



From Bratislava to Rome

The European Council's role
in shaping a common future
for EU-27

IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The Rome Declaration of 25 March 2017, issued by the Heads of State or Government of the EU-27 on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome, marked the end of a process that started after the UK referendum on EU membership on 23 June 2016.

The aim of this In-depth Analysis is to assess the outcomes of the various EU-27 and European Council meetings in the period between the Bratislava summit of 16 September 2016 and the Rome summit of 25 March 2017, in relation to the objectives laid out in the Bratislava Declaration and Roadmap.

The analysis shows that substantial progress has been made on the Bratislava commitments for all three policy priorities listed – migration, security, and the economy. It also reflects on how the Rome Declaration and Bratislava process were shaped by the overall context of the growing concerns of EU citizens and their attitude towards the EU and demonstrates how the views of the different EU institutions and the various Member States have converged during this process, leading to a consensual Rome Declaration.

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Executive summary

The EU leaders' Rome Declaration of 25 March 2017, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Rome Treaties, marked the end of a process that started after the June 2016 UK referendum on EU membership. The point of departure for what could be called 'the road to Rome' process was a diagnosis of the reasons for the decline of the European Union's popularity with its citizens, and the objective to decide on the Union's short- to medium-term policy priorities. A first milestone was the meeting of 27 Heads of State or Government in Bratislava on 16 September 2016, focusing on the future of the EU at 27 and attempting to address the key policy priorities of concern to EU citizens. By doing this, leaders hoped to counter the disconnect between the people and political elites. They chose migration, security and the economy as the three main policy priorities for the Bratislava Roadmap — areas flagged up by recent surveys as principal concerns of this kind. Such policy priorities had in fact already occupied EU leaders' attention in previous years, many commitments in those areas having been part of the European Council's agenda to date.

The meeting in Bratislava also confirmed the twin-track approach, initiated after the UK referendum, whereby EU-27 leaders would meet in parallel to European Council meetings, the former concentrating their discussions on the future of Europe, while the latter debated EU policy priorities. The activities of the EU-27 leaders and the European Council have become inextricably linked. The reflection on the future of the EU went through three phases – diagnostics and reflection, deliberations and 'breaking taboos', and constructing the future – before culminating in the Rome Declaration. In the run-up to Rome, Heads of State or Government have addressed nearly all their Bratislava commitments and substantial progress had been made on most of them by the due date.

Groups of Member States, the European Parliament and the European Commission all contributed to shaping the final content of the Rome Declaration. The President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, and the successive holders of the rotating presidency of the Council of the EU in this period, Slovakia and Malta, took an especially active role in steering the process. The views of the European Union's institutions and of the various Member States have converged during this process, leading to a consensual Rome Declaration, where EU leaders pledged 'to listen and respond to the concerns expressed by [the] citizen.'

While the Rome Declaration reflects many of the statements included in the Bratislava Declaration and Roadmap, there were also some significant changes, such as the reorganisation of policy priorities. The Rome Declaration draws upon the Berlin Declaration of 2007, which commemorated the 50th anniversary of the signature of the Treaties of Rome, but important differences can be noted. These include the change of signatories, the reference to the EU citizens, the pledge to work together 'in a spirit of trust and cooperation' and the aim to 'promote a democratic, effective and transparent decision-making process and better delivery', which are all reflections of current debates taking place within the EU.

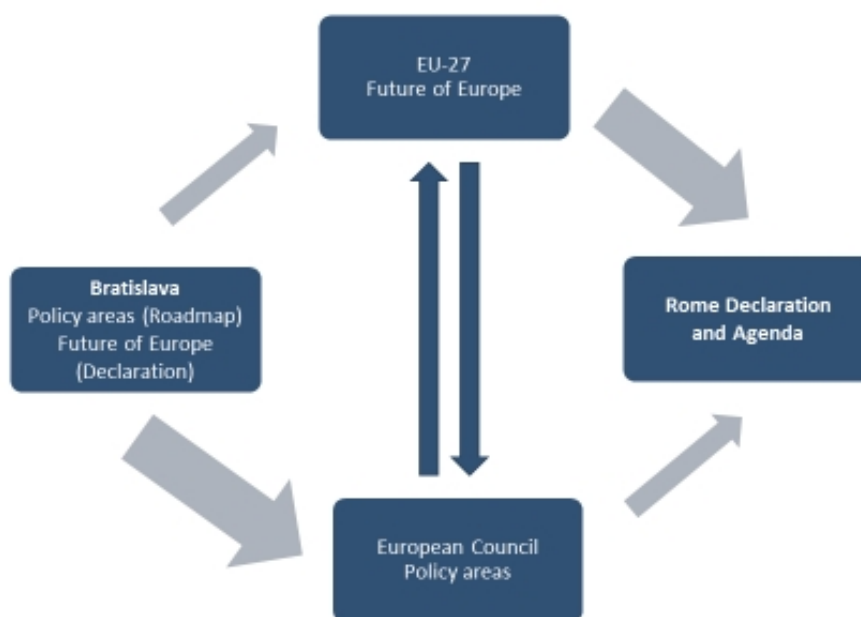
Although the Rome Declaration completed a process initiated on 29 June 2016, leaders will continue on the twin-track approach of parallel meetings in EU-27 and EU-28 formation. The European Council will regularly follow up on progress made on migration, internal and external security and economics. In their format of 27, EU leaders will focus on the future of the EU, as well as on the negotiations on the UK's withdrawal from the Union. The European Council meeting in December 2017 should offer further clarification on where the EU is headed.

Introduction

The Rome Declaration of 25 March 2017, which marked the 60th anniversary of the Rome Treaties, echoed its predecessor drawn up for the 50th anniversary, the [Berlin Declaration](#), in its celebration of the achievements of the European integration process. Leaders emphasised their unity and pledged to listen and respond to the citizen. It was the culmination of a reflection process on the future of the EU-27 that was launched after the UK referendum on EU membership held on 23 June 2016, in which 51.9 % (out of the 71.8 % of the electorate who voted) opted for the United Kingdom to leave the European Union. A practical consequence of the referendum result was that it led to parallel tracks for the EU leaders' meetings: meetings of the EU-28 on the one hand, and the 27 Heads of State or Government meeting without the United Kingdom on the other. As the European Council President, Donald Tusk, [concluded](#), the referendum result meant that the EU-27 became 'a fact of life'.

How this twin-track approach would work in practice became apparent in the [informal meeting](#) of 27 Heads of State or Government in Bratislava on 16 September 2016, when President Tusk [made clear](#) that the [Bratislava Declaration and Roadmap](#), which was the result of the informal EU-27 meeting, would also guide leaders' actions at the regular meetings of the European Council at 28. The meeting in Bratislava had two complementary, but different, focal points: the future of the EU at 27 and the key policy priorities of concern to EU citizens for the short to medium term (i.e. six months). This led to two accompanying documents, a declaration and a roadmap, each concentrating mainly on one of these two dimensions. While the declaration looked more at the future of the 'EU at 27', the roadmap looked mainly at policy priorities for the short to medium term.

Figure 1: Process leading to the Rome Declaration and Agenda



As illustrated in Figure 1, the two dimensions discussed by EU leaders in Bratislava, the 'future of Europe' and 'EU policy priorities', were followed up by two parallel processes: meetings of EU-27 leaders on the one hand, and meetings of the European Council at 28 on the other. The activities of the EU-27 leaders and of the European Council became inextricably linked, as the priorities and decisions of one would directly impact on the other. This analysis considers the activities of both the European Council at 28 and the meetings of EU-27, as well as the interaction between them.

The Rome Declaration incorporates the results of both processes, as it addresses, on the one hand, how to turn its vision for the EU into reality, and, on the other, how to take forward the work on the policy areas identified in the Bratislava Roadmap. The 'Rome Agenda', which is part of the Rome Declaration, outlines the four policy areas on which EU leaders pledge to work, without setting clear deadlines.

The Bratislava commitments were largely fulfilled for all three policy priorities listed therein. This was also due to the central role of the President of the European Council in building consensus between the different actors throughout the process. At the meetings of EU leaders, both in the 27 and the 28 formation, the successive holders of the rotating presidency of the Council of the EU, Slovakia and Malta, also took an especially active role in steering the process.

The views of the different EU institutions and the various Member States have converged along the process, leading to a consensual Rome Declaration. The extent to which the European Parliament's priorities have been taken into account in the Rome Declaration is evidence of the cooperation among Institutions and Member States, which has been called for in the whole process from Bratislava to Rome.

This publication assesses the outcomes of the EU-27 and European Council meetings in the period between the Bratislava and the Rome meetings, in relation to the objectives laid out in the Bratislava Declaration and Roadmap. It includes an examination of the Rome Declaration and the accompanying Agenda as an outcome of the Bratislava process, while also reflecting on how they were shaped by the overall context of the growing concerns of EU citizens and their attitude towards the EU.

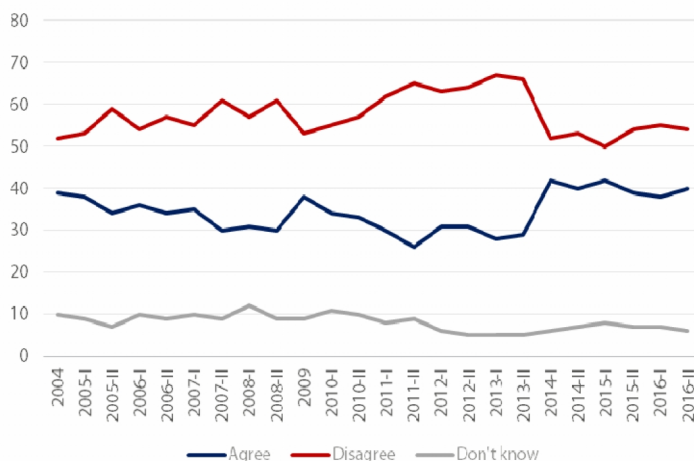
After looking at EU citizens' views and concerns in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 outlines the different phases in the reflection process on the future of the EU-27, while Chapter 3 examines developments in the three policy areas identified by the Bratislava Roadmap (migration and external borders, internal and external security, and economic and social development, including youth). Chapter 4 and 5 bring the two dimensions back together when examining the Rome Declaration, providing an overall analysis and giving an outlook for the future of the EU-27 process launched in Rome.

The activities of the European Council between the Bratislava and Rome meetings are thus placed into context, outlining where the policy objectives in the Bratislava Roadmap (and later in Rome) were a continuation of previous objectives agreed by Heads of State or Government, and where they presented new initiatives. While the focus clearly lies on the activities of the European Council, the activities and inputs of other actors (such as EU institutions and Member States) are taken into consideration to the extent that these had a direct impact on the decisions of the EU leaders and on the content of the Rome Declaration and Agenda.

