Future of Europe debates
Parliament hosts Heads of State or Government

SUMMARY
Against the background of the many challenges which the European Union has faced in recent years, the European Parliament has taken the lead in launching and hosting a series of high-profile debates on the Future of Europe, intended to run for the whole of 2018. While the Heads of State or Government of countries holding the rotating presidency of the Council – this year, Boyko Borissov of Bulgaria and Sebastian Kurz of Austria – routinely debate with MEPs in plenary, the leaders of other EU Member States are now able to set out publicly their vision for Europe’s future in a dialogue with the only directly elected European institution, during its plenary sittings.

This process is all the more important at a time when the EU’s Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for the next seven years is being discussed: the choices surrounding the MFF and the direction in which the EU decides to develop are intrinsically linked.

So far, at the invitation of its President, Antonio Tajani, the European Parliament has hosted the leaders of six Member States in the context of these ‘Future of Europe’ debates, welcoming the prime ministers of Ireland (Taoiseach), Leo Varadkar; Croatia, Andrej Plenković; and Portugal, António Costa; the President of France, Emmanuel Macron; and the prime ministers of Belgium, Charles Michel; and Luxembourg, Xavier Bettel.

This Briefing provides an overview of where the Future of Europe debate stands in a number of key policy areas, such as economic and monetary union (EMU), the EU’s social dimension, migration policy, security and defence, and broader institutional issues. It takes stock of the views expressed by those EU Heads of State or Government who have intervened in the debate so far, on how these areas might develop in the future.

Participants in Future of Europe debates in the European Parliament, 2018

NB: The schedule of future debates is, by definition, subject to change.

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Background

In-depth reflections on the 'Future of Europe' have been under way for some time in a range of different fora and institutions. The debate became more focussed in the aftermath of the UK referendum of June 2016, when the other 27 EU leaders decided to start meeting informally in an EU-27 format, in parallel with formal European Council meetings (EU-28). The EU-27 first explored the causes and consequences of Brexit, leading to the Bratislava Declaration and Roadmap of 16 September 2016. In a second phase, in the period leading up to their meeting in Valletta in February 2017, EU-27 leaders deliberated on the future of the EU. Then, with the Rome Declaration of 25 March 2017, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Rome Treaties, the EU-27 leaders gave a clear signal of 'unity and solidarity'. The Rome Declaration envisaged the possibility of Member States integrating at different speeds and with different intensities, while still 'moving in the same direction'. It also expressed a vision for the EU for the next ten years, organised around a safe and secure Europe, a prosperous and sustainable Europe, a social Europe, and a stronger Europe on the global scene. Following a resolution adopted in June 2016, in the immediate aftermath of the UK referendum, the European Parliament adopted, in February 2017, three further landmark resolutions on improving the functioning of the EU institutional structure. Finally, it set out its broader vision in October 2017.

A fundamental contribution was provided by the European Commission in March 2017, with a white paper setting out in greater detail the main challenges facing the EU and suggesting five scenarios 'offering a series of glimpses into the potential state of the Union by 2025 depending on the choices we will jointly make'. The Commission's white paper has since been complemented by a number of reflection papers on key topics for the EU. In his State of the Union address of 13 September 2017, the President of the Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, unveiled a roadmap for a more united, stronger and more democratic Union, setting the timeline for the Commission's key initiatives up until the 2019 European elections. In addition, as part of its strategy to bring the European project closer to the people, the Commission launched the 'citizens' dialogue', an initiative that has seen fora organised in all Member States to discuss the European agenda and its future developments.

In this context, at the European Council of 19-20 October 2017, the President of the European Parliament, Antonio Tajani, recalled the Parliament's early contribution to the reflections on the Future of Europe and announced its intention to host Future of Europe debates during plenary sessions, as a democratic and open forum, where Heads of State or Government and other leading European figures would be invited to express their vision, starting in early 2018.

