enhance private risk-sharing, make our Union more competitive and resilient, and provide the backbone of a stronger international role for the euro. We also need to make further progress on convergence between the economic, fiscal and social policies of our Member States. A simplification of the Stability and Growth Pact could improve transparency and compliance, while supporting the progressive development of a common fiscal stance for the euro area[19]. To complete our Economic and Monetary Union, a European safe asset, introduced gradually, would also be a beneficial stabilising tool. It would require work in parallel on the regulatory treatment of sovereign exposures.

We need to introduce in the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework **a euro area budgetary instrument for convergence and competitiveness**, which will encourage reforms and investments, as proposed by the Commission and endorsed at the Euro Summit in December 2018. Over time and in order to complete our Economic and Monetary Union, we also need a stabilisation function to further strengthen our resilience.

We need to continue to support the transformation of the **European labour market** whilst ensuring its fairness. Working conditions and health and safety at work need to be further improved. Labour mobility has to be fair and well managed and existing rules should be implemented effectively. We need to help Member States adapt their education and training systems to equip people with the right skills for today's labour market[20]. In an ageing society and in the face of digitalisation, ensuring adequate social protection for all people in work, investing in lifelong learning, training and upskilling of the EU workforce and ensuring equal opportunities will be essential.

We need to provide a **modern and flexible regulatory framework for mobility and transport**, particularly for automated and connected mobility. We should enhance connectivity across Europe by completing the Single European Transport Area. Europe should take the lead in shaping new international standards for safe, smart, sustainable, secure and resilient mobility. EU rules must effectively protect our transport systems against emerging and evolving threats to safe mobility, such as cyber-attacks. We need to reduce the environmental and climate impact of our transport systems. That means urgently deploying alternative fuels, further improving vehicle standards on CO_2 emissions, pollutants and noise. We should also adopt a truly circular economy approach and address the social impact of transitioning to cleaner and more automated transport.

Fair Europe

We must continue to **deliver on the European Pillar of Social Rights**, jointly proclaimed by Parliament, Council and Commission in November 2017. We need to address inequalities and social challenges across regions and Member States, as well as across different areas of the economy. Inequalities are often at the origin of feelings of lack of opportunities. Our focus should not solely be on creating more jobs, but on delivering more quality jobs and access to social protection, as well as ensuring equal access to high quality education, training and life-

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[19] President Juncker invited the European Fiscal Board in January 2019 to carry out an assessment of the current EU fiscal rules by end July 2019, with a specific focus on how to simplify these rules further

[20] Commission Communication 'Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture The European Commission's contribution to the Leaders' meeting in Gothenburg, 17 November 2017', COM(2017) 673 final, 14.11.2017

long learning. Other ideas, such as the gradual setting up of a common unemployment re-insurance scheme, should also be considered.

We also need to work with Member States to achieve **social inclusion and equality**, including by addressing regional disparities, minorities' needs, gender issues and the challenge of an ageing population. Inequalities, both social and territorial, have been found to often be a breeding ground for a growing feeling of injustice. The European institutions should lead by example, notably on gender issues and championing equal opportunities for all.

We need to firmly uphold and promote the shared values and mutual trust on which the European Union is founded. These guide our policies and foster a sense of belonging, building on our shared culture. This is particularly relevant for **the rule of law**, a prerequisite for democracy and fundamental rights, as well as for the smooth functioning of our internal market and cooperation in the area of justice and home affairs. We must further strengthen our joint capacity to safeguard and uphold the rule of law. This must be done by building a rule of law culture across the EU, committing to address problems effectively, and improving our tools to do this.

We need to protect our **fundamental rights** in the digital world. New technologies do not and must not mean new values. The EU should extend its leadership on data protection and privacy into a unique selling point as the model of a value-based data economy. A robust regulatory framework should proactively address the ethical and legal questions surrounding artificial intelligence. The digital transformation also requires require high standards in cybersecurity and consumer protection.

We need a fair and modern **taxation policy**, adapted to the challenges of the digital economy and ensuring a level playing field for internet giants, on-line merchandise platforms and local businesses. Tackling tax evasion, fraud and avoidance will require deeper cooperation at international level and amongst national tax authorities.

We need to **support high-quality, affordable and accessible health care** through the digital transformation of health systems. EU rules on pharmaceuticals should keep pace with scientific developments, combat antimicrobial resistance, address shortages of medicines and improve availability, affordability and access to therapies. The EU should support Member States in their efforts to make their health care systems effective, accessible and resilient, including through the digital transformation of health systems. The problem of so called 'medical deserts' with falling numbers of high skilled medical practitioners in several EU regions also needs to be addressed. In these regions, access to basic health care services is being jeopardised.

We need to support access to **quality, energy-efficient affordable housing** for all in Europe, supporting Member States to ensure functioning housing markets and adequate provision of social housing.

Sustainable Europe

We need to pay particular attention to the implementation of all our sustainability objectives, both within the EU and globally, in line with the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** adopted by the United Nations. To achieve these objectives, we need to modernise our economy to embrace sustainable consumption and production patterns, to correct the imbalances in our food system, and to put our mobility, the way we produce and

use energy, and design our buildings onto a sustainable path. We need to do this in a socially fair way and leave no one behind in transition. We also need to gear our education, science, our financing, taxation, trade and our governance towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

We need to reinforce our efforts to fight **climate change and reverse environmental degradation,** which jeopardises biodiversity, both on land and in the oceans. We must meet our 2030 targets for climate and energy and deliver on our ambitious long-term strategy for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. To help deliver this, the Commission has earmarked 25% of the future Multiannual Financial Framework for investment on climate action. We need to halt and reverse biodiversity loss and better anticipate and mitigate risks of climate-related disasters and diseases, including through the newly created rescEU mechanism for civil protection. A modernised Common Agricultural Policy should support this integrated approach to sustainability.