1. Citizens' expectations paving the way to Rome

The Bratislava process was set in motion on 26 June 2016 following the UK vote to leave the European Union (see Chapter 2). The President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, [said](#) that the Brexit vote is not a 'specifically British issue', but rather represented 'a desperate attempt to answer the questions that millions of Europeans ask themselves daily'. Experts identified a 'disaffection of voters who believed that they no longer controlled their leaders and that their leaders themselves no longer controlled events'.¹

Figure 2: Responses to the question 'My voice counts in the EU' (Source: Eurobarometer 86)

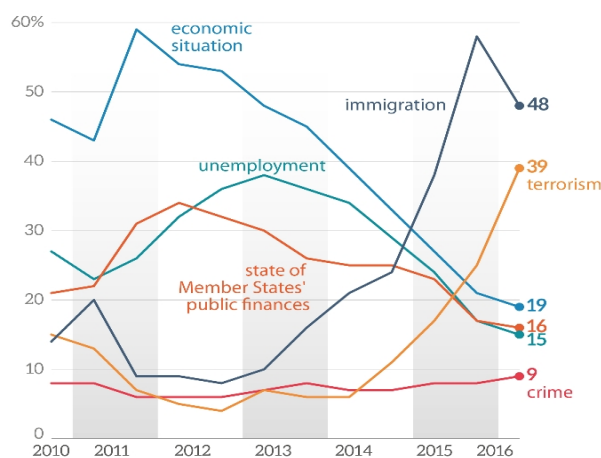


Citizens' disaffection was demonstrated both by the Brexit vote and by feelings of disengagement reported by citizens around Europe. Over half of EU citizens feel their voice does not count in Europe. While this proportion was higher during the financial crisis in Europe, reaching a peak of 68 % in 2013, it has increased slightly since the beginning of the migration crisis in 2015 (See Figure 2).

1.1 Citizens' expectations and policy concerns

The Bratislava Declaration emphasises the importance of taking account of citizens' views in creating a common future for Europe (see Chapter 3) and calls for behavioural change by EU institutions and Member States in order to respond to citizens' concerns. The EU leaders said they should 'focus on citizens' expectations' and offer them 'a vision of an attractive EU they can trust and support.'

Figure 3: Political concerns of EU citizens (Source: Eurobarometer 86)



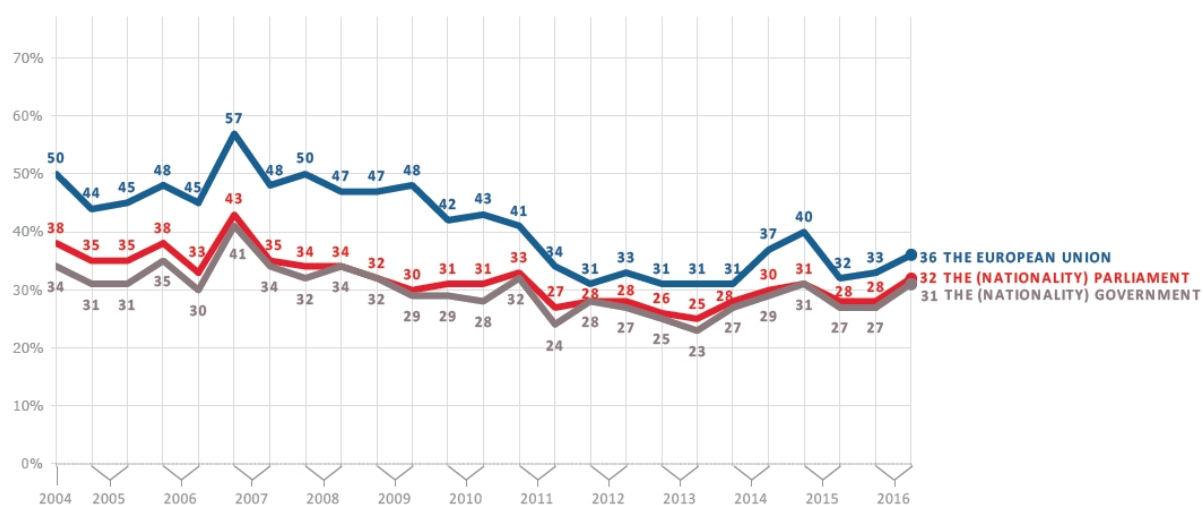
By focusing on citizens' concerns, leaders hoped to counter the impression of a disconnection between the people and political elites. Therefore, they chose migration, security and the economy as the three main policy priorities in the Bratislava roadmap (see Chapter 3), as those reflect the three main concerns of EU citizens as expressed in recent Eurobarometer surveys (see Figure 3). Concerns over immigration have spiked since 2014, while worries about the economic situation have declined since 2011 and the fear of terrorism has increased substantially since 2014.

¹ See Eurocomment's European Council Briefing Note 2016/4-5.

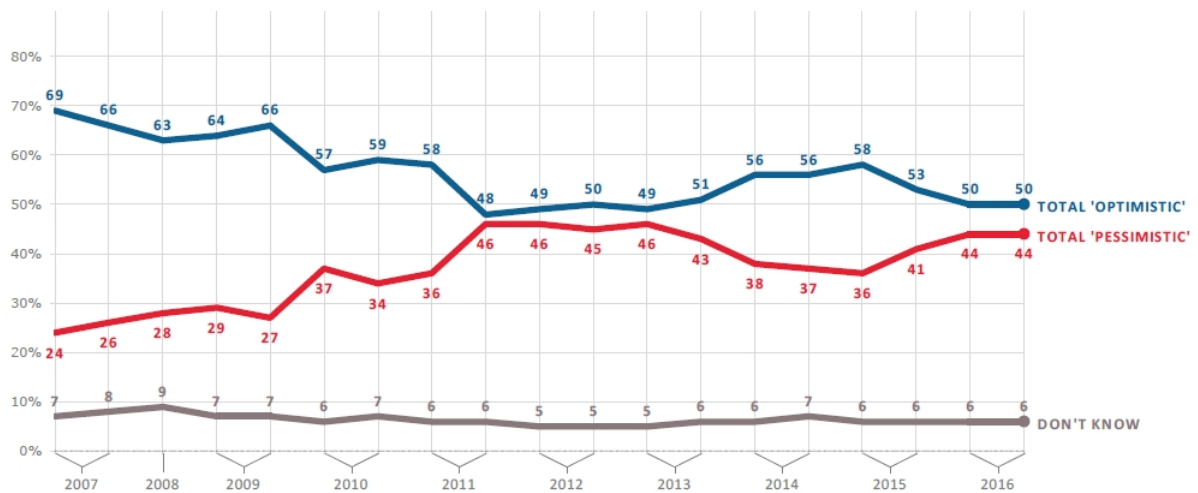
1.2 Citizens' expectations and the future of Europe

The importance of taking account of citizens' concerns was reiterated on a number of occasions throughout the Bratislava process. After the European Council [meeting](#) of 20-21 October 2016, Heads of State or Government reaffirmed their commitment to 'taking into account the concerns of [EU] citizens' in the context of international trade'. President Tusk's [letter of invitation](#) to the 27 Heads of State or Government ahead of the informal European Council [meeting](#) of 3 February 2017 in Valletta, Malta, also addressed citizens' concerns about the EU and the threat posed by rising anti-EU and nationalist sentiment in Europe. 'National egoism is also becoming an attractive alternative to integration', according to Tusk, and countering this rising egoism is a driving force behind the aim of the Bratislava process to offer a vision of an attractive EU that citizens can both trust and believe in.

Figure 4: Trust in institutions (Source: Eurobarometer 86)



Trust in the EU has traditionally been higher than trust in national governments, but as Figure 4 shows, both the absolute level of trust and the gap between trust in the EU and in national governments have fallen over the past decade. The proportion of citizens who trust the EU has fallen from a high of 57 % in 2007 (16 percentage points above trust in national governments) to 36 % in the most recent survey in 2016, at just five percentage points above national governments.

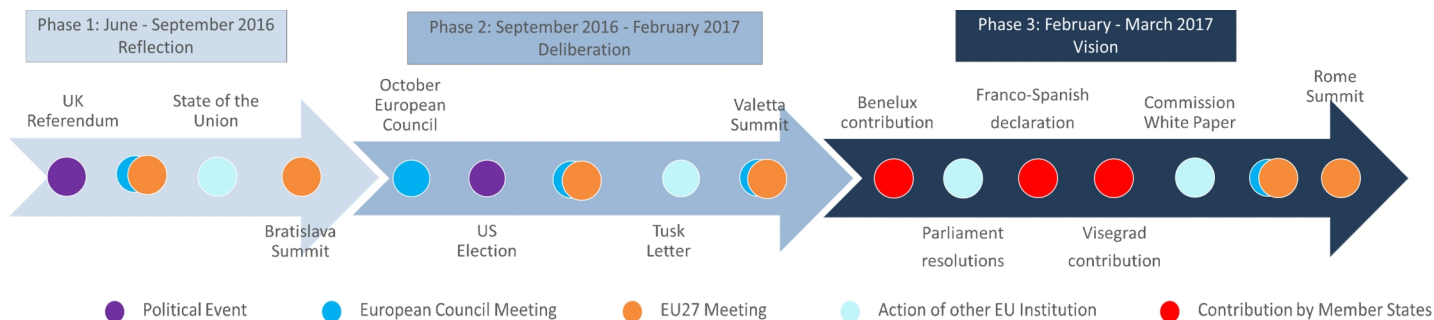
Figure 5: Attitudes about the future of the EU (Source: Eurobarometer 86)

Like trust, optimism about the future of the EU decreased over the course of the financial crisis before starting to recover in late 2013. In 2015, with the beginning of the migration crisis in Europe, optimism about the EU's future once again declined (see Figure 5). Reversing the decline in both trust and belief in European integration has been a core aim of EU leaders as they have sought to define their vision for the future of the EU. [Analysts](#) believe that mainstream European politicians need foresight and a persuasive narrative explaining why European integration continues to be a 'win-win' option for the Member States and their citizens.

2. The road to Rome: The future of EU-27

The Rome Declaration is the culmination of a process initiated after the UK referendum of 23 June 2016 by the [informal meeting](#) of 27 Heads of State or Government on 29 June 2016. It can be divided into three phases, as shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Key developments in the debate on the future of



The **first phase** was launched immediately after the UK voted to leave the European Union last June and ended in Bratislava on 16 September 2016. During this first phase, the [focus](#) was on 'the political and practical implications of 'Brexit'', as EU leaders tried to understand the reasons leading to the result of the referendum, and initiated an overall reflection on the state of the European Union.

Phase two started just after the Bratislava meeting, where the short- to medium-term policy priorities were set, and lasted until the subsequent informal meetings of the European Council at 28 and of the 27 Heads of State or Government without the UK in Valletta, Malta, on 3 February 2017. During this phase, EU leaders concentrated on 1) addressing citizens' expectations (see Chapter 1), 2) achieving concrete results on the policy priorities of the Bratislava roadmap (see Chapter 3) and 3) starting to deliberate about the future of Europe.

During **phase three**, which started after the Valletta summit and culminated at the meeting on 25 March 2017 celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome, EU leaders designed their long-term vision for the EU-27, which they then presented in the Rome Declaration and Agenda.

2.1 Phase one: Diagnostics and reflection

At the beginning of this phase, the focus was mainly on defining the EU's position towards the UK following the referendum outcome. Leaders attempted to diagnose why the EU is not as popular with its citizens today as it has been in the past (see Chapter 1); to consider what can be done to rectify this; and to decide on the short- to medium-term policy priorities for the EU. Once the diagnosis was completed, EU leaders could concentrate on the latter two aspects, which they then addressed in the Bratislava Declaration and Roadmap.

In his [invitation letter](#) to the members of the European Council for their meeting of 28 June 2016, the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, made it clear that 'due to the negative outcome of the UK referendum, we will mostly need to devote our European Council to a discussion on its political consequences'. In the [statement](#) issued after their first informal meeting, on 29 June 2016, without the participation of the UK Prime Minister, the 27 leaders concluded that 'many people express dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs, be it at the European or national level. Europeans expect us to do better when it comes to providing security, jobs and growth, as well as hope for a better future. We need to deliver on this, in a way that unites us, not least in the interest of the young'. They therefore 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'.