Economic and monetary union

“**It is of strategic importance to further deepen the Economic and Monetary Union.**”

Xavier Bettel

Launched in 1992, Europe's economic and monetary union (EMU) comprises the single currency and an independent monetary policy run by the European Central Bank (ECB), rules for the coordination and surveillance of Member States' economic policies, and, more recently, a single rulebook and single supervision framework for financial institutions within the euro area. The legal foundations of EMU are the relevant Treaty provisions and two Council regulations. The financial and sovereign debt crises highlighted a number of weaknesses. The framework was therefore enhanced with eight new EU regulations and directives (known as the ‘six-pack’ and ‘two-pack’), two intergovernmental treaties (the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance (TSCG) and the Euro Plus Pact) and common prudential rules to prevent banking crises or manage them efficiently (including the orderly winding-down of failing banks).
A number of the Heads of State or Government speaking in the debate so far have explicitly mentioned the banking union as a crucial objective, in order to protect citizens’ savings on a pan-European basis and reduce the exposure of individual Member States, and made a firm commitment to further work to reach that aim.

In parallel to strengthening the framework mentioned above, discussions began in 2012 on how to further integrate frameworks for the financial sector, budgetary matters and economic policy, as well as adding greater democratic legitimacy and accountability to the process. Important milestones in this process were the 2012 Commission communication, ‘Blueprint for a deep and genuine EMU’, the December 2012 report, ‘Towards a genuine economic and monetary union’ by the European Council President, in collaboration with the Presidents of the European Commission, the Eurogroup and the ECB, and the 2015 report, ‘Completing Europe’s economic and monetary union’, drafted by the Presidents of the four afore-mentioned institutions, together with the President of the European Parliament.

On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Rome Treaties, in March 2017, the European Commission published its white paper on the future of Europe, followed shortly thereafter by a reflection paper on deepening EMU. The latter contained some considerations regarding steps in three key areas – completing the financial union, achieving a more integrated economic and fiscal union, anchoring democratic accountability and strengthening euro-area institutions. In his September 2017 State of the Union address, the Commission President announced further policy initiatives to strengthen EMU governance.

Shortly after that State of the Union address, the European Council endorsed the Leaders’ Agenda, setting its June 2018 meeting as the deadline to adopt concrete decisions on EMU reform. Finally, in December 2017, the Commission put forward specific proposals and initiatives to complete EMU.

The discussion on the future of EMU, however, is not confined to the EU institutions. In September 2017, in an address at the Sorbonne, the French President, Emmanuel Macron, presented EMU reform as one of six dimensions of an initiative for Europe. A month later, Germany’s then finance minister, Wolfgang Schäuble, circulated to his Eurogroup colleagues a non-paper, structured around three core principles. A third view was provided in March 2018 in a position paper issued by the finance ministers of Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Finland and Sweden.

All Heads of State or Government who have spoken in the debate so far have shown support for the completion of EMU, including the Prime Minister of Croatia, a country not yet a member of the euro area. For all speakers, strengthening EMU can prevent further crises and support a more cohesive Union.

With regard to tax policy, the views of Heads of State or Government expressed so far in the context of the Future of Europe debate diverge. Digital taxation, for example, remains for some a national instrument, whilst others favour it as an own resource of the EU. Conversely, all EU leaders who have spoken to date support common work to tackle harmful tax practices, in particular tax fraud and tax evasion, and a move towards a gradual harmonisation of the corporate tax base.
As illustrated above, so far in the debate there has been a general convergence of the views of Heads of State or Government on completing EMU. This is in line with the European Council agenda and with the conclusions of its recent meetings, including Euro Summits. A number of Heads of State or Government expressed support for completing EMU by the end of the current legislative term, with one suggestion being to adopt a roadmap to reach that aim. Some considered the banking union as a key objective, and firmly committed to working further on it to avert future financial crises. On taxation, views appear to diverge somewhat more, in particular on digital taxation.

Migration

“As migratory movements are an integral part of human history. We should not fear them. We should understand them.”
Charles Michel

Since 2015, Europe has faced its most significant migratory challenge since the end of the Second World War. Management of migration flows is likely to continue to be high on the EU agenda. In a speech in December 2017, Antonio Tajani, Parliament’s President, declared: ‘Piecemeal responses are the opposite of effective solutions. What we need instead is a strong European strategy, genuine coordination and more pooling of resources’.

All Heads of State or Government who have intervened so far in the Future of Europe debates in the Parliament were united in considering migration as one of the main challenges that the EU is facing, and agreed that this challenge can only be addressed at EU level.