We must transition towards a more resource-efficient **circular economy** by promoting green growth, bioeconomy and sustainable innovations. We should step up efforts to encourage responsible conduct by businesses, sustainable choices by consumers and private financing from a variety of sources. A new circular economy action plan could focus on sustainable resource use, especially in resource intensive and high impact sectors, to take Europe to a sustainable path. It would respond to citizens' expectations to eat safe, healthy and affordable food[21]. An ambitious zero-pollution strategy would spur innovation in cleaner alternatives and substitutes, delivering clean air, soil and oceans for present and future generations.

We need to maximise the **Energy Union**'s potential by addressing major remaining challenges including energy security, energy costs for households and businesses, and the impact on climate change. The EU has already established the most advanced legislative framework for clean energy and should now focus on its implementation. We should maintain our efforts to diversify energy supplies and interconnect national energy grids, as well as foster the transition towards sustainable energy sources and energy efficiency. Energy taxation can support the clean energy transition and contribute to sustainable and socially fair growth.

Influential Europe

In an increasingly fractured and multipolar world, the EU will need to strengthen its position in order to guarantee its prosperity, security and values. This will require a collective effort: no single Member State can go it alone. Only the EU as a whole can shape world events and ensure we Europeans are standard-setters and not standard-takers. Only by standing together will we preserve the European way of life in the midst of fierce global competition, and defend our values around the world.

As highlighted in the Global Strategy of June 2016, Europe needs to lead in the world through consistent and strong support for **the multilateral, rules-based global order, with the United Nations at its core**. The EU should promote global governance based on the core values of human rights, rule of law, sustainable development, multilateralism and the respect for international humanitarian law.

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[21] Through the recently adopted Directive on Unfair Trading Practices in the food chain (Directive (EU) 2019/633 of 17 April 2019), the EU has taken concrete action to support the incomes and, therefore, the sustainability of EU farmers

We should leverage the EU's significant economic power more assertively to promote our global interests. An open and fair trade agenda creates opportunities for European citizens and businesses while ensuring a level playing field at home and abroad. We should prioritise preserving **the multilateral trading system based on the World Trade Organization (WTO)**, reformed to address the new realities of world trade, and step up cooperation with major international trading partners.

The EU should use its economic weight to step up its capacity in the field of sanctions, by improving the effectiveness of its own measures and better equipping itself to defend against the extraterritorial effects of unilateral sanctions by third countries. A **strengthened international role of the euro** would increase Europe's economic and monetary sovereignty, lowering costs and risk of trading internationally and contributing to greater financial stability.

The EU should also make it a priority to develop strong relations with close neighbours, based on a clear balance of rights and obligations. This includes **supporting the transformation of the Western Balkans through a credible enlargement policy**, in which the EU must stick to its commitments. We should also help to stabilise **our eastern and southern neighbours**, while tackling common challenges. The EU should strengthen its ties and engagement with Africa, in order to bring the two continents economically and politically closer together and to address common interests and challenges. The **Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs** of September 2018 must be fully implemented to provide new opportunities through increased trade, targeted investments, including in education and relevant skills, and result in a strong partnership for the rules and values based international order.

Part II: Europe's unique communication challenge: how to communicate effectively across a whole continent in times of increasing fragmentation and disinformation

In an increasingly polarised and volatile world, it is in our unity and shared values that Europe will find the strength to surmount the challenges it faces. Only together can we effectively respond to citizens' expectations of a Union that protects and empowers them. But this alone is not enough. For Europe to thrive, it must be built with the active and sustained engagement of those it is built for. This requires constant, honest and transparent communication about what the EU is, what it does, what values it stands for and how its decisions are taken.

Communicating about the EU is a responsibility shared by EU institutions and Member States at all levels – at national, regional and local level. It cannot be taken lightly or treated as an afterthought. At its essence, it is about enabling citizens to make informed choices and participate fully in European democracy. That is why communicating about Europe must be in the languages its citizens understand. Multilingual communication is a hallmark of the EU and its cultural diversity.

When Europeans take to the polls on 23-26 May 2019, they should be able to rely on evidence and facts, in addition to being guided by political manifestos. However, in today's increasingly fragmented and polarised media and information environment, where social media has an increasingly significant role, this is not always so straightforward. In the digital era, information is easier to find and easier to produce than ever before. This brings with it enormous potential to widen and deepen the debate across the Union. But it also carries risks and heightens the need to ensure the debate is based on reliable and accurate information. EU institutions and Member States must join forces to make sure that this is the case.

Over the course of its mandate, the EU institutions, and notably the Juncker Commission, have sought to communicate in both a more political and more strategic way. In this section, we have regrouped some of the lessons gleaned from this experience.

II.1 Communicating about the EU is a shared responsibility

The European Union is primarily a union of people and values – with a unique system of democracy that complements and interacts with national, regional and local democratic systems of all Member States, as well as working directly with citizens and civil society. All those with a stake in the future of Europe have a role to play in explaining what it means to be part of this Union and in spelling out the benefits or consequences of its policies and choices.

It also calls for more honesty in acknowledging the **joint responsibility of all involved in policy and decision-making** when communicating about the EU to citizens. It is time to move past the tendency to nationalise success and Europeanise failure and instead better explain our common decisions and policies. No system can survive if its most vocal critics are the ones co-responsible for its design. The nationalist-populist narrative is based on a false dichotomy pitching national against European. EU institutions and Member States need to respond as one with a strong counter-narrative that explains the EU's fundamental role and benefits.