The first milestone in this reflection process was the [informal meeting](#) of 27 Heads of State or Government on 16 September 2016 in Bratislava. In the aftermath of the uncertainty following the outcome of the UK referendum, the EU's stated priority for the meeting in Bratislava was 'to show unity'. The President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, set the scene prior to the meeting in Bratislava. In his invitation [letter](#), he argued that 'this is not about new treaties or procedural changes. What we need is a strong political will and imagination.' He called for 'more responsibility for the Union in national capitals' and 'a change of attitude of national governments towards the European Union'.

As they were in a reflection phase, the Bratislava Roadmap concentrated on the short-term priorities that the Heads of State or Government wanted to address over the coming months (see Chapter 3). The leaders still had to develop a long-term vision for the EU-27, in line with their declared aim to finalise the process at the March 2017 celebrations of the 60th anniversary of the Rome Treaties. The messages about the future of Europe coming out of Bratislava were, first, that Member States need the EU; second, that as leaders, they need to improve communication among Member States, with EU institutions and with the citizens, in order to combat the apparent disconnection between voters, their leaders and the rest of Europe; and third, that more focus is needed on citizens' expectations, to restore trust and belief in the European Union.

2.2 Phase two: Deliberation and 'breaking taboos'

The second phase started after the September 2016 Bratislava summit and ended with the [informal EU-27 meeting](#) in Valetta on 3 February 2017. This phase concentrated on the political priorities of the Bratislava Roadmap (see Chapter 3), on a deliberation on the future of Europe by the Member States and EU institutions, and behind the scenes preparations for the Valetta summit, which turned out to be a significant milestone in preparing the groundwork for the Rome Declaration.

The discussions at the informal meeting in Valletta were based on an informal [concept paper](#) and President Tusk's invitation letter, in which he outlined his views on the future of Europe. He argued that 'the challenges currently facing the European Union are more dangerous than ever before in the time since the signature of the Treaties of Rome' and therefore 'the most important signal that should come out of Rome is that of readiness of the 27 to be united'. In his view, some of the declarations of the new US administration contributed to the need for Heads of State or Government to close ranks (see Chapter 5) and he therefore called for 'assertive and spectacular steps that would change the collective emotions and revive the aspiration to raise European integration to the next level'. Consequently, some experts are of the opinion that the election results in the United States of America 'served as a wake-up call' for EU leaders.²

The informal concept paper and the discussions in Valletta already included some of the elements which would later feature in the Rome Declaration, and consequently in the long-term vision for the EU-27, such as:

- a reference to the joint EU history and its achievements;
- a strong reaffirmation of the fundamental values of the EU;
- the 27 Member States' determination to remain united;
- the need to deliver on the issues which most concern European citizens.

EU leaders also [discussed](#) the possibility of acknowledging in the Rome Declaration a European Union of different speeds, which until then had remained a taboo topic between Heads of State or Government. In June 2016, the European Parliament [expressed](#) its view that 'there is a need to reform the Union, making it better and more democratic' and that 'while some Member States may choose to

² See Eurocomment's European Council Briefing Note 2016/7.

integrate more slowly or to a lesser extent, the core of the EU must be reinforced and à la carte solutions should be avoided'.

Prior to Valetta, the regular European Council meetings held in October and December 2016 did not advance on the issue of the future of Europe. This was mainly because EU leaders did not meet in the EU-27 format in October, and although they briefly met without the UK after the [15 December 2016 European Council](#), they only discussed the practicalities of the negotiation process once the UK had invoked Article 50 TEU, and not the future of the EU-27.

2.3 Phase three: Constructing a long-term vision

Phase three, beginning after the Valetta summit of 3 February 2017 and lasting until the Rome summit of 25 March 2017, was marked by an increase in contributions and statements from EU institutions and Member States on the future of Europe, a convergence of views and a concretisation of the long-term vision which was then presented in the Rome Declaration.

During this phase, the Commission's white paper on the future of Europe (see Chapter 5) [presented](#) five possible scenarios for Europe by 2025: 'carrying on', 'nothing but the single market', 'those who want more do more', 'doing less more efficiently' and 'doing much more together'; thus covering the whole spectrum of options for the EU leaders to decide upon – from concentrating only on the single market, through a multi-speed Europe, to increased power-sharing between the EU and the Member States.

The European Parliament contributed to the discussions with three resolutions: on improving the functioning of the European Union building on the [potential](#) of the Lisbon Treaty (rapporteurs: Mercedes Bresso, S&D, Italy and Elmar Brok, EPP, Germany), on possible evolutions of and adjustments to the current [institutional set-up](#) of the European Union (rapporteur: Guy Verhofstadt, ALDE, Belgium) and on a [budgetary capacity](#) for the Eurozone (rapporteurs: Reimer Böge, EPP, Germany and Pervenche Berès, S&D, France) (see Chapter 5).

In this phase, Member States became increasingly active in voicing their opinion on the future of Europe and their vision for the Rome Declaration. For example, the leaders of France, Germany, Italy and Spain held a [meeting](#) in March in Versailles, France. When looking at the [statement](#) of the Visegrad countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia), the [vision](#) outlined by the Benelux countries (Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg) and the Franco-Spanish [Declaration](#), one can clearly identify a number of common elements. One also recognises the Berlin Declaration (see Chapter 4) as a source of inspiration. However, while all of these contributions reference the Bratislava Declaration and Roadmap, only the Visegrad statement makes a direct link to the Berlin Declaration.

All three contributions highlight the EU's achievements (for example, peace, security and prosperity), recall the values of the EU (human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights), and address the global and internal challenges, before concluding that the EU is the best way to address them. The different groups of Member States all highlight the EU's need to respond to the concerns and expectations of its citizens (see Chapter 1).

The biggest difference in Member States' contributions lay in the importance attributed to the respective policy priorities. While some stressed the social and environmental dimensions (Franco-Spanish declaration), others focused more on the single market (Visegrad). Another difference was to be found in the views regarding the role and functioning of the EU's institutions. While the Benelux countries stressed democratic and transparent decision-making processes and the importance of the community method, the Visegrad countries emphasised the role of the European Council in 'setting major political objectives', in particular when issues are discussed that are of major national interest to Member States. The latter group also insisted that control over legislative and political processes of the EU at national level must be strengthened.

At the [informal meeting](#) of the 27 Heads of State or Government on 10 March 2017, the content of what was to become the Rome Declaration was already far advanced. The first [draft text](#), co-authored by the President of the European Council, the Maltese Government, holder of the rotating Council presidency, and the Italian Government hosting the celebrations, was discussed by EU leaders and then structured in three parts: 'achievements of the EU', 'new challenges facing the EU' and 'the Rome Agenda'. The first section looked at the past and the successes of the Union, such as the free movement of people, goods, services and capital, a single currency and a common space of freedom security and justice. The second section outlined today's challenges for the EU, including terrorism, growing migration pressures and social and economic inequalities. The third section set forth a long-term vision for the next 10 years, resulting in a 'safe and secure European Union', a 'prosperous and sustainable European Union', a 'social European Union' and a 'stronger European Union in the world'. In the Rome Declaration, the EU leaders have identified migration, security and economic and social development as policy priorities, just as they did in the Bratislava Declaration and Roadmap. However, they grouped them as four policy priorities by splitting economic and social development into two different policy areas (see Chapter 4).

The issue of a 'multi-speed Europe' or 'enhanced cooperation' was discussed with particular intensity in the run-up to the 9 March 2017 European Council. While restating the need for unity and 'preserving the integrity of the single market, the Schengen area, and the EU as a whole', the draft text also envisaged the possibility for groups of Member States 'to move closer, further and faster in some areas, keeping the door open to those who want to join later'. Prior to the meeting, many EU leaders expressed their support for the idea, including [Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker](#), [German Chancellor Angela Merkel](#), [French President François Hollande](#), and [Maltese Prime Minister Joseph Muscat](#), as well as the [Benelux Prime Ministers](#). While being open to enhanced cooperation, the Visegrad Group [stressed](#) that it 'should be open to every Member State and should strictly avoid any kind of disintegration of Single Market, Schengen area and the European Union itself.' Some Member States' leaders, such as the President of Romania, Klaus Iohannis, and the Prime Minister of Poland, Beata Szydło, expressed their [concerns](#) about the idea of a multi-speed Europe as they feared that it could gradually lead to the disintegration of the EU. As a consequence, the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, after the informal meeting of the 27 Heads of State or Government on 10 March 2017, [attempted](#) to alleviate the reservations that such a 'multi-speed Europe' scenario would introduce a new dividing-line between Member States.

3. The road to Rome: EU policy priorities

A series of summits in preparation of the Rome Declaration followed the Bratislava meeting, some in the EU-27 leaders' constellation and some with the 28 Heads of State or Government (see Figure 7). The EU-27 formation mainly discussed the future of Europe (see Chapter 2), while the European Council meetings concentrated on 'delivering on the policy priorities' as identified in the Bratislava Roadmap. This chapter outlines the policy commitments undertaken in the Bratislava Roadmap, which include both the policy objectives and the specific measures, and analyses the outcome of the subsequent European Council meetings.

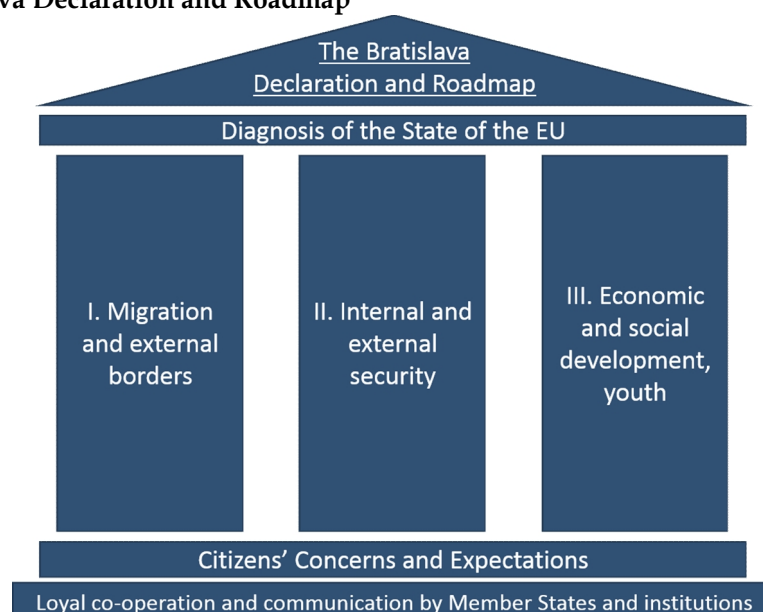
Figure 7: Main meetings of EU leaders from Bratislava to Rome



3.1 Informal meeting of 27 Heads of State or Government in Bratislava of 16 September 2016

At the informal meeting of 27 Heads of State or Government without the UK on 16 September 2016 in Bratislava, EU leaders 'diagnos[ed] together the present state of the European Union and discuss[ed] the EU's] common future. In the resulting Bratislava Declaration and accompanying Roadmap, Heads of State or Government committed themselves to 'improve the communication with each other – among Member States, with EU institutions 'and 'focus on citizens' expectations' (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Bratislava Declaration and Roadmap



They also agreed on key priorities for the coming months which better served the citizens' needs (see Chapter 1), namely: migration and external borders; internal and external security; and economic and social development, including youth, and stated the corresponding specific objectives and proposed concrete measures to achieve them (see Table 1).