In 2016, the European Commission launched a reform of the common European asylum system (CEAS) to make it more efficient and more resistant to migratory pressures. Almost two years on, the proposals have attained different stages of progress within the EU legislative process. The most controversial aspect involves reaching a compromise between the principles of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility between Member States (relocation mechanism) in the Dublin system. The Commission’s contribution to the Leaders’ Meeting of December 2017 envisages a political agreement on the overall reform of the CEAS by June 2018. To open up more legal pathways, Member States have also been resettling refugees from third countries under the provisions of the EU emergency resettlement scheme, while in September 2017, the Commission recommended that they additionally resettle at least 50 000 vulnerable persons by October 2019, focussing on North Africa and the Horn of Africa.

“The most controversial aspect involves reaching a compromise between the principles of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility between Member States (relocation mechanism) in the Dublin system.”
António Costa

Most Heads of State or Government speaking in the debate have stressed the need to make progress on the reform of the CEAS and on the issue of relocation. Some of them stressed that their countries have made their contribution in relation to relocation and resettlement, but that other Member States were not shouldering their responsibilities.

“Too few countries have shouldered the responsibility of providing refugees with a fresh start in Europe. We can all do more and we must.”
Leo Varadkar

Addressing current challenges also requires better management of external borders, and returning those who do not have the right to stay in the EU. The European Border and Coast Guard Agency was established in record time. It aims to support Member States in the field of migration management, search and rescue operations and in returning migrants to their countries of origin. The EU is also focusing on increasing returns by improving its own capacities and by concluding readmission agreements with countries of origin and transit. In 2016, the EU and Turkey issued a statement on their plans to stem irregular migration from Turkey to the EU. Furthermore, the
Commission devised a new partnership framework with third countries to address the root causes of irregular migration, combat human smuggling, and increase return and re-admission. In November 2017, the EU set up a joint task force with the African Union and the United Nations (UN), to save and protect lives of migrants along the transit routes and in particular inside Libya.

The Future of Europe debates in the European Parliament have highlighted that some Heads of State or Government are in favour of a general increase in funding or a more ambitious and specific initiative, such as a 'Marshall Plan' for Africa. All of them agree on the need to step up cooperation with countries of origin and transit of migrants. Most of the speakers to date did not address the issue of legal migration; those who did considered the need for developing a system of legal and organised migration.

In the field of migration, the Heads of State or Government intervening in the debate to date have shown a great degree of convergence on several points. All acknowledged that migration is a significant challenge, which needs to be addressed jointly at EU level. This is a result of the European Council's efforts to find a common and comprehensive EU strategy on migration since the outbreak of the migration crisis in 2015. Speakers called for additional funding for EU migration policy. Responsibility and solidarity were also stressed as an important shared value, together with the need to reform the CEAS. However, convergence on these topics might become less evident, for example on relocation, once other leaders have spoken.

### Social dimension

«Let’s put fire back into the engine of our social Europe by following through on the proclamation we issued in Gothenburg last year on jobs, employment rights, pensions and other things.»

Leo Varadkar

In the context of the debate triggered by the white paper on the Future of Europe, launched by the European Commission in March 2017, the reflection paper on the social dimension of the EU offered three scenarios: i) focusing exclusively on the free movement of workers; ii) developing what would essentially be a multispeed Europe; and iii) genuinely deepening EMU across the EU-27. The reflection paper on harnessing globalisation highlighted the strong links between economic and social policies. The Commission proposed a holistic reference framework, the European pillar of social rights (‘social pillar’), for the development of EU labour markets and welfare states. Its 20 principles and rights reach far beyond the strict confines of social policy, and address equal opportunities and access to the labour market; fair working conditions; social protection and inclusion. The solemnly proclaimed and signed social pillar shows the joint commitment of the three institutions that should open a new chapter for the social dimension of the European project.

All Heads of State or Government intervening in the debate to date expressed strong commitment to the principles contained in the European Pillar of Social Rights and fully acknowledged that economic and social development go hand in hand. Some stressed that the very essence of the European Union lies in achieving a closer union, and thus, that the full equality of Member States and their citizens can only be achieved by implementing the relevant social acquis throughout the internal market.

«It is our political responsibility to respond to European citizens’ legitimate anxieties. But we will only succeed if we are able to construct a genuine European Union that is more economically, socially and politically cohesive.»