If citizens are to place their trust in Europe, their legitimate concerns and expectations must be addressed. Europeans often feel that they are not sufficiently informed about the EU's work[22]. For this to change, our communication has to explain how the EU affects people's lives, and needs to build and nurture a better understanding of how the EU works and which issues fall under its responsibility.

> ✓ Communication must be **integrated** from the start in policymaking – not as an afterthought or as a way to 'beautify' policies.
>
> ✓ Communication must be a **two-way conversation** – **listen** first, then **engage**.
>
> ✓ It must be **factual – while also appealing to emotions,** backed up with **data** – and **adapted** to the **target audience**, in **clear language**.
>
> ✓ Communication should start from our shared values and then focus on what the **concrete results of EU policies are for people where they live,** and support **community building**[23].
>
> ✓ **Good policymaking needs good multilingual communication to be understood and owned**.

Freedom and pluralism of the media is and must remain a cornerstone of the Union, as set down in Article 11 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Traditional media – including notably the Brussels press corps, but also regional and local media – are crucial partners when it comes to communicating about what the Union does. The Commission's daily midday briefing allows over 1,000 accredited journalists and media representatives from nearly 60 countries worldwide to ask questions on EU policies and decision-making. Together with other briefings, these are designed to help journalists frame the EU debate among domestic conversations in each Member State. The public trusts traditional press more than it does social media as an independent source of EU news and analyses[24]. However, the unique vantage point that Brussels-based media offers is often overshadowed or sidelined by stories viewed through a predominantly national prism. Continuous support for specialised journalists and media with a genuinely European focus, combined with a more European political discourse from national leaders, will remain essential for the creation of a true 'European public space' for informed discussion and debate.

Communicating Europe, however, is not a task for any single institution or individual. When communicating about the EU, EU institutions must do so in full knowledge of their duty to explain and justify their work in all transparency. At the same time, they cannot and should not bear the responsibility for defending the Union on their own. While the

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[22] Standard Eurobarometer 88, November 2017

[23] As recommended in the 2017 report 'Reaching out to EU citizens: A new opportunity', by Luc Van den Brande, President Juncker's Special Adviser on outreach towards citizens

[24] Public trust in traditional media (broadcast and press) grew in 2017, while it fell in internet and social networks. Traditional media is the most trusted source of news: radio (70%), television (66%), printed newspapers, and news magazines (63%). However, less than half (47%) trust online newspapers and magazines, and lower proportions trust video hosting websites and podcasts (27%) and online social networks and messaging apps (26%) – Flash Eurobarometer 464, February 2018

Commission has a specific role as the guardian of the Treaties and the initiator of EU legislation, it does not have the same reach or proximity as national or regional governments in communicating with their own citizens. Nor can it compensate for information gaps. The strong engagement of other EU institutions and Member States at all levels is therefore crucial in communicating on EU policies.

As set out in the Treaties, EU decisions should be taken as openly as possible and as closely as possible to citizens[25]. While much progress has been made, further accountability and clarity in decision-making is essential to ensure more joint ownership of the outcome of political processes. This would also help to avoid a persistent 'crisis myth' and the tendency to focus communication primarily on points of disagreement. Argument and debate between leaders, governments, institutions and people about EU policies is not a sign of conflict, but a sign of healthy and vibrant democratic engagement. **The constant need to reach balanced and sustainable compromises is inherent to the form of governance that Europeans have chosen for themselves.** It is important for all those involved in decision-making to emphasise this.

There are many successful examples of EU institutions and Member States working together to project an image of European unity on the global stage. For example, in 2015, communication about the European Year for Development underlined the Union's commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, bringing together all EU institutions, as well as the community of non-governmental development organisations. Communication and outreach to audiences in third countries needs to be further improved to promote the EU's strategic interests.

The EU's free trade agreement with Japan was another example of a united front, with the Commission, Council and national governments all communicating strongly about the agreement's benefits. This Commission deliberately chose to publish and make all negotiating mandates and documents transparent, drawing on the lessons learnt during earlier negotiations, which were often heavily criticised for their lack of transparency.

Similarly, in the Commission's communication around the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union, one clear and simple message of unity was repeated by 27 Member States, with an unprecedented level of openness and transparency in the withdrawal negotiations. Handling communication on Brexit mainly through a dedicated Commission Task Force also meant that Brexit was not allowed to hijack or pollute the European Union's positive agenda.

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[25] Article 1 of the Treaty on European Union