Table 1: Summary of the main objectives and concrete measures in the policy areas

Policy area: Migration and external borders	
Objectives	Concrete measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further bring down number of irregular migrants • Ensure full control of the EU's external borders and get back to Schengen • Broaden EU consensus on long-term migration policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) full commitment to implementing the EU-Turkey statement and support the countries of the Western Balkans; b) assistance to Bulgaria's border protection with Turkey, and continue support to other frontline States; c) full capacity for rapid reaction of the European Border and Coast Guard; d) migration compacts with third countries to lead to reduced flows of illegal migration and increased return rates; e) broaden EU consensus in terms of long-term migration policy, including the principles of responsibility and solidarity in the future
Policy area: Internal and external security	
Objectives	Concrete measures
Internal security <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Member States in ensuring internal security and fighting terrorism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) intensified cooperation and information-exchange among security services of the Member States b) adoption of the necessary measures to ensure that all persons, including nationals from EU Member States, crossing the Union's external borders will be checked against the relevant databases, that must be interconnected c) start to set up a European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) to allow for advance checks and, if necessary, deny entry of visa-exempt travellers d) a systematic effort against radicalisation, including through expulsions and entry bans where warranted as well as EU support to Member States' actions in prevention
External security <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen EU cooperation on external security and defence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) decide on a concrete implementation plan on security and defence and on how to make better use of the options in the Treaties, especially as regards capabilities b) start implementing the joint declaration with NATO immediately
Policy area: Economic and social development, youth	
Objectives	Concrete measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a promising economic future for all, safeguard our way of life and provide better opportunities for youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) decision on the European Fund for Strategic Investment b) review progress on the different Single Market strategies (Digital Single Market, Capital Markets Union, Energy Union) c) address how to ensure a robust trade policy that reaps the benefits of open markets while taking into account concerns of citizens d) decisions on EU support fighting youth unemployment

EU leaders decided to concentrate on these specific three policy priorities for two main reasons: the importance attached to them by EU citizens (see Chapter 1) and previous [commitments](#) in the European Council conclusions. The latter, in particular the commitments to return to specific policy issues, created a *rolling agenda*, which necessarily needed to be incorporated when deciding on the priorities for the European Council for the next six months. Experts argue that 'the promises which

the Heads of State or Government underwrote at Bratislava... are based in many if not most cases on work which is already in train.³ The policy areas selected at Bratislava can also be seen as a continuation of the European Council conclusions of June 2016 where 'the migratory crisis, deepening of the single market to boost growth and jobs, and enhancing the security of the EU' were the main [agenda points](#).

Migration and external borders

The priorities outlined for the policy field of migration and external borders need to be seen in the context of the height of the migration crisis (2015-2016) and the numerous [commitments](#) undertaken by the European Council in that period. As a consequence of this high level of activity, many of the commitments made at Bratislava are continuations of prior policy decisions:

- The objective of 'bringing down number of irregular migrants', has been explicitly mentioned by EU leaders at nearly every European Council meeting since June 2015;
- The need to 'broaden consensus on long-term migration policy and apply the principles of responsibility and solidarity' has been coming up in European Council [debates](#) since the beginning of the migration crisis. At Bratislava, the new dimension was the Visegrad countries' proposal for 'flexible solidarity', meaning that Member States could decide for themselves if and how they would like to contribute to migration policy, based on their experience and potential;
- Supporting frontline Member States with additional resources was one of the first European Council [decisions](#) since the onset of the migration crisis;
- The idea of a European coast and border guard had been repeatedly discussed in the European Council since October 2015.

Internal and external security

In Bratislava, EU leaders confirmed the nexus between internal and external security, regularly [reflected](#) in the [outcome](#) of their meetings since 2015, while recognising the need to prioritise action in these two interconnected areas. With regard to internal security, the aim of the Bratislava Roadmap is to support Member States in their efforts to ensure security and fight terrorism. EU leaders agreed on five commitments, outlined in Table 1. Only the [European Travel Information and Authorisation System](#) (ETIAS) represents a new commitment, first mentioned by European Commission President Juncker in his September 2016 [State of the Union](#) address to the European Parliament, several days prior to the Bratislava summit. In the past, the European Council has regularly addressed the other four commitments, particularly in the context of the follow up of progress made in implementing the [European Agenda on Security](#) and the [European Union Internal Security Strategy 2015 -2020](#).

On external security, the 27 Heads of State or Government called to strengthen European defence cooperation, reiterating similar [appeals](#) made at four European Councils held since December 2012. Commitments made in Bratislava were neither new nor [ambitious](#) but, with one exception, were achievable prior to the March 2017 celebrations of the 60th anniversary of the Rome Treaties. Indeed, the reflection process on the definition of an implementation plan on security and defence aimed at operationalising the defence and security component of the [EU Global Strategy](#) that had already been set in motion and which was based on the June 2016 European Council mandate. The same reasoning applied to EU-NATO cooperation, previously discussed at all four European Councils on defence since December 2012, and where the [June 2016 European Council](#) called for a new impetus, based on a joint document which was to be released at the July 2016 [NATO Warsaw Summit](#). Several Member States asked for a [decision](#) on the better use of Lisbon Treaty provisions on CSDP, a non-consensual item, which [analysts](#) considered unlikely to be discussed by the EU leaders. The invitation letters sent

³ See Eurocomment's European Council Briefing Note 2016/4-5.

by Donald Tusk, prior to both the [Bratislava Summit](#) and the [December 2016](#) European Council did not refer to this latter commitment, thus excluding the possibility of a discussion on the maximisation of the Lisbon Treaty provisions – an item the European Parliament repeatedly [called](#) for in its resolutions.

Economic and social development, youth

While economics and unemployment are not as high on the list of priorities for citizens as they were at the height of the financial crisis, they are still a source of concern for the European public (see Chapter 1). Moreover, these issues have been a mainstay of the European Council agenda, and the high number of commitments in this area made at previous [summits](#) meant a prominent place in the Bratislava process was inevitable.

The broad objective in the area of economic and social development and youth in the Bratislava Roadmap is to '[c]reate a promising economic future for all, safeguard our way of life and provide better opportunities for youth'. The Roadmap gives four short-term measures to achieve this. The first concerns extending the European Fund for Strategic Investment (EFSI). The EFSI is one of the pillars of the Investment Plan, aiming to boost growth and increase employment by mobilising €315 billion in investment over a three-year period (2015-2018). Monitoring the EFSI has appeared regularly on the European Council agenda since the proposal was launched in December 2014. The second measure concerns reviewing the progress made on implementing Single Market strategies (including Digital Single Market, Capital Markets Union and Energy Union). The different single market strategies have often been discussed by the European Council; in their June 2016 meeting, EU leaders called for the various strategies to be all completed by 2018. The third measure, ensuring 'a robust trade policy that reaps the benefits of open markets while taking into account concerns of citizens', has been addressed by the European Council in various ways before. The short-term goals targeted by the Heads of State or Government in this area included finalising agreement on the EU-Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) and the modernisation of trade defence instruments. This last point in particular aims to address the concerns of citizens, by protecting the EU from unfair trading practices that will hurt European workers.

The final measure calls for the European Council to make 'decisions on EU support for Member States in fighting youth unemployment and on enhanced EU programmes dedicated to youth' in December 2016. Once again, youth unemployment has already been discussed on a number of occasions at European Council meetings, and unemployment was reported as one of the main concerns of EU citizens (see Chapter 1). The Bratislava Summit came just after the Commission, on 14 September 2016, proposed increased funding for Youth Employment Initiative (YEI).

In the Bratislava Roadmap, Heads of State or Government underlined that this was only the first summit in a process that would culminate in the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome in March 2017. Subsequent European Council meetings would allow for concrete follow-up on the priority themes and some specific actions and deadlines were already mentioned in the Bratislava Roadmap (see Table 2).

Table 2: Bratislava Roadmap timeline for European Council follow-up on main policy issues

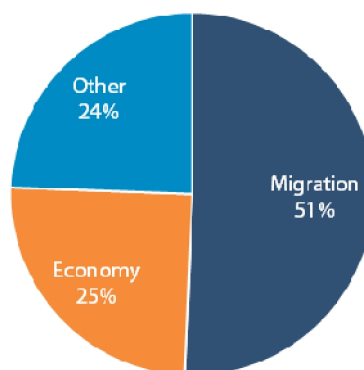
Date	Principal Topic(s)	Action
October 2016	Trade policy	Addressing the benefits of open markets and taking citizens' concerns into account
December 2016	Security and Defence	Decide on a concrete implementation plan
December 2016	European Fund for Strategic Investment	Decision on extension based on evaluation so far
December	Fighting youth unemployment	Decisions on EU support for Member States

Date	Principal Topic(s)	Action
2016		
Spring 2017	Single Market strategies (including Digital Single Market, Capital Markets Union, Energy Union)	Review progress

3.2 European Council of 20-21 October 2016

The [European Council of 20-21 October 2016](#) was the first formal European Council meeting since Bratislava, and it demonstrated how meetings in the EU-27 format would shape the European Council's agenda. Donald Tusk had already [made clear](#) that the Bratislava Declaration and Roadmap would guide leaders' actions at their regular European Council meetings. The Bratislava Roadmap agreed that the 'coming formal European Council meetings will allow for concrete follow up'. A similar instructions was included in the concept paper, namely that the June 2017 European Council should be used for the 'operational follow up' of the Rome Declaration.

Figure 9: Topics addressed by the European Council of 20-21 October 2016



As outlined in Figure 9, over half of the 20-21 October 2016 European Council conclusions were dedicated to migration.⁴ EU leaders directly addressed eight of the nine commitments for the migration and external borders priority (one had already been delivered).⁵ They stated that 'more efforts are needed to stem the flows of irregular migration' and stressed the need for 'the further implementation of the EU-Turkey statement and continued support for countries along the Western Balkans route'. They recalled that the European Border and Coast Guard Regulation entered into force on 6 October 2016 and contributes to 'strengthening control of [the EU's] external borders' and in getting 'back to Schengen'. The aim was to 'reach full capacity for rapid reaction and returns by the end of the year'. EU leaders also recalled 'the importance of continuing to work towards the implementation of a Partnership Framework of cooperation with individual countries of origin or transit' and invited the High Representative 'to present at the December European Council meeting progress with the five selected African countries and the first results achieved in terms of arrivals and returns'. They also invited 'all actors to continue close cooperation on the compacts with a view to intensifying operational delivery, and Member States to reinforce national administrative processes for returns' and recognised 'the significant contribution, including of financial nature, made by the frontline Member States'. The European Council also called 'for work to be continued on the reform of the Common European Asylum System, including on how to apply the principles of responsibility and solidarity in the future' and agreed to 'revert to the issue in December' 2016. EU leaders also

⁴ The percentage calculation for all policy related figures is based on word count of European Council conclusions.

⁵ EU assistance to Bulgaria was already provided before the meeting.