António Costa
One question for the future remains how to strengthen the social dimension in practice, and how the social pillar will contribute to the further development of social policies across the EU, while mobilising the main EU policy tools to hand: legislation, guidance, governance and funding. Some first evaluations point to its potential to bring about a new policy dynamic. As for legislation and guidance, the European Parliament has called for new measures to modernise the world of work, social protection and access to education. The European Council, at its December 2017 meeting, agreed that legislation and guidance should be taken forward with regard to implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights at Union and Member State levels, including future initiatives announced in the 2018 Commission work programme, as well as improving social dialogue at all levels. To strengthen the social aspects of governance in terms of its content, the country reports within the 2018 European Semester exercise have made use of the social pillar, with particular emphasis on skills challenges and on national social safety nets. In 2017, the European Parliament reiterated the idea of introducing a 'social imbalances procedure' in the drawing up of country specific recommendations (CSRs). Several issues around strengthening the social aspects of the Semester process are still to be tackled. Parliament urged the Commission to launch negotiations on an interinstitutional agreement on economic governance.

Finally, the future of EU finances will greatly impact on the extent to which the social dimension of the EU can be supported. Forthcoming initiatives on completing economic and monetary union include the introduction of an EU budget line dedicated to supporting structural reform and to developing a convergence instrument for pre-accession assistance. The debate on the post-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), starting with the Commission’s proposals in May 2018, will also be influential. The Parliament has made several proposals to secure financial support for new priorities. A recent resolution on the reflection paper on the future of EU finances emphasised the importance of 'genuine' own resources for the EU to gain some financial autonomy.

The interventions of Heads of State or Government to date on social aspects have shown a high level of convergence in defending the founding values of the European social model, but also in the need to progressively bring social models of Member States closer together. All agree that the future success of the EU depends on the ability to ensure that policy decisions are geared towards more economic, social and political cohesion. To achieve that, closer coordination of economic and social policies would be necessary.

Security and defence

Recent years have seen remarkable progress in EU security and defence initiatives, and in the move towards implementing the Lisbon Treaty provisions with the aim ‘to make better use’ of them, as stressed by the Heads of State or Government in their Bratislava Declaration and Roadmap. In 2016,
the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP), Federica Mogherini, presented the EU global strategy on foreign and security policy, a strategic document guiding the EU’s external action. The global strategy was subsequently implemented – in the area of security and defence – through a series of actions. These consisted of, first, an implementation plan on security and defence; second, the European Defence Action Plan (EDAP); and, third, proposals to strengthen EU-NATO cooperation within the framework of the Warsaw joint declaration. These actions provided the basis for the realisation of initiatives such as the European Defence Fund (EDF), the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) and Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), which aim to tackle inherent weaknesses of the European defence market and the EU defence industry, and to enhance and optimise EU defence capabilities. In June 2017, the Commission presented a reflection paper on the future of European defence, featuring possible scenarios for EU cooperation on security and defence, on the basis of the global strategy.

All Heads of State or Government intervening in the Future of Europe debates so far have agreed that the deteriorating global security environment requires a common response from the EU and its Member States. Most of them stressed that the on-going efforts to strengthen the internal/external security nexus will help to counter the threats that the EU is facing and ensure the security of its citizens. Most of them have also spoken of the EU's commitment to multilateralism, one of the pillars of the EU's Global Strategy.

The EDAP, unveiled by the Commission in November 2016, enabled the creation of the European Defence Fund (EDF) to support collaborative research in innovative defence technologies and the development of defence products jointly agreed by the Member States. The Fund was launched in June 2017, consisting of a research window and a capability window, supporting joint development and joint acquisition of key defence capabilities. On 22 May 2018, the Council and the European Parliament reached a provisional agreement on a regulation for a European defence industrial development programme (EDIDP) to finance the EDF. The aim of the regulation is to improve the competitiveness and innovative capacity of the EU defence industry, by supporting cooperation between Member States.

Most of the Heads of State or Government speaking in the debates favoured a strengthening of EU foreign and security policy, praised progress recently made on European defence cooperation, and were united in the view that PESCO and EDF are timely developments.