Transparency in the Brexit negotiations

60+ speeches, **100+** negotiation documents published

written replies to **10,000+** citizen enquiries

30 meetings with national Parliaments

150+ events for EU citizens in **50+** locations across the UK

650+ stakeholder meetings

200+ meetings with the Council and the European

visits to all Member States during negotiations
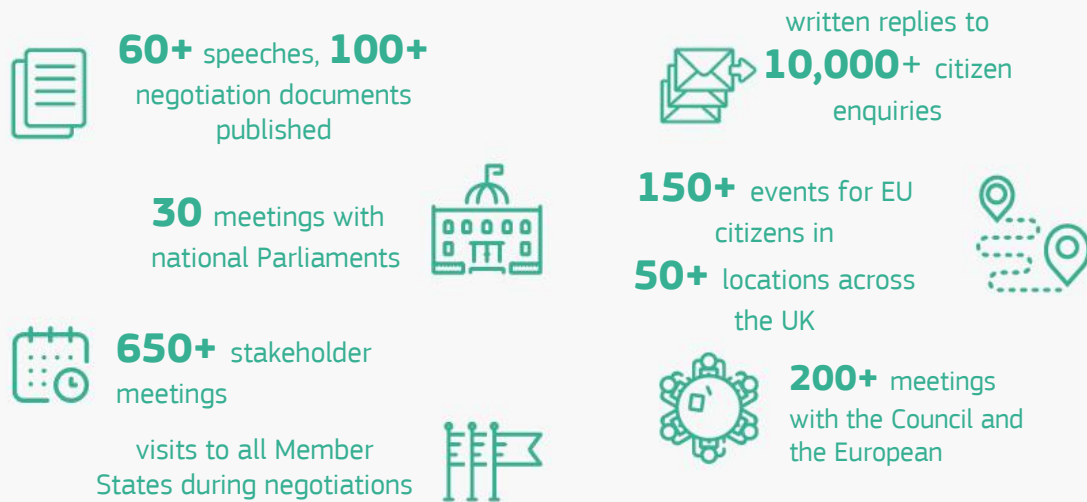
Summits and high-level meetings with third countries provide a clear opportunity for EU institutions and Member States to profile the Union's important role as a generator of positive change at home and abroad. Transparency, through the publication of negotiation documents in other policy areas underpins this approach. This was shown in the decisive role played by the EU in reaching the climate change agreement in Paris in December 2015. The transparent approach helped to ensure unity between Member States and keep citizens informed and included throughout.

The many examples of this nature demonstrate the value of joint, coordinated communication. There is, however, much to be gleaned from the times in which our communication was not up to par. The EU's communication efforts are often hampered by overselling and under-delivering. This is most visible when looking at how many times EU leaders have pledged in European Council conclusions to complete the Digital Single Market or the Banking Union. Conversely, the EU is also often guilty of over-delivering and under-selling. Communication around migration provides a telling example of this. Even if the term 'migration crisis in Europe' still prominently features in public and political discourse, the reality is that arrivals to the EU have been brought back to pre-crisis levels.

The EU's institutional communication is also often hampered by its inability to compete with persuasive national voices or online platforms. When it came to the reform of the EU's copyright legislation, the EU institutions found themselves faced with powerful lobbying and communication campaigns mounted against the proposed reform in the last weeks before the decisive vote in the European Parliament. The lack of an equally powerful response on the EU side meant that the intentions and reasons behind the reform were not sufficiently known by the public, even if the reform was ultimately approved by a clear majority in the European Parliament.

To counter such tendencies and address these weaknesses, more joint communication is needed from the national level. In particular, EU leaders should coordinate better in their

communication of the results of negotiations and summits when addressing domestic audiences.

There are also many more opportunities for joint communication that the EU institutions and Member States should seize throughout the decision-making cycle.

These examples all point to the need for greater coordination in communication efforts about the EU at European, national, local and regional level. Cooperation between EU institutions on communication is well developed, notably between the Commission and the European Parliament. By signing a joint statement in December 2017, the two institutions' communication departments agreed to work together and share resources in the run-up to the European elections, spearheaded by the www.thistimeimvoting.eu campaign. They do this in recognition of their shared responsibility to **mobilise and empower citizens to take informed decisions about Europe's future**.

This pragmatic approach has forged a new culture of working together, surmounting institutional rivalry to promote the EU's benefits for citizens, with EU branding. In the same vein, all visual communication by EU institutions around the Treaty of Rome's 60th anniversary used EU, rather than institutional, branding.

Beyond the upcoming elections, the Parliament and the Commission should step up cooperation between Parliament Liaison Offices and Commission Representations in the Member States. They must foster further synergies in their on-going communication and combine their outreach activities. Non-governmental organisations, social partners, Europe Direct Information Centres and other networks and academia should also be involved. Commission Representations and Parliament Liaison Offices show a much stronger EU presence and brand with shared spaces in '**Europe Houses**' across the Union, and '**Experience Europe**' facilities already up and running in several Member States. For example, over 70,000 people have visited the recently opened 'Experience Europe' in Helsinki.

The Europe Direct Contact Centre

Europe's single phone number for citizens' EU questions. The Contact Centre answers by phone/email in any of the 24 official EU languages. Europe Direct Contact Centres in numbers:

- ✓ **109,000** questions in 2018

- ✓ **27,000** questions between January–March 2019

- ✓ **85%** of clients satisfied
  Freephone from EU: +800 6 7 8 9 10 11.
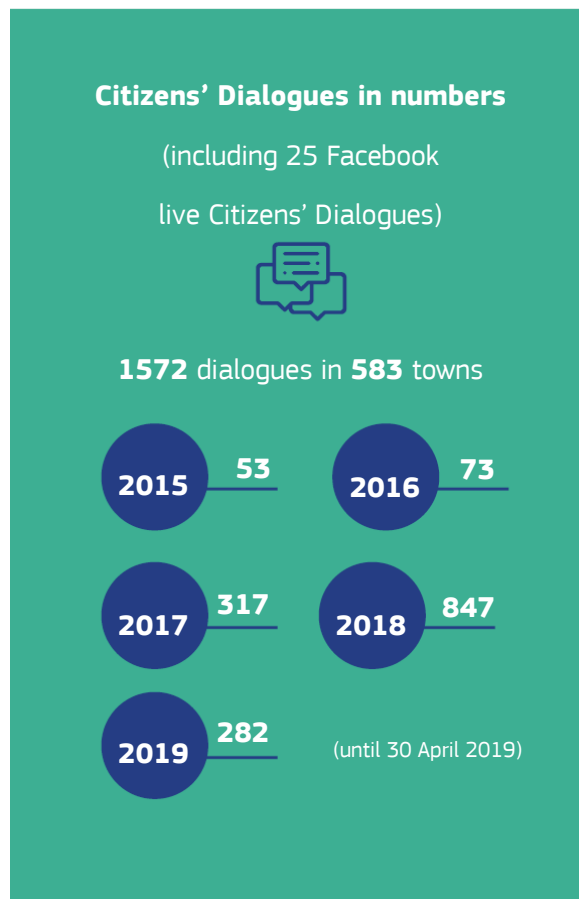 Online: https://europa.eu/european-union/contact_en; Factsheet

The Europe Direct network
are composed of some

- ✓ **440** Europe Direct Information Centres in all the Member States and

- ✓ **330** European Documentation Centres cover in a quite homogeneous way towns and cities, rural areas and outermost regions in the 28 Member States.