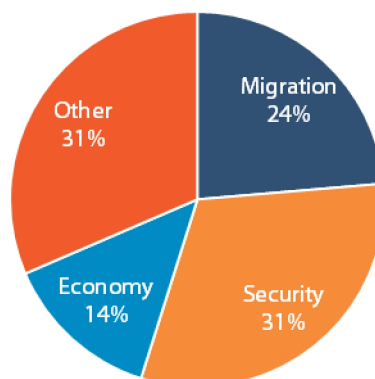
addressed ETIAS, but in contrast to the Bratislava roadmap, which placed the issue under internal security, the October European Council discussed it in the context of migration.

The October 2016 European Council also resulted in action on two economic commitments from Bratislava, both of which were met by the deadline stipulated in the roadmap. In line with their commitment to a decision on the extension of the European Fund for Strategic Investment, the Heads of State or Government called on the Council to adopt its position on EFSI. The Council agreed to extend the fund at the Economic and Financial Affairs Council [meeting](#) held in December 2016.

In line with their commitment to ensure a robust trade policy taking into account citizens' concerns, EU leaders also called on the Council to agree on modernisation of trade defence instruments, and called for a swift decision on CETA. They said that 'the EU will continue to address citizens' concerns', such as tackling unfair trading practices which threaten EU jobs. The Council agreed its [position](#) on modernisation of trade defence instruments in December. CETA was [approved](#) and signed in October by the Council, and [approved](#) by the European Parliament in February 2017.

3.3 European Council of 15 December 2016

The [European Council of 15 December 2016](#) continued addressing most commitments of the migration and external borders dimension as outlined in the Bratislava Roadmap. EU leaders reiterated their 'commitment to the EU-Turkey statement', underlining 'the importance of a full and non-discriminatory implementation of all aspects' and reiterated their 'pledge to continue support for the countries along the Western Balkans route'. Heads of State or Government acknowledged the importance of the partnership framework on migration, envisaging also the possibility of additional compacts, or other forms of cooperation, called 'upon Member States to continue and step up their engagement under the Partnership Framework' and promised to 'keep progress on stemming the flows and improving return rates under close review'. They recalled that 'the effective application of the principles of responsibility and solidarity remains a shared objective'. Sustained efforts over the past months to review the Common European Asylum System had shown some areas of convergence, while other areas required further work. Building on this work, they invited the Council to continue the process with the aim of achieving consensus on the EU's asylum policy during the Maltese Presidency. EU leaders recalled 'the importance of adequate resources being put at the disposal of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and the European Border and Coast Guard.' While they did not mention the objective of ensuring 'full control of EU's external borders and get back to Schengen' when discussing migration, during their debate on security they welcomed the agreement on the revised Schengen Borders Code enforcing systematic controls on all travellers crossing EU external borders. The conclusions did not refer to the commitment of supporting frontline Member States.

Figure 10: Topics addressed by the European Council of 15 December 2016

Nearly 30 % of the conclusions of the European Council of December 2016 were dedicated to internal and external security (see Figure 10).⁶ With respect to the former, EU leaders progressed on all commitments undertaken in Bratislava. On countering terrorism, the European Council noted the [agreement](#) reached by the co-legislators with respect to the [Counter-Terrorism Directive](#), which was [adopted](#) on 15 March 2017. As regards the external borders, the European Council welcomed the [agreement](#) of the co-legislators on a revised Schengen Border Code, which will allow systematic checks against relevant databases of all persons crossing the EU external borders. The Heads of State or Government also called upon the co-legislators to agree in 2017 on ETIAS, based on the November 2016 European Commission [proposal](#), as well as on the [Entry/Exit System](#), based on the April 2016 European Commission [proposal](#).

On external security, the [December 2016 European Council](#) led to action on two of the Bratislava Roadmap commitments. First, EU leaders agreed on an implementation plan which builds on the general lines agreed at the 14 November 2016 [Foreign Affairs Council](#) based on an [Implementation Plan for Security and Defence](#) (IPSD) presented by the High Representative/Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP), Federica Mogherini. EU leaders renewed the practice of setting clear deadlines for a number of specific actions (e.g. revision of the [Athena Mechanism](#) by the end of 2017); a practice last used extensively at the [milestone](#) December 2013 European Council on defence. The second Bratislava Roadmap commitment in the area of external security the Heads of State or Government focused on, was EU-NATO cooperation. They referred to the Economic and Financial Affairs Council of 6 December 2016 which agreed on the [implementing principles](#) of the Warsaw Joint Declaration, called for immediate follow up action, and agreed to assess implementation progress at their upcoming meetings. As [expected](#), EU leaders did not hold a general discussion on the better use of the Lisbon Treaty provisions on CSDP. They only tasked the HR/VP, as part of the above mentioned implementation plan, to present options to maximize the Permanent Structured Cooperation mechanism introduced by the Lisbon Treaty (Articles 42(6) and 46 TEU, and Protocol No 10).

In addition, EU leaders welcomed the [European Defence Action Plan](#) (EDAP) presented in November 2016 by the European Commission. The EDAP represents the most [far-reaching](#) progress yet on defence/external security of the summit and confirms the change of mind-set initiated in [June 2015](#), when the European Council specifically called for defence research and technology expenditure to be funded from the EU budget. The EDAP [allows](#) a timely synthesis between the community method (i.e. the 'research window' allowing funding for defence research to come from the EU budget) and the intergovernmental method (i.e. 'capability window' allowing Member States, through a forthcoming European Defence Fund, to purchase certain assets in common, such as drones or

⁶ The percentage calculation for all policy related figures is based on word count of European Council conclusions.

helicopters). It also [continues](#) work started following the [December 2012](#) European Council in strengthening the defence market and industry. Overall, EU leaders [reiterated](#) previous calls to spend more on security and defence and confirmed, for those 22 out of the 28 EU Member States that are also members of NATO, the objective of 2 % spending for defence [agreed](#) by the Alliance for the horizon 2024.

The Bratislava Roadmap promised European Council decisions on EU support for Member States in fighting youth unemployment and on enhanced EU programmes dedicated to youth by December 2016. In line with this commitment, EU leaders called for the continuation of the [Youth Guarantee](#) and welcomed the increased support for the [Youth Employment Initiative](#). They also called for work to be taken forward on the recent Commission initiatives dedicated to youth, including those on mobility, education, skills development and the [European Solidarity Corps](#).

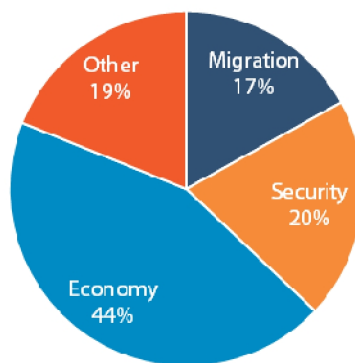
3.4 Informal European Council of 3 February 2017

The informal European Council [meeting](#) of 3 February 2017 in Valletta, Malta, was mainly dedicated to migration policy, in particular its external dimension. The subsequent declaration on the [external aspects](#) of migration included references to being 'committed to the EU-Turkey Statement', to 'continued support for the countries along the Western Balkans route', to 'the Partnership Framework', and to 'better operational cooperation with Member States and the European Border and Coast Guard on preventing departures and managing returns'. EU leaders reiterated their objective to ensure 'effective control of [the EU's] external border and stem illegal flows into the EU'. While not referring directly to frontline states, EU leaders welcomed and expressed their willingness to support Italy in its implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding with Libya. While the comprehensive long-term migration policy, including the principles of responsibility and solidarity in the future, was not discussed, EU leaders welcomed the 'Maltese Presidency's efforts to take forward all elements of the EU's comprehensive migration policy'.

3.5 European Council of 9 March 2017

At the [European Council of 9 March 2017](#), Heads of State or Government addressed only two of the migration related commitments from the Bratislava Roadmap, namely: to '[b]roaden consensus on long-term migration policy' and 'apply the principles of responsibility and solidarity and cooperation with third countries on increasing return rates'.⁷ EU leaders reiterated that the 'effective application of the principles of responsibility and solidarity remains a shared objective' and called for 'further efforts to rapidly deliver on all aspects of the comprehensive migration policy', including the aim of achieving consensus on the EU's asylum policy during the current Presidency. They also recalled the need to pursue work on a range of well-functioning EU re-admission arrangements with third countries.

⁷Although the March 2017 European Council did not end with European Council conclusions, but rather produced '[Conclusions by the President of the European Council](#) supported by 27 Member States', this analysis treats them from a content perspective as if they were regular European Council conclusions.

Figure 11: Topics addressed by the 9 March 2017 European Council

The European Council focused on progress made since its December 2016 meeting on both external and internal security, dedicating 20 % of its conclusions to this topic, as shown in Figure 11.⁸ On external security, the European Council [outlined](#), based on the [overview](#) delivered by the Foreign Affairs Council on 6 March 2017, progress achieved with respect to streamlining CSDP decision-making, establishing the principles of a Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) and the ongoing reflection on options available to activate Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). EU leaders confirmed their pledge for 'sufficient additional resources' made at [past](#) European Councils and reaffirmed their call to [implement](#) the Joint Declaration with NATO. The Heads of State or Government committed to revert to external security and defence at their June 2017 meeting, when strategic guidelines should be adopted. As regards internal security, the European Council reiterated its call to the co-legislators to respect the timeframe foreseen for the Entry/Exit System and ETIAS (see also December 2016 European Council above). EU leaders reaffirmed their commitment 'to ensure internal security and fight terrorism' while calling for the continuation of the implementation of the EU Internal Security Strategy 2015 - 2020.

Heads of State or Government dedicated 44 % of their attention in the European Council conclusions to the economic commitments (see Figure 11). The Bratislava Roadmap set spring 2017 as the deadline for reviewing progress on delivering the different single market strategies (including Digital Single Market, Capital Markets Union and Energy Union). However, while addressing the different single market strategies at the March 2017 European Council, the Heads of State or Government announced that they would delay reviewing progress until their June meeting, thus making the commitment on those strategies the only economic commitment from the Bratislava Roadmap that the European Council has not met within the envisaged timeframe.

The March 2017 European Council revisited a number of other Bratislava commitments. EU leaders discussed the modernisation of trade defence instruments and called for progress in ongoing free trade negotiations, in particular with Japan. In line with the Bratislava objective of creating 'a promising economic future for all', EU leaders also recalled the 'vital importance that the benefits of economic growth reach all citizens', and expressed their anticipation of the Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth in Gothenburg, Sweden, on 17 November 2017.

3.6 Policy priorities analysis

The Heads of State or Government kept the policy priorities outlined in Bratislava more or less permanently on the agenda of the European Council and in the conclusions of their meetings (see Table 3). Migration was a central issue at all European Council meetings between Bratislava and Rome. The first three European Council meetings addressed nearly all of the individual commitments

⁸ The percentage calculation for all policy related figures is based on word count of European Council conclusions.

(Table 3). At the March 2017 European Council, one can see a reduction in the number of specific Bratislava commitments, which can be explained mainly by the completion of some of them (for example, Bulgaria and European Border and Coast Guards), their reduction in (political) importance (for example, the EU-Turkey statement) or by the necessity to concentrate on other dimensions of migration (such as Libya and the central Mediterranean situation) or on other policy areas.

Security has been addressed less regularly. EU leaders focused on internal and external security at their December 2016 and March 2017 meetings (see Figures 10 and 11). They made progress on all internal security commitments, including ETIAS which, as outlined above, was the only new commitment the European Council made in Bratislava. The European Council fulfilled two out of the four Bratislava commitments made on external security, as it adopted a plan on security and defence and welcomed the implementing principles of the Joint Declaration with NATO. The commitment on 'strengthening EU cooperation on external security and defence' is ongoing. EU leaders did not discuss the better use of the Lisbon Treaty provisions on CSDP, although specific progress was made in respect to the operationalisation of PESCO and the strengthening of capabilities. Heads of State or Government will continue to monitor internal and external security progress and, in respect of the latter, should adopt strategic guidelines in June 2017.