PESCO was launched in December 2017 with the participation of 25 Member States. It operates on the basis of concrete projects and commitments, several of which are geared towards the strengthening of the EU defence sector. PESCO members commit to increase national defence budgets and invest more in defence research. An initial list of projects was adopted in March 2017. A common and coherent set of governance rules for projects is due to be adopted by the Council in June 2018. In December 2017, the HR/VP, Federica Mogherini, presented further proposals regarding the future of EU security and defence, including such actions as activating the EU Battlegroups, launching a European peace facility and working towards a common strategic culture within the EU. As part of its efforts to step up security and defence, the EU is also aiming to improve military mobility. This will also be one of the new areas for EU-NATO cooperation based on the Council conclusions of 5 December 2017.

Most of the Heads of State or Government whose countries are also members of NATO stressed in the debates that current efforts to advance on European defence cooperation are made in full complementarity and cooperation with NATO. Some of them explicitly wished to reaffirm their
country’s support of Permanent Structured Cooperation, in full compliance, as is the case for Ireland, with their neutrality status.

The contributions of Heads of State or Government in the Future of Europe debate have shown a high degree of convergence of views on security and defence. For example, most of them spoke of the common threats that the EU and the Member States are facing, primarily referring to terrorism and cyber-attacks. A number highlighted that the EU and Member States need to elaborate a common response to threats that balances and preserves the EU’s interests internationally.

**Multiannual Financial Framework**

*In the next Multiannual Financial Framework the basic principle of financing needs to be the added European value.*

Andrey Plenkovic

The European Union’s budget provides the financial means for the EU to act. Each year, its size is negotiated within the limits set out in the seven-year multiannual financial framework (MFF). The MFF, besides being a financial plan, gives a vision of the EU’s long-term priorities. With the current MFF for the 2014-2020 period entering its final phase, the EU has started preparing the post-2020 plan. This preparation should take into account not only the financial coverage of the engagements of the Bratislava and Rome declarations, but also the current debate on the future of Europe and the loss of a major contributor due to the UK’s withdrawal – the financial aspects of the future relationship with the latter are still to be defined. On 2 May 2018, the Commission presented a package of legislative proposals on the 2021-2027 MFF, on own resources to finance the EU budget and on linking the EU budget with the rule of law. Within the new structure of the MFF headings and simplified architecture of programmes, the Commission presented, in its own words, ‘a modern budget for a Union that protects, empowers and defends’. The proposal offers more European added value to EU spending. It emphasises the new priorities by giving more funding for research and innovation and the digital economy, security and defence, migration and border management, external action, climate, and programmes supporting young people.

All Heads of State or Government who have spoken in the debates so far outlined which policy priorities, in their opinion, deserve funding in the next MFF. Some stressed the need to develop new policies (such as security, innovation or the digital economy), others highlighted the contribution of the ‘traditional’ areas (the common agricultural policy (CAP) and cohesion policy) and a few stressed the need for a balance between the two.

*In no way should we scale-back the ambition of current policies, but we must promote new ambitions.*

Emmanuel Macron

At the same time, the Commission’s proposals would reduce the allocations for cohesion policy and the CAP (by between 5% and 15% depending on the methods and assumptions used). The Commission also proposed new instruments to strengthen the link between the EU budget and the European Semester. Overall, the next MFF amounts to €1.135 billion (in commitments, 2018 prices), i.e. 1.11% of EU-27 gross national income (GNI). Changes were also envisaged on the revenue side, including modernisation of the current own-resources system, a basket of new resources, and gradual elimination of rebates. This reform, according to the Commission, could be an opportunity to depart from the obsolete concept of Member States’ net balances or ‘fair return’.

*The success of the CAP cannot be reduced to ensuring food security in Europe, just as the success of Cohesion Policy cannot be limited to its contribution to economic and social modernisation of our territories.*

António Costa

*We need to consolidate and modernise common policies, cohesion and support for agricultural policy. Above all, we will have to be smarter in our spending.*

Charles Michel
Most Heads of State or Government who have spoken in the debate to date have expressed their readiness to contribute more to the EU budget, although some made this conditional upon, for example, the contribution to the advancement of the European ideal or a full re-working of the budget itself. Many of them, however, stressed the need to provide the EU with a budget that matches its needs and ambitions.