II.2 A permanent dialogue with citizens

Engaging with citizens on a constant basis is essential to strengthen European identity and democracy and ensure greater ownership of the European project. Commissioners were actively encouraged to participate in dialogues with citizens across the Union.

Citizens' Dialogues in numbers

(including 25 Facebook live Citizens' Dialogues)

1572 dialogues in **583** towns

2015	53	**2016**	73
2017	317	**2018**	847
2019	282	(until 30 April 2019)	

Citizen engagement will only work if it goes both ways. These dialogues are opportunities to present the Commission's political agenda and, more importantly, to listen to citizens' ideas and expectations. Representations play a key role – as the Commission's 'eyes, ears and voice' on the ground – in ensuring these dialogues fit the national and local context.

The European Commission's White Paper on the Future of Europe of March 2017 provided new impetus to this process. In the last five years, hundreds of thousands of people have taken part in some 1,600 citizens' dialogues' and citizens' consultations organised across Europe by or with the help of the Commission. Since January 2015, hundreds of Members of the European Parliament, national governments and regional governments, and all 28 Members of the Commission have engaged in citizens' dialogues and citizens' consultations. The Committee of the Regions also took the debate to the regions in its 'Reflecting on Europe' process, while the Economic and Social Committee involved civil society in dialogues on the future of Europe. The explicit support of France's President Macron to this new form of interaction significantly enhanced their visibility.

The Commission's citizens' dialogues and citizens' consultations report published on 30 April 2019 confirms that most citizens see Europe as essential to tackling global challenges, but expect it to become more efficient and more transparent[26].

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[26] European Commission, 'Citizens' dialogues and citizens' consultations, Key conclusions', 30.4.2019, (https://ec.europa.eu/commission/progress-reports-citizens-dialogues-and-consultations_en)

Their top expectations of the EU are as follows:

A **Europe that protects:** Citizens expect the EU to listen to their concerns and to take measures to promote safety, health and security. They expect social rights to be upheld and to be protected from crime.

Addressing migration: Citizens expect European policies on migration to stop the loss of human lives, but also to end irregular migration flows.

A **dynamic economy**: Citizens expect action to avert future economic crises. They expect the EU to bring prosperity, to grow and regulate the technology sector to stay globally competitive. They would like the Union to prioritise research innovation and investment, with a special focus on the circular economy and on the digital economy.

Fighting climate change and **protecting the environment**: Citizens expect the EU to take on a global leadership role in climate action and environmental protection.

A **Europe of values** – including democracy, transparency and the rule of law: Citizens expect more information on EU decision-making and greater channels of influence. They expect the EU to uphold its values including its founding principles of gender equality and non-discrimination.

Opportunities for young people: Citizens expect Europe to create better life chances for young people – also by tackling youth unemployment and investing in education.

A stronger Europe on the world: Citizens expect Europe to be a strong player in the global arena, led by principles.

Throughout this process of dialogue, consultation and debate, the Commission has taken into account citizens' expectations and acted upon them. For example, in November 2017 the EU institutions proclaimed the **European Pillar of Social Rights** in response to widespread demands for more social Europe. In January 2018, it adopted the **first ever Europe-wide strategy on plastics** in response to mass public support for the transition towards a more circular economy.

The EU has also sought to highlight the tangible impact of EU policies. It was in this vein that the **European Border and Coast Guard** was launched at a border crossing in Bulgaria on 6 October 2016 – a visible message to people in the region whose lives were most affected by the global migration challenge. However, a lot more needs to be done to strengthen shared ownership of the European project by citizens. In this spirit, the momentum of citizens' dialogues and consultations must be sustained when the new European Parliament is elected and the next Commission takes office.

EU leaders recently took important steps forward in this direction. For the first time, the December 2018 European Council conclusions welcomed the holding of citizens' dialogues

and citizens' consultations. These are seen by EU leaders as 'an unprecedented opportunity to engage with European citizens, which could serve as an inspiration for further consultations and dialogues'[27]. The conclusions also made a direct link between engagement with citizens and the next strategic agenda of the European Union, which will now be prepared by the informal EU27 leaders meeting in Sibiu.

The outcome of these dialogues and consultations must be communicated openly and fed back into the policymaking process. This means publishing the main results from each dialogue, regularly compiling and analysing trends and ensuring that they are taken into account in policy design.

Europa web domain:
First worldwide in the category of Society/Government websites

Ranks second in regards to website traffic within the 3 700 000 registered on the '.eu' domain

In 2018 over **300 million** visits from over **200 million** unique visitors

24 official EU **languages**

https://europa.eu/

It is equally important to use the huge potential of online communication to engage with citizens on a daily basis. This should be done through social media and other online channels, as well as the Union's Europa website, which had more than 200 million unique visitors in 2018.

There is scope to go beyond advances made in recent years, such as the 'Have Your Say' portal on the Europa website, for citizens and stakeholders to send their concerns and interests directly to policy-makers and decision-takers. These mechanisms must also be more widely publicised.