The European Council managed to meet the economic commitments laid out in the roadmap and kept this policy priority on the agenda throughout the entire Bratislava process. It discussed all economic policy points of the Bratislava Roadmap within the timeframe envisaged, with the exception of reviewing the different single market strategies, which is due to take place instead in June 2017. Furthermore, economic and social development was discussed at every meeting of the Heads of State or Government apart from Valetta. However, analysts have [highlighted](#) the 'crowding out' of economic policy by other policy areas which are seen as more urgent, such as migration and external relations, at European Council meetings during the Bratislava process.

Analysts have also [pointed to](#) the limited role actually played by the European Council in fulfilling some of the Bratislava commitments. The commitment on trade, for example, was supposed to be fulfilled in October with the adoption of CETA, which relied upon action by the Commission, the Council and Parliament, not by the Heads of State or Government. Therefore observers argue that 'it was a deliverable which the European Council could be credited with even though it had nothing to do with it'.⁹ This shows that while the majority of economic commitments were met, the extent to which this constitutes an achievement of the European Council is debatable.

Table 3: European Council's attention to Bratislava policy commitments

Policy measures from the Bratislava roadmap	October	December	February	March
<i>Migration and external borders</i>				
Further bring down number of irregular migrants	✓	✓	✓	✗
Ensure full control of EU's external borders and get back to Schengen	✓	✓	✓	✗
Broaden consensus on long-term migration policy and apply the principles of responsibility and solidarity	✓	✓	✗	✓
Full commitment to implementing the EU-Turkey statement	✓	✓	✓	✗
Continued support to the countries of the Western Balkans	✓	✓	✓	✓
Assistance to Bulgaria's border protection with Turkey	✓ ¹⁰	—	—	—
Continue support to other frontline States	✓	✗	✓	✗

⁹ See Eurocomment's European Council Briefing Note 2016/6.

¹⁰ The October 2016 European Council did not address the issue, as EU assistance to Bulgaria was already provided before the meeting.

Full capacity for rapid reaction of the European Border and Coast Guard	✓	☑	—	—
Cooperation with third countries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> reduced flows of illegal migration and increased return rates 	✓	✓	✓	✓
Internal and external security				
Support Member States in ensuring internal security and fighting terrorism	✗	✗	✗	✓
Intensified cooperation and information-exchange among security services of the Member States	✗	✓	✗	✓
Adoption of the necessary measures to ensure that all persons, including nationals from EU Member States, crossing the Union's external borders will be checked against the relevant databases, that must be interconnected	✗	✓	✗	✓
Start to set up a Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) to allow for advance checks and, if necessary, deny entry of visa-exempt travellers	✓	✓	✗	✓
A systematic effort against radicalisation, including through expulsions and entry bans where warranted as well as EU support to Member States' actions in prevention	✗	✓	✗	✓
Strengthen EU cooperation on external security and defence	✗	✓	✗	✓
Decide on a concrete implementation plan on security and defence	✗	☑	—	—
Decide on how to make better use of the options in the Treaties, especially as regards capabilities	✗	✗	✗	✗
Start implementing the joint declaration with NATO immediately	✗	☑	—	—
Economic and social development, youth				
Decision on the European Fund for Strategic Investment	✗	☑	—	—
Review progress on the different single market strategies (Digital Single Market, Capital Markets Union, Energy Union)	✗	✓	✗	✓
Address how to ensure a robust trade policy that reaps the benefits of open markets while taking into account concerns of citizens	☑	—	—	—
Decisions on EU support fighting youth unemployment	✗	☑	—	—

Legend: ✓ = discussed, ☑ = completed, ✗ = not discussed, — = not relevant because fulfilled

4. Rome Declaration

As outlined in Chapter 2, the Rome Declaration cannot be considered in isolation but was shaped by the process started with the June 2016 UK referendum and expanded with the Bratislava Declaration and Roadmap. In order to see the EU leaders' messages in Rome in a wider perspective, it is necessary to compare the Rome Declaration with the content of the Bratislava Declaration and Roadmap, outlining the similarities and differences. To appreciate how the project of European integration has evolved over the last 10 years, it is also worth considering the differences between the Rome Declaration and the Berlin Declaration, issued in 2007 on the 50th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome.

4.1 Rome Declaration: A vision for ten years

On the 25 March 2017, EU leaders signed the [Rome Declaration](#), providing a vision for the European Union for the next ten years. As part of the Rome Declaration, leaders committed to the 'Rome Agenda', and pledged to work towards:

- a safe and secure Europe,
- a prosperous and sustainable Europe,
- a social Europe,
- a stronger Europe on the global scene.

The first priority, 'a safe and secure Europe', includes the free movement of all EU citizens, secure external borders, fighting terrorism and organised crime, and an efficient, responsible migration policy. The second priority, 'a prosperous and sustainable Europe', focuses on sustainable growth and jobs, the Single Market, a further strengthened single currency, small and medium-sized enterprises; completing the Economic and Monetary Union; energy security and clean and safe environment. The third priority, 'a social Europe', aims at sustainable growth, economic and social progress as well as cohesion and convergence. It includes, amongst other issues, the diversity of national systems, the key role of social partners and equality between women and men as well as rights and equal opportunities for all. As part of the fourth priority, 'a stronger Europe on the global scene', leaders seek to develop existing partnerships, in the EU's neighbourhood and globally, thereby promoting stability and prosperity. Part of this objective is the creation of more competitive and integrated defence industry, thereby strengthening the EU's common security and defence, cooperate with NATO, engage with the UN and promote free and fair trade and a positive global climate policy.

The President of the European Parliament, Antonio Tajani, declared that 'bringing Europe closer to its citizens' would be the priority for his term in office. He [argued](#) that the 'Union is still unfinished and it often seems remote from people's problems, divided, inefficient, overly bureaucratic'. It will be the European Parliament's duty 'to ensure that the pledges made in the [Rome] declaration are honoured', he concluded.

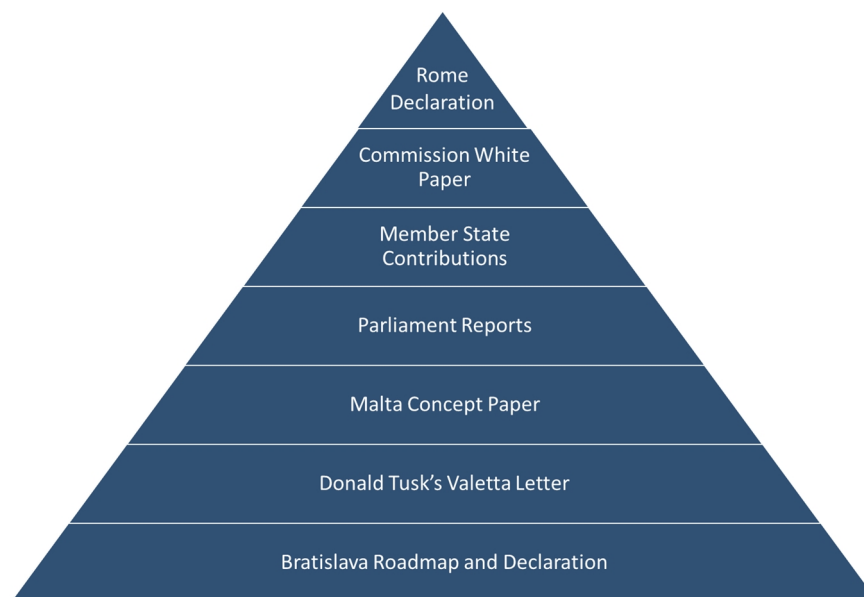
European Council President Donald Tusk [stressed](#) that the 'Union is a guarantee that freedom, dignity, democracy and independence are no longer only our dreams, but our everyday reality', whereas Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker [added](#) that Europeans should be more proud of Europe's achievements, such as a single currency and the internal market. He sees the Rome Declaration as a good start for the broad ranging debate on the Commission's white paper on the future of Europe.

The Italian Prime Minister, Paolo Gentiloni, [stated](#) that the Rome declaration is a step forward for the Union, constituting a solid base to move in a direction which confirms the EU's values, objectives and unity. He also stressed the importance of moving forward, when necessary, with forms of enhanced cooperation.

4.2 From Bratislava to Rome: Shaping the EU's future

The content of the Rome Declaration was based to a large extent on the Bratislava Roadmap and Declaration, but in the time period between the Bratislava and Rome summits, it has been complemented by numerous contributions, such as the Valetta concept paper, contributions by the EU institutions (Parliament's resolutions and the Commission white paper) and inputs from groups of Member States (see Figure 12 and Chapter 2).

Figure 12: Inputs shaping the Rome Declaration and Agenda



It is therefore not surprising that EU leaders' messages in the Rome Declaration reflect many of the statements already included in the Bratislava Declaration and Roadmap, such as the focus on EU citizens' expectations (see Chapter 1) and the desire to improve the communication 'among Member States, with EU institutions, but most importantly with citizens'. The leaders' call for unity also clearly originates in the Bratislava Declaration and Roadmap. In both documents, leaders recall the history of post-war Europe, highlight the EU's achievements of peace, democracy and prosperity, and see terrorism, migratory pressures and social and economic inequalities as the main challenges the EU is facing.

While it is not unexpected that much of the content from the Bratislava Declaration and Roadmap remained, the differences are still striking. The most obvious change concerns the scope and timeframe. The Bratislava Declaration and Roadmap had a very limited lifetime (six months), as it was aimed to be completed in Rome; whereas in the Rome Declaration, EU leaders provide a vision for the next 10 years. An additional difference is the change in the number of signatories. While the Bratislava Declaration and Roadmap was a statement by the 27 Heads of State or Government, the Rome Declaration has a larger group of [signatories](#), including the President of the European Parliament and the President of the European Commission. Consequently, some of the proposals of the European Parliament and the European Commission have been integrated into the Rome Declaration (see Chapter 5).

While the Bratislava Declaration was very much influenced by the result of the UK referendum on EU membership and the prospect of the UK leaving the EU, the Rome Declaration made no reference to the possible UK withdrawal.

The three policy priorities outlined in Bratislava were still retained in the 'Rome Agenda', but they were reorganised; some were increased in priority and a fourth policy priority regarding the EU's wider role in the world was added. The policy issue 'external and internal security' was split. While internal security was merged with migration, external security was combined with the foreign and security policy aspects, with global climate policy (which was absent from the Bratislava Roadmap), and with international trade, previously included in the Bratislava priority 'economic and social development, youth'. The former Bratislava priority 'economic and social development, youth' was divided into two different policy priorities, with one looking at growth, the Economic and Monetary Union and the Single Market, and the other focusing on Social Europe, including the role of social partners, the importance of cohesion, the fight against poverty, providing equal opportunities for all and addressing youth, education and culture.

EU leaders in their Rome message also added a reference to the Union's 'strong values', as well as to the option of 'different paces and intensity' of working together (i.e. a multi-speed Europe).