The European Parliament has presented its expectations on the post-2020 MFF and the reform of own resources and given its first reaction to the Commission's proposals (declaration of 2 May and resolution of 30 May 2018). The Parliament supports programmes on research and innovation, youth, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and financial support for pressing challenges in the areas of security, migration and external border protection. It insists that financing of the CAP and cohesion policy (in real terms) should remain unchanged, but estimates that, in order to finance new priorities, the MFF ceiling should increase from the current 1.0 %, to 1.3 % of EU GNI. Both the Parliament and the European Commission stress the need for a swift agreement, within one year, namely ahead of the May 2019 European elections. This would allow the new programmes to start on 1 January 2021, and avoid the delays that hindered the implementation of previous financial frameworks.

Half of the Heads of State or Government who have spoken in the Future of Europe debates have addressed the creation of new own resources for the EU, with some stressing the need to avoid additional taxes for EU citizens. Only one, Emmanuel Macron, called for the end of all rebates after Brexit.

There is no clear convergence of view among the speakers to date on MFF issues, which the Heads of State or Government have only discussed once collectively, so far. Opposing views persist as to funding of the CAP and cohesion policy. Some Heads of State or Government strongly reject any cuts, while others call for their consolidation and modernisation. Nevertheless, most of them agreed that more initiatives should be funded in the areas of external relations, security and defence and migration. While most did not want to commit to the timing of an agreement on the next MFF, one of them – António Costa – stressed the importance of finding an agreement during this legislative term. The vast majority expressed their willingness to contribute more to the EU budget, many of them calling for additional own resources for the EU.

Institutional issues

Institutional issues are a matter of intensive debate between the European Parliament, the European Commission and the European Council as part of their reflections on the future of Europe.

The European Parliament, as the first EU institution to contribute to the debate on the EU’s future institutional setting, adopted a first resolution, soon after the UK referendum, calling for reforms to re-launch the European project. In a second resolution, the European Parliament suggested ways to exploit the unused potential of the Lisbon Treaty. These include, inter alia, preserving the ‘Community method’, using passerelle clauses more often in the European Council, strengthening Parliament's right of legislative initiative and its political scrutiny of the Commission; transforming the Council into a legislative chamber and reducing its configurations. In a third resolution, the European Parliament also proposed Treaty changes, notably making fiscal and economic policy a

*A revision of the Treaties is not necessary, in the short or medium term. It would even be counterproductive. The Treaties provide for sufficient flexibility to make our actions more effective.*

Charles Michel
shared competence; creating an 'EU foreign minister', and granting legislative initiative also to the Council, the Parliament and also, to a certain degree, to national parliaments. The fourth resolution on budgetary capacity for the euro area, focused on restoring trust in the euro area and on measures to strengthen economic governance. The European Parliament set out its overall vision for the future of Europe in October 2017.

Since 29 June 2016, institutional issues have also been a permanent element in the future of Europe discussions in the European Council. Then EU leaders decided to start 'a political reflection to give an impulse to further reforms in line with the EU's strategic agenda, and to the development of the EU with 27 Member States'. This process has led to three milestone contributions: the Bratislava Declaration, the Rome Declaration and the recent Leaders' Agenda. The EU leaders’ main objectives have been to maintain EU unity, which has clearly been the leitmotif running through the European Council’s statements since June 2016, as well as to deliver on key concerns of EU citizens.

Heads of State or Government intervening in the Future of Europe debate so far unanimously committed to working within the current Treaties, and agreed that no Member State could manage the challenges of today's global world alone. While most stressed the unity of the EU, some highlighted the benefit of a multi-speed Europe to speed up decisions and avoid a standstill.

In this context, the European Commission adopted its white paper in March 2017. Intended as a contribution to the Rome Summit of 25 March 2017, this strategic document touched upon the broader challenges that will affect future European construction. In doing so, it identified five possible future scenarios for 'how Europe could evolve by 2025', with the intention to stimulate debate. The five options, which are neither mutually exclusive nor exhaustive, were: i) 'Carrying on'; ii) 'Nothing but the single market'; iii) 'Those who want more do more'; iv) 'Doing less more efficiently'; v) 'Doing much more together'. To these five scenarios, a sixth was added in the 2017 State of the Union address, consisting of strengthening a Europe of values, represented by freedom, equality and respect for the rule of law.

Various Heads of State or Government intervening in the debates to date called for the strengthening of the subsidiarity and proportionality principles in order to reach decisions at levels closest to the people, and referred to the work of the subsidiarity and proportionality task force. Many of the most recent interventions have stressed the importance of democracy, in particular as Europe is facing rising populism and authoritarianism.