In support of these efforts, it is crucial to encourage and support a greater general knowledge of the EU's history, functioning and competences, including through educational curricula. Education and learning have a fundamental role to play in explaining and promoting the understanding of the respective roles and competences of the Union and the Member States. While respecting Member States' competences, the EU should aim to build partnerships with educational institutions at national and regional levels to **ensure European civic education becomes a part of formal learning**. Learning about Europe and our common history would also promote a better understanding of EU values and fundamental rights.

II.3 A unified message through corporate communication

Over the past five years, the EU institutions, and notably the Commission, have worked to break down silos in its own communication. If citizens are to perceive the positive difference that the EU makes in their lives, they need clear and coherent communication about what it stands for and how they benefit from EU policies and action. Rather than disconnected communication about individual policies and programmes, a unified approach enables people to see the relevance of policies more clearly. This is the aim of the Commission's corporate communication strategy – to inform citizens about EU values and action, challenges and opportunities and how they can be faced together.

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[27] European Council conclusions, 13/14.12..2018, point 15

Communication on social media in an emotive way with powerful visuals

This Commission focused primarily on the strategic areas where the EU could bring benefits. President Juncker's 10 political priorities of July 2014 came with a commitment to explain its objectives with clear and consistent core messages. The resulting corporate campaigns, demonstrating EU values and packing strong emotional punch, help get across these overarching messages.

This approach is based on one clear, coherent narrative, showing benefits for citizens framed through storytelling. Storytelling is a powerful way of appealing to and engaging with citizens. A policy or political priority that is not explained and underpinned by examples and emotions is unlikely to be embraced in the same way by the citizens it involves and affects. Telling the EU's story in a more engaging and emotive way is a more effective means of communication than one restricted to factual, evidence-based arguments only. This is also in line with the nature of the EU as a union of values and not merely a union of economies.

In this approach, each policy continues to have its own tailored stakeholder communication within a wider positive narrative. At the same time, **corporate communication ensures that citizens and stakeholders get clear and sharp messages in their own language** adapted to their age, culture and background, with increased use of infographics, visual narratives and story-driven videos. The streamlined approach has allowed the Commission to project a European corporate voice.

Engaging and interacting on social media

@EU_Commission
over **1 million** followers

European Commission
Over **580,000** followers

European Commission
nearly **923,000** fans

EUTube
nearly **83,000** subscribers

europeancommission over
240,000 followers

Corporate communication has had a real impact and has proven to be cost-effective, financed solely from existing means. By pooling resources, the Commission has been better able to **engage with citizens, improve the understanding of EU values, political priorities and policies, and encourage people to participate actively** in shaping the EU. Evaluation and

feedback confirms the efficiency, effectiveness, relevance and coherence of this approach. The recent evaluation of the #InvestEU campaign covering the full range of EU funds dedicated to inciting investment reveals that, in just one year, the campaign potentially reached 240 million contacts with a 4-5 percentage point increase in the positive perception of the impact of EU funding in EU regions[28].

In response to citizens' main concerns, the Commission built up a narrative around the ten political priorities of its mandate. Three complementary corporate public campaigns have presented these messages in innovative and creative ways, to spark a conversation across Europe on the EU's impact on citizens' daily lives.

With increasing use of social media, audiovisual communication and digital tools, the campaign themes were carefully chosen:

 InvestEU, uses 100 real life stories to illustrate how EU investment is creating jobs, changing lives and revitalising communities across Europe;

 EUandME, engages with young Europeans, to start a conversation on EU values and achievements through a series of short films and stories of young people whose lives were impacted by the EU; and

 EUprotects, explains how 'ordinary heroes' work together across Europe to address people's safety and security concerns, demonstrating EU action on global challenges that cannot be dealt with at national level.

The Commission is also organising a **pilot corporate campaign in a number of rural areas**, designed to explain the value of EU cooperation in harder-to-reach communities. The campaign will run for 18 months, starting with meetings with rural stakeholders in March 2019 and focus groups in May to discern the key topics and messages for each country before rolling out tailor-made communication activities. The Commission will also launch a campaign on **EU cooperation with Africa**, in parallel to the existing communication efforts on the specific projects and programmes.

Flying the EU flag, **the corporate campaigns pave the way for EU communicators, at all levels, to work together**. The Commission's policy departments provide expert knowledge and information that feeds the campaigns; while research and focus groups help to ensure that the right messages target the right audiences, and Commission Representations tailor the content to local interests and sensitivities.

The experience of the corporate campaigns during this Commission has shown the strong impact in reaching citizens with emotive storytelling and tailored messaging for different Member States and regions. The Commission has proposed to continue the corporate communication method under the post-2020 multiannual financial framework, identifying key communication messages and priorities over several years. This model should also be further developed in support of the Union's strategic objectives for the future.

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[28] Final Report on the Study: Monitoring the performance of EC communication activities for the Investment plan for Europe, Technopolis Group, November 2018

Other EU institutions are invited to support and adopt this corporate communication approach in their own communication efforts, helping to build shared, sustained and cohesive narratives. Member States should also develop complementary communication tools that helps citizens understand the link between EU policies and their local impact better.

II.4 Acting together to fight disinformation

Fighting disinformation while defending media freedom and pluralism is fundamental to protect European democracy. The rapid development of digital technologies has not only changed the way that citizens consume news, but also transformed their ways of interacting. **Online platforms connect citizens, enable them to create content and break down geographic and societal barriers.** Online platforms have become powerful information gateways[29], where the gatekeepers have financial interests in servicing the users with customised information.

83%
of Europeans think fake news is a threat to democracy

73%
of internet users are concerned about disinformation online in the pre-election period

While this environment makes it easier for citizens to interact and express their political views, thus contributing to the healthy functioning of democratic societies, it also allows the rapid spread of harmful disinformation that seeks to disrupt democratic processes. Evidence shows that foreign state actors are also increasingly deploying disinformation strategies to influence societal debates, create divisions and interfere in democratic decision-making.