4.3 Rome Declaration: Changes and continuation 10 years after the Berlin Declaration

When trying to place the Rome Declaration into perspective, an obvious starting point is the Berlin Declaration of 2007, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the signature of the Treaties of Rome. Comparing these two declarations, one sees that the signatories in both cases addressed the division of responsibility between the various levels (i.e. local, regional, national or European) in the EU, evoked the historical achievements and emphasised the common European values. They also both refer to the challenges of their times, which no Member State, neither then or now, could master individually, and express their conviction that the European Union constitutes the best response to these challenges.

However, there are also some significant differences between the content of the two documents. The most noteworthy is the difference in the signatories. While the Berlin Declaration was signed by the Presidents of the European Parliament and the Commission and the Presidency of the Council of the EU, held by Germany at the time, the Rome Declaration was [signed](#) by 'the leaders of 27 Member States and of the European Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission'. The sentence 'we have united for the better', is used in both declarations; however in Berlin it was in the name of the citizens, while in Rome it was in the name of the leaders. This lends support to the arguments of some academics (e.g. Puetter 2014 and Wessels 2015) claiming there is a growing role of the European Council in the EU's architecture. Interestingly, even though the UK had not yet activated Article 50 TEU at the time of the celebrations of the 60th anniversary of the Rome Treaties, and even if the UK currently remains a full Member of the EU, and therefore of the European Council, the declaration was made on behalf of the European Council without the UK Prime Minister.

Another important difference is that EU leaders in the Rome Declaration attempted to address the EU citizens, showing them that their concerns are taken into account when designing EU policies. They pledged 'to listen and respond to the concerns expressed by [the] citizen.' The reference to the citizens, as well as the pledge to work together 'in a spirit of trust and cooperation, both among Members States and between them and the EU Institutions', and to 'promote a democratic, effective and transparent decision-making process and better delivery' are reflections of current debates, and were absent from the Berlin Declaration. Another new element is the reference to the prospect of EU enlargement, as EU leaders stated that the EU 'remains open to those European countries that respect our values and are committed to promoting them'.

Many policy priorities outlined by leaders in Rome were already mentioned in the Berlin text, but some received additional emphasis, such as migration and the fight against terrorism. However, the EU's ambitious aims at Berlin 'to promote freedom and development in the world', 'wanting to drive

back poverty and disease' and to 'lead the way in energy policy and climate change' were scaled down to 'promoting stability and prosperity' in the EU's neighbourhood and globally, and to make energy 'secure and affordable and the environment clean and safe'. Also, the bold pledge 'to make [the EU's] contribution to averting the global threat of climate change', was toned down to 'promoting a positive climate policy'.

5. General analysis

The Bratislava summit generated two sets of commitments: shaping the future of the EU on the one hand and policy priorities on the other. The extent to which the EU leaders managed to fulfil these commitments will be evaluated by examining how the different actors (the President of the European Council, the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU, the Member States, the European Parliament and the European Commission) shaped the process leading from Bratislava to Rome and its outcome in the form of the Rome Declaration. As the Rome Declaration is based on a number of contributions (see Figure 12), it is also worth examining where these differ or converge. The aim of the Rome Declaration is to provide a vision for the EU for the [next ten years](#). This analysis will conclude by providing an outlook for the next steps until December 2017.

5.1 Delivering on policy priorities and the future of the EU: Two sides of the same coin

Shaping the future of the EU

The process initiated in Bratislava committed EU leaders to both policy oriented results (Bratislava Roadmap) and the future of the European project (Bratislava Declaration). Experts considered that 'EU-27 did not exist before 24 June [2016]' and that '[s]ince then it has spoken and acted as a distinct and distinctive force with increasing frequency'.¹¹ The reflection on the future of the EU went through three phases - diagnostics and reflection, deliberations and 'breaking taboos', and constructing the future - before culminating, on 25 March 2017, in the Rome Declaration (see Chapter 2 and Chapter 4). The 27 Heads of State or Government met informally five times prior to the Rome celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Treaties. In four instances, their meetings coincided with the European Council meetings (June 2016, December 2016, February 2017, March 2017) (see Figure 6). The Bratislava summit (September 2016), organised under the auspices of the Slovak presidency of the Council of the EU, was a stand-alone EU-27 informal meeting. The Valetta summit (February 2017), organised under the auspices of the Maltese presidency, was initially [intended](#) as an EU-27 informal meeting, similarly to the Bratislava summit. The urgent need to discuss the situation in the Central Mediterranean, however, made it necessary to hold in addition an informal European Council meeting with migration as its exclusive agenda point.

Three milestone summits took place as part of the process of shaping the future of the EU at 27 in the run-up to Rome. The September 2016 Bratislava summit made it possible to define what the EU wished to achieve in the near future (policy priorities in the roadmap), while a long-term vision for the EU at 27 had still to be developed. At the informal February 2017 Valetta summit and the informal March 2017 summit in Brussels, the 27-EU leaders then went on to discuss the content of their future Rome Declaration.

The Rome Declaration signed by the 27 Heads of State or Government and by the Presidents of the EU institutions on 25 March 2017 represents both the outcome of the process initiated in June 2016 as well as a basis for continuing reflection on the EU's future. The December 2017 meeting of the Heads of State or Government will most probably allow for a discussion on the implementation of the Rome Agenda based on inputs from the Member States and the EU institutions (see sections below in this chapter).

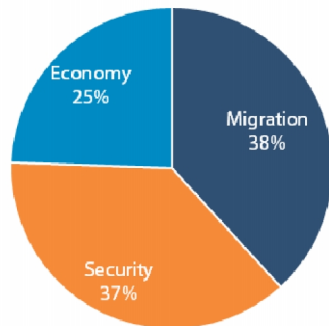
Follow-up to policy priorities

The 27 Heads of State or Government chose to focus on three policy areas, which represented the top three concerns of the EU citizens: migration, security and economics. Figure 13 shows the attention

¹¹ See Eurocomment's European Council Briefing Note 2016/4-5.

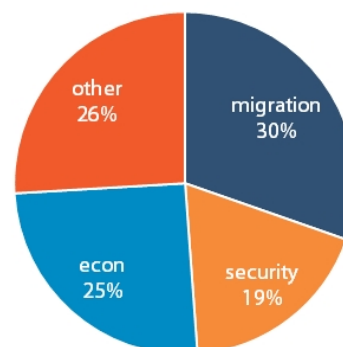
EU leaders gave to these three policy areas in Bratislava.¹² These have been rolling items on the agenda of the European Council for the [past years](#) and will continue to attract EU leaders' attention well beyond the Rome summit. Figure 14 shows the overall attention Heads of State or Government paid to the different policy areas at the three formal European Council meetings - October 2016, December 2016 and March 2017.¹³

Figure 13: Policy topics addressed by the Bratislava Roadmap



They have devoted most attention to migration, while economy ranked second. Both topics were discussed at all European Councils, while security was only discussed in December 2016 and March 2017, bringing it third in terms of overall attention in the European Council conclusions (in contrast to the Bratislava Roadmap where it ranked second, receiving nearly the same attention as migration).

Figure 14: Topics addressed by the formal European Council meetings between Bratislava and Rome



Heads of State or Government have addressed *all* policy-related Bratislava commitments, except for one (better use of the Lisbon Treaty provisions on CSDP (see Chapter 4)).¹⁴ The commitments accompanied by a clear deadline (e.g. implementation plan on security and defence, decision on extending EFSI, European Coast and Border Guard) have been fulfilled by the due date, to the exception of the review of the single market strategies, which was postponed from March to June 2017.

Commitments without a clear deadline have been continuously addressed by Heads of State or Government, often leading to activities of the Member States and other EU institutions. The European Council is likely to continue to monitor them as part of its routine review of the policy areas they pertain to (e.g. bringing down the number of irregular migrants, progress on establishing ETIAS, working towards adopting the Entry/Exit System, and advancing on the European Defence Fund).

¹² The percentage calculation for all policy-related figures is based on word count of European Council conclusions.

¹³ Idem.

¹⁴ The October 2016 European Council did not consider assistance to Bulgaria's border protection with Turkey as this assistance had already been provided before the meeting.

5.2 One or more 'engines': multiple actors and their role(s)

A central role for the President of the European Council

Throughout the Bratislava process, European Council President Donald Tusk strongly [supported](#) the idea of rebuilding trust between EU citizens and their political elites, while stressing at the same time the importance of delivering on commitments. He holds a ['European mandate'](#) defined, *inter alia*, by agenda-management, consensus building ('brokerage') and reporting to the European Parliament on the outcome of the European Council meetings. Agenda-management represents a [powerful tool](#) allowing the European Council President to set the framework for debate and steer the process. In the opinion of [experts](#), President Tusk has shaped the agenda of both the European Council meetings and the EU-27 informal summits (for example, the June and September 2016 meetings as well as the February 2017 meetings) from the early moments following the June 2016 British referendum. The invitation letters sent to the Heads of State or Government ahead of each meeting represent his most tangible contribution to steering the debate. They have a structuring role, [announcing](#) the main agenda points, and a follow-up role, [referring](#) to previous activities, commitments and results. They also take a deliverable-oriented perspective, focussing on what is achievable. For example, both the [Bratislava Summit](#) and [December 2016](#) European Council invitation letters made reference to EU-NATO cooperation, a process on track since the June 2016 European Council. Conversely, none of the invitation letters made reference to the Lisbon Treaty provisions on CSDP, as Member States were not collectively prepared for an ample discussion on the subject prior to the Rome summit. President Tusk's invitations also set out the framework and the tone for the discussions, and were even, at times, considered by observers to be rather [outspoken](#). More often than not, the results of the meetings significantly [mirror](#) the ideas the President put forward in his invitation letter.¹⁵

Experts [highlighted](#) the effective consensus building work conducted by President Tusk to ensure the EU 27 stand for a common position from their 29 June 2016 informal meeting onwards. [Consensus building](#) was not a summit-related exercise, but rather results from day-to-day work to build and maintain common positions on the top three concerns of EU citizens (migration, security and economy), while reflecting on the future of Europe. As part of his reporting duties, but also as a reflection of his view on the need to enhance 'the loyal cooperation and communication of Member States and institutions', President Tusk regularly informed the European Parliament on progress made in implementing the Bratislava Roadmap as well as on where the process of reflection on where the future of Europe stands.

The revival of the rotating presidency

The introduction by the Lisbon Treaty of a permanent President of the European Council considerably [reduced](#) the role of the rotating presidency in the workings of the European Council, as distinct from its role in most Council meetings. The reality of formal European Council meetings and 27 Heads of State or Government informal meetings allowed both the [Slovak](#) and the [Maltese](#) Presidencies of the Council of the EU to (re)gain influence in the process of shaping a common EU future. This is reflected in the organisation of the Bratislava and the Valetta summits, the concept papers originating from the presidencies, and in the appearance of the [Slovak](#) and [Maltese](#) Prime Ministers at the European Council President's side at post-summit press-conferences. Observers have pointed to the instrumental role played by the Slovak Presidency in drafting and building consensus on the Bratislava Declaration at a time when Donald Tusk, faithful to his 'promise less and deliver more' motto, was supporting the view to only agree on a Roadmap.¹⁶

¹⁵ See Eurocomment's Pre-summit Briefing 2017/1.