In February 2018, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the composition of the Parliament in view of the 2019 elections and the UK’s withdrawal from the European Union, proposing a reduction of seats from 751 to 705 with no loss for any Member State. Of the 73 UK vacant seats, 27 would correct the currently flawed degressive proportionality, while the remaining 46 seats would be kept free for future enlargements. The European Parliament resolution did not endorse transnational lists. At the informal meeting of 23 February 2018, the EU-27 leaders broadly supported this reduction, but did not consider the Spitzenkandidaten process to be automatic, and did not guarantee that the European Council would propose one of the lead candidates as President of the Commission. However, EP President Antonio Tajani referred to Parliament's position that it would reject any proposed Commission President who had not been a Spitzenkandidat. The proposal on the composition contained in Parliament's resolution is expected to be adopted by the European Council (Article 14(2) of the Treaty on European Union (TEU)) at its meeting

"We must build this full and complete European sovereignty to protect our fellow citizens."
Emmanuel Macron

"We have taken this the wrong way around. We have Spitzenkandidaten but not Transnational lists. Spitzenkandidaten should be at the head of Transnational lists."
Xavier Bettel

"In our future work, we must strengthen the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality and reach decisions at levels closest to the people."
Andriy Plenković

"Let's make permanent the Spitzenkandidat system, and democratise choosing candidates for other leading positions within the EU."
Leo Varadkar
of 28-29 June 2018. Parliament must first give its consent to the decision, and that is expected to be voted during the June plenary session.

Some of the Heads of State or Government speaking in the Future of Europe debates explicitly stressed the overall consensus among EU leaders in favour of concrete action for citizens as opposed to Treaty revisions. Nevertheless, their views on specific institutional action were relatively divergent. Some supported transnational lists and the Spitzenkandidaten procedure, seeing it as a permanent method, while democracy and the rule of law featured quite prominently in the speeches of others. Some leaders chose not to dwell on institutional reforms as, in their view, attention should lie more on listening to the citizens and regaining their trust. All of them agreed on the importance of greater involvement of citizens, with many of them referring to the citizens’ conventions.

ENDNOTES

1 The quotations presented in this briefing, taken from the speeches as published by the leaders’ offices, represent a limited selection illustrating the six topics addressed in this text. For the full speeches, and the subsequent discussions with MEPs, the verbatim record and video recording of each debate can be found on the plenary section of Parliament’s website: Leo Varadkar; Andrej Plenković; António Costa; Emmanuel Macron; Charles Michel; and Xavier Bettel.

2 The term ‘discussions’ is used to refer both to Commission initiatives and to deliberations of the Presidents of the European Commission, the Euro Summit, the Eurogroup, the European Central Bank and the European Parliament.

3 The ‘social dimension’ of the EU has been developed gradually since the Treaty of Rome. Article 3(3) of the Treaty on European Union includes the concept of achieving a highly competitive social market economy. The horizontal social clause (Article 9 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union) places balanced economic growth and sustainable development on a par with full employment, a high level of social protection, equality, promotion of social justice and respect for diversity.

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## Annex: Overview of topics addressed by each Head of State or Government

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<th>Amount of speaking time spent on topic</th>
<th>Main focus/specific proposals</th>
<th>Topics addressed</th>
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<tr>
<td>Most</td>
<td>The European ideal and values, Brexit, internal market.</td>
<td>EU’s global role, Trade, EU History, Migration, Energy, Climate, Internal Market, Tax, Enlargement, Security, EU elections, MFF, Institutional issues, Brexit, Digital, Multilateralism, EMU, Food and health, Social Europe, Defence, Transport, Five scenarios, Competitiveness, Development of the press</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Strengthen CFSP, Protection of external borders, Reform of the CEAS, Completion of the Single Market and the single digital market, MFF.</td>
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<td>Convergence, completion of EMU and providing EU with needed resources. Specific proposal: A convergence mechanism to help a country improve its growth potential.</td>
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<td>European democracy and European sovereignty. Specific proposal: citizens’ consultations on the future of Europe</td>
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<td>Prosperity, security and European values. Specific proposal: a peer review mechanism on the rule of law</td>
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<td>Taxation, competitiveness, social policy.</td>
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