The Commission defines disinformation as 'verifiably false or misleading information that is created, presented and disseminated for economic gain or to intentionally deceive the public, and may cause public harm'[30]. The aim of disinformation is to distract and divide, to plant seeds of doubt by distorting and falsifying facts, thus confusing people and weakening their faith in institutions and established political processes.

It is our common duty to defend the core value of freedom of expression and to protect European citizens from disinformation. This calls for three-fold action – **effective policy measures to regulate online content and service providers, innovative communication to build resilience against disinformation, and the continued defence of media freedom and pluralism**.
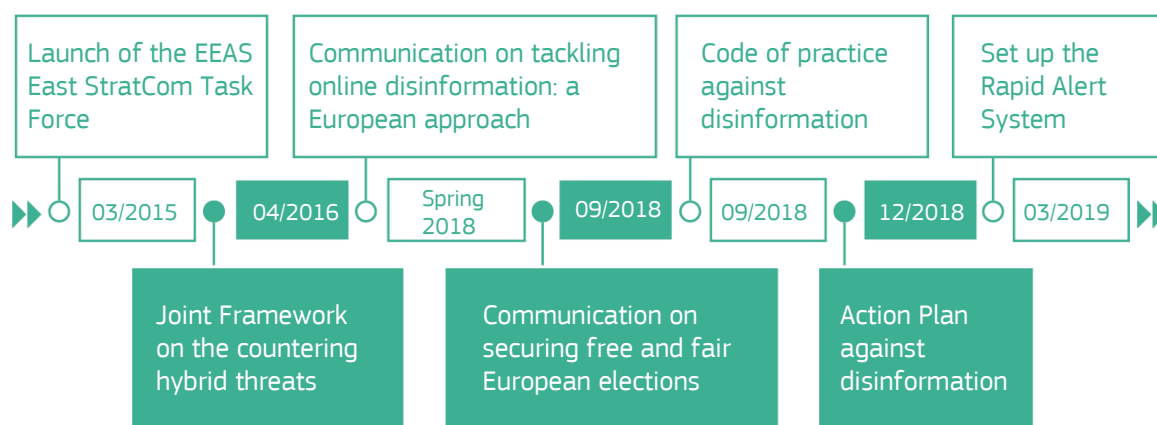
Over the past five years, the EU has strengthened its efforts to tackle disinformation. Following March 2015 European Council conclusions, the East StratCom Task Force was set up in the European External Action Service (EEAS). Together with the Commission and EU delegations in non-EU countries, the Task Force communicates about Union policies in eastern neighbourhood countries, strengthening the media environment and supporting media freedom and independence. It improves the EU's capacity to forecast, address and raise

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[29]   62%   of   news   is   read   off   mobile   platforms   –   Pew   Research   centre: http://www.journalism.org/2012/10/01/future-mobile-news
[30] Commission Communication 'Tackling online disinformation: a European Approach', COM(2018) 236 final, 26.4.2018

awareness about disinformation activities.

The Commission has tackled disinformation from the legislative, security and communication perspective. In the last year, the Commission has underlined the importance of securing free and fair European elections[31]. It has encouraged leading platforms to sign up to a code of practice against disinformation and put forward an action plan with proposals for a coordinated EU response to the challenge of disinformation. The platforms must now take their fair share of responsibility for ensuring free and unbiased speech in Europe.

Launch of the EEAS East StratCom Task Force	Communication on tackling online disinformation: a European approach	Code of practice against disinformation	Set up the Rapid Alert System

03/2015	04/2016	Spring 2018	09/2018	09/2018	12/2018	03/2019

	Joint Framework on the countering hybrid threats		Communication on securing free and fair European elections		Action Plan against disinformation	

The Action Plan[32] focuses on four areas to build up EU and Member State capabilities and strengthen cooperation: 1) improving detection, analysis and exposure of disinformation; 2) building stronger cooperation and joint response through a new rapid alert system; 3) engaging with online platforms and industry, as per the code of practice signed by online platforms, leading social networks, advertisers and industry; and 4) raising awareness and empowering citizens through targeted campaigns and dedicated programmes promoting media literacy at European and national level.

Crucially, the fight against disinformation requires a constant outflow of fact-based messaging that helps citizens to distinguish reality from falsehood.

The Commission responds to disinformation directly via its Spokesperson's Service, the Commission Representations in the Member States and on social media by drawing on the expertise of its Network against Disinformation, a group of Commission mythbusters, data analysis from social media and insights from behavioural science. The Commission provides factual and accurate information on its policies and political priorities as well as rebutting any disinformation that seeks to mislead European citizens as regards the EU.

Colouring pencils and crayons are to be 'banned' by the European Union: In 2017, headlines incorrectly reported that the EU was banning crayons and colouring pencils. In reality, the EU was proposing to reduce the lower limit for lead in toys, based on scientific evidence. The measures ensure that children can safely use crayons without being exposed to lead poisoning.

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[31] Commission Communication 'Securing free and fair European elections', COM(2018) 637, 12.9.2018

[32] Joint Communication of the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy 'Action Plan against Disinformation', JOIN(2018) 36 final, 5.12.2018

> *EU ban on doner kebabs:* Following a European Parliament debate in 2017 on phosphate preservatives in processed meats, rumours spread that the EU was banning kebabs. In truth, scientific research showed a link between the chemical and heart disease. The proposal sought a change in the manufacturing of kebab meat, but not anything akin to a ban on the popular snack.

In Member States, Commission Representations also play a part in mythbusting[33] setting the record straight on the most persistent and commonplace falsehoods about the EU.

In the rapidly evolving world of disinformation, **institutions need to continue efforts to adapt very quickly, not only to changing political circumstances, but also to the changing technological landscape**. The use of 'bots' (online robots that perform repetitive tasks based on algorithms) in communication is already a reality[34]. In the near future, artificial intelligence will also be increasingly used to carry out communication activities. The EU institutions and Member States need to continue efforts to adapt to and get ahead of this new reality. Education systems can play a part here: The Digital Education Action Plan could encourage more specialist training in artificial intelligence.

Mythbusting activities by Representations

Décodeurs de l'Europe – an initiative by the Commission Representation in Paris

https://ec.europa.eu/france/news/decodeurseurope_fr

Keyboard Warriors – an initiative by the Commission Representation in Warsaw

https://www.facebook.com/groups/wojo wnicyklawiatury/

In order to continue fighting the increasing flow of disinformation, Member States and institutions need to team up to build on existing synergies and pool resources. Together, Member States and EU institutions need to make sure that the new rapid alert system is fully

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[33] See examples of the Commission Representations in Paris (https://decodeursdeleurope.eu), Vilnius (https://ec.europa.eu/lithuania/home_lt), and London (https://blogs.ec.europa.eu/ECintheUK/euromyths-a-z-index)

[34] In 2017, so-called 'bots' (or online robots that perform repetitive tasks based on algorithms) were responsible for more than half of all web traffic; and while good bots generate 23% of all web traffic, roughly 29% can be attributed to creators with illegitimate aims. See Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, 'Countering Information Influence Activities: The State of the Art', 2018 (https://rib.msb.se/filer/pdf/28698.pdf)

exploited. Going beyond information sharing, **a real knowledge community with expertise on the different facets of disinformation is needed**, drawing insights from research and academia, fact-checkers, online platforms, technology experts and international partners. The Commission is ready to link up the expertise of its Network against Disinformation with the rapid alert system and provide a hub for EU policy-related content to counter disinformation.

The Commission intends to facilitate the creation of a **European multidisciplinary community** to foster cooperation between all involved, in particular **independent fact-checkers and academic researchers** involved in the fight against disinformation. To this end, the Commission plans to establish a European Platform on Disinformation. The Platform will scale up collaboration between fact-checkers and academic researchers in order to ensure full coverage of the Union territory and facilitate the build-up and interconnection of relevant national organisations, including national disinformation centres.

EU communication at the service of citizens and democracy

5 Recommendations

When they meet in Sibiu, Romania, on 9 May 2019, EU leaders are invited to:

1. ***Recognise that communicating about the European Union is a joint responsibility for EU Member States, governments at all levels and EU institutions alike****. We need to communicate more with common messages, under the EU brand, explaining what decisions and policies mean for people and what tangible results they bring. We should capitalise on major political agreements and decisions at European Council meetings, and make use of milestones and landmark events to highlight European unity (for example, Europe Day on 9 May, anniversaries of Union enlargements and Treaties).*

2. ***Increase engagement and interaction with citizens about European Union policies and issues****. EU institutions and Member States should step up their support for a permanent dialogue with citizens about the European Union, using citizens' dialogues and town hall style meetings, consultations or conventions, as well as digital and audio-visual technologies. They should inform people of the full range of options to express their opinions on the EU and its policies and ensure there is a process and channels to feed the results of the citizens' dialogues and consultations back.*

3. ***Ensure EU institutions work more closely together in the future on EU corporate communication campaigns based on shared European values****, telling the story of what difference the European Union makes in people's daily lives. Campaigns should address all audiences, in their own language, in an appealing, engaging and evocative manner. These should be fully aligned with the strategic priorities for the next political cycle.*

4. ***Join forces to counter disinformation, with EU communication based on facts.*** *Scale up independent fact-checking services nationally and at European level, promote media literacy and skills development in artificial intelligence. Intensify work with social networks and online platforms at EU level to promote good practice, while defending media freedom and pluralism. Step up efforts to pool EU and national resources to safeguard citizens' right to factual, objective and reliable information about the European Union.*

5. ***Promote teaching and learning about the European Union at all levels of education****, to strengthen learners' knowledge of the European Union, its values, functioning and field of activities. The EU should build partnerships with educational institutions at national and regional levels to ensure European civic education becomes a part of formal learning. Bring Erasmus and European Solidarity Corps alumni into this effort. Ensure that EU citizens are made aware of their rights.*

Part III: Conclusion

As Europeans prepare to take to the polls between 23 and 26 May 2019, they need to be able to do so with an informed view both of the challenges we are currently facing and the opportunities the EU can afford them. They should be well aware of the alternative visions for the future of Europe which are being presented and debated during the ongoing campaign for the European Parliament elections.

The informal EU27 leaders' meeting in Sibiu on 9 May 2019 is the right moment to renew our unity and our sense of purpose, respecting the healthy difference of views presented in the elections but not being restricted by it. Unity in diversity is the enduring hallmark of our Union. It is what makes it work, including through testing times. In this spirit, Sibiu will be the time and place to demonstrate that citizens' concerns are taken into account in the next strategic agenda; and to give a message of hope and direction for the future of our Union in the current uncertain global environment.

As Europe looks to its future, it should do so with confidence. If Europe's nations are able to rally around a common set of objectives, there is no challenge they cannot surmount. And if Europe's decision-makers are able to inspire, engage and empower citizens, there is no divide they cannot cross.

The EU's next strategic agenda is an opportunity to demonstrate clearly that we are able to overcome internal differences and stand tall together in order to tackle the trials of our times. The world will not wait for Europe. It is time instead that Europe starts punching its weight in the world.