¹⁶ See Eurocomment's European Council Briefing Note 2016/4-5

Member States' input

Member States continued to give their regular [input](#) to the policy priorities discussed at European Council meetings, while, in addition, providing inputs on the future of the EU. This paper distinguishes between three phases in the reflection process on the future of Europe, with Member States being particularly active during the last phase when various groups of Member States issued their views on a long-term vision for the EU (see Chapter 2). There are points of agreement (for example, the need to respond to the citizens' concerns, and the challenges the EU is facing), as well as aspects that, due to persisting national sensitivities, require further debate among the Member States (e.g. 'multi-speed Europe', and the equilibrium between the community and the intergovernmental methods). Some of the commonly agreed points were reflected in the Rome Declaration (such as the message of unity, shared principles and values, and the four policy priorities of the Rome Agenda), while others (for example, enhanced cooperation, and further streamlining the decision-making) will most probably be discussed in preparation for the December 2017 European Council.

European Parliament views

The European Parliament contributed to both the policy debate, as reflected in the workings of the European Council, and to the future of the EU debate, as reflected in the workings of the EU-27, with four resolutions. Its contribution spanned the three phases of the process on the future of EU-27 described in Chapter 2.

On 28 June 2016, less than a week after the UK referendum vote, the European Parliament [called for](#) a period of reflection on the future of the EU. The Parliament's contribution was timely and substantive. It called 'for a roadmap for a better Union based on exploiting the Lisbon Treaty to the full, to be completed by a revision of the Treaties' and stressed the need to address the challenges of migration, internal and external security and economics. The Parliament also stressed that 'the reforms must result in a Union which delivers what citizens expect'. Some of these demands were echoed later on in the Bratislava Declaration and Roadmap.

More recently, on 16 February 2017, Parliament adopted three resolutions on improving the functioning of the European Union building on the potential of the Lisbon Treaty, on possible evolutions and adjustments to the current institutional set-up of the European Union and on budgetary capacity for the Euro area (see Chapter 2). As a common feature, the resolutions called for 'a qualitative leap in integration'. The European Parliament requested that preference be given to the community method and demanded the strengthening of democratic accountability, including increased control at both national and European levels regarding 'the renewed economic governance framework'. Parliament underlined that the Treaty provisions 'have not been exploited to their full potential' and called for an 'in-depth review of the Lisbon Treaty', while in the interim, its current potential should be exploited. It proposed to end 'Europe à la carte', suggesting to use future Treaty reviews to 'rationalise the current disorderly differentiation by ending, or at least drastically reducing, the practice of opt-outs, opt-ins and exceptions for individual Member States at EU primary-law level'. The European Parliament also underlined its 'essential role in ensuring the legitimacy of the Union' through its legislative powers and the oversight it exerts over the executive, calling for a strengthening of both. Treaty change, which has led so far to the '[gradual empowerment](#)' of the European Parliament, currently remains [outside](#) the agenda of the EU leaders.

Both the former and current European Parliament Presidents, Martin Schulz and Antonio Tajani, when expressing the institution's views on policy developments and the future of the EU ahead of the formal European Council meetings (October 2016, December 2016 and March 2017), have called upon the Heads of State or Government to [involve](#) the Parliament more closely in the 'Bratislava agenda'. President Tajani undertook the task of 'help[ing to] bring Europe closer to its citizens', while assuring the European Council of the Parliament's commitment to 'fair and constructive cooperation' between

the two institutions. He also emphasized the importance of inter-institutional cooperation and [stressed](#) that the European Parliament's 'duty will be to ensure that the pledges made in the declaration are honoured'.

European Commission contribution

The European Commission has actively and regularly contributed to the discussion on the future of Europe, most prominently by means of its President's [State of the Union](#) address to the European Parliament of September 2016 and the Commission white paper published in March 2017. In his address to the European Parliament, Jean-Claude Juncker spoke of a Europe that 'protects', 'preserves the European way of life', 'empowers' citizens, 'defends' and 'takes responsibility'. These aspects mirror the top three concerns of the EU citizens, which the EU leaders defined as policy priorities later that month at the Bratislava summit (migration, security, economic and social development).

The March 2017 Commission white paper presents five scenarios as a first response to the reflection process on the future of the EU (see Chapter 2). The [scenarios](#), which 'are neither mutually exclusive, nor exhaustive', were [assessed](#) by some observers as having a lesser or greater potential to make '[m]any governments in the south and east of Europe [...] uncomfortable', a view [contested](#) by Mr Juncker following the March 2017 European Council. The Commission's choice of a white paper shows the intention to open the debate on the future of the EU rather than to already pinpoint to a solution. Although published ahead of the Rome summit, it was primarily intended to initiate a period of debate across Europe before the 14-15 December 2017 European Council would [draw](#) 'first conclusions'. In the interim, the Commission will publish a series of 'reflection papers' on priority issues including the social dimension of Europe, harnessing globalisation, deepening of the Economic and Monetary Union, the future of European defence, and the future of EU finances. In the Rome Declaration, one finds the current Commission's main [motto](#) 'to be big on big issues and small on small ones'.

Converging inter-institutional views on the future of the Europe

The 27 Heads of State or Government led the reflection process on the future of Europe based on the Bratislava Declaration. The European Parliament in its resolutions and the European Commission through its white paper have both contributed to the debate.

Throughout the reflection process on the future of Europe the Member States and the EU institutions displayed converging views on several items, including three major aspects, namely: the need for unity; values and principles, including accountability to citizens; and the top three policy concerns of the EU citizens (migration, internal and external security and economic and social Europe). They have all been reflected in the Rome Declaration.

The 27 Heads of State or Government, the President of the European Council, both Presidents of the European Parliament during this timeframe, and the President of the European Commission, have all stressed the need for EU unity several times in the past months. In the Rome Declaration, they understood unity as 'both a necessity and [their] free choice', stressing that only a united European Union can influence global dynamics and defend its interests. EP President Tajani [stressed](#) that 'today more than ever we need European unity' in order to face global and domestic challenges.

Regarding values and principles, there was consensus from the outset on their central role in underpinning EU integration, as well as on their capacity to inspire democratisation throughout the world. European Council President Tusk [considered](#) that a free and united Europe was a 'dream' for people in Eastern Europe until the fall of the Berlin Wall when the 'the road for Europe opened up'. EU leaders confirmed in Rome that they 'want a Union which remains open to those European countries that respect our values and are committed to promoting them'.

EU institutions also agreed on the three policy priorities outlined by the European Parliament in its June 2016 resolution and retained by the Heads of State or Government as their short-term priorities in the Bratislava Roadmap. Substantial progress has been made on the short- to medium-term commitments undertaken in Bratislava regarding the different policies. Another policy-related [priority](#) of the European Parliament, namely, the focus on small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), was also integrated into the Rome Declaration.

One of the most non-consensual items was the concept of a multi-speed Europe, a concept supported by several Member States and one of the options in the Commission white paper (see Chapter 2). In Rome, the EU leaders and the Presidents of the EU institutions opted for a more consensual formula, stating that they 'will act together, at different paces and intensity where necessary, while moving in the same direction, as [they] have done in the past, in line with the Treaties'. This corresponds to the calls the European Parliament has made in its resolutions to implement the Lisbon Treaty, as well as to its pledge that 'the core of the EU must be reinforced and à la carte solutions should be avoided'. The European Parliament was the only institution to call for institutional (Treaty) change through its [resolution](#) on possible evolutions and adjustments to the current institutional set-up of the European Union.

5.3 Outlook

The Rome Declaration completed the process that was initiated on 29 June 2016, but in doing so, it also started a new one. Hence, the twin-track approach of having meetings of 27 Heads of State or Government in parallel to European Council meetings is likely to continue after the Rome summit. The European Council will most probably continue to focus on the *rolling agenda*, and regularly follow up on progress in the area of migration, internal and external security and economics. The Heads of State or Government already committed in March 2017 to [focus](#) on these topics at their June 2017 meeting.

In their format of 27, EU leaders will most likely continue to focus on the future of the EU, as well as on the negotiations on the UK's withdrawal from the Union. On 29 April 2017, Donald Tusk [called](#) for 'a European Council, in an EU-27 format (without the UK)' to adopt the guidelines for the negotiations with the UK following the triggering of Article 50 TEU.

The EU-27 will focus on the future architecture of the EU, based on the guidelines of the Rome Declaration. The December 2017 meeting of the Heads of State or Government will, most probably, lead to further clarification on where the EU is headed, based *inter alia* on the reflection process initiated by the European Commission following the publication of its white paper, and on further inputs from groups of Member States (for example, the Benelux prime ministers are [expected](#) to meet with their Visegrad and Baltic colleagues later this year) and from EU institutions.

Annex

Table 4: Origin of the Bratislava commitments and follow-up by the European Council

Policy area: Migration and external borders		
Bratislava Statement	Prior activity	Follow-up by the European Council
Further bring down number of irregular migrants	23 April 2015 European Council 25-26 June 2015 European Council 15 October 2015 European Council 17-18 December 2015 European Council 18-19 February 2016 European Council 07 March 2016 European Council 28 June 2016 European Council	20-21 October 2016 European Council 3 February 2017 European Council
Ensure full control of EU's external borders and get back to Schengen	Tusk 1 March 2016 Commission Roadmap 3 March 2016 Tusk 18 March 2016	20-21 October 2016 European Council 3 February 2017 European Council
Broaden consensus on long-term migration policy and apply the principles of responsibility and solidarity	24-25 October 2013 European Council 23 April 2015 European Council	20-21 October 2016 European Council 15 December 2016 European Council 9 March 2017 European Council
Full commitment to implementing the EU-Turkey statement	28 June 2016 European Council	20-21 October 2016 European Council 15 December 2016 European Council 3 February 2017 European Council
Continued support to the countries of the Western Balkans	8 October 2015 High-Level Conference on the Eastern Mediterranean/Western Balkans route	20-21 October 2016 European Council 15 December 2016 European Council 3 February 2017 European Council
Offer immediate assistance to strengthen the protection of Bulgaria's border with Turkey	Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker letter 12 September 2016 Juncker State of the Union speech, 14 September 2016 Frontex to reinforce its activities in Bulgaria 5/08/2016	
Continue support to other frontline States	23 April 2015 European Council	20-21 October 2016 European Council 3 February 2017 European Council
Reach full capacity for the rapid reaction of the European Border and Coast Guard by end of 2016	15 October 2015 European Council	20-21 October 2016 European Council 15 December 2016 European Council
Cooperation with third countries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> reduced flows of illegal migration and increased return rates 	25-26 June 2015 European Council	20-21 October 2016 European Council 15 December 2016 European Council 3 February 2017 European Council 9 March 2017 European Council
Policy area: Internal and external security		
Bratislava Statement	Prior activity	Follow-up by
Support Member States in ensuring internal security and fight against terrorism		15 December 2016 European Council 9 March 2017 European Council
Intensified cooperation and information-exchange among		15 December 2016 European Council 9 March 2017 European Council

security services		
Improved EU external borders controls		15 December 2016 European Council 9 March 2017 European Council
Start to set up a European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS)		20-21 October 2016 European Council 15 December 2016 European Council 9 March 2017 European Council
Effort against radicalisation		15 December 2016 European Council 9 March 2017 European Council
Strengthen EU cooperation on external security	European Council December 2012, December 2013, June 2015	15 December 2016 European Council 9 March 2017 European Council
Plan on security and defence		15 December 2016 European Council 9 March 2017 European Council
Better use of the options in the Treaties	19-20 December 2013 European Council	
Start implementing the joint declaration with NATO	28 June 2016 European Council	15 December 2016 European Council 9 March 2017 European Council
Policy area: Economic and social development, youth		
Bratislava Statement	Prior activity	Follow up by
December 2016: decision on extension of EFSI in light of evaluation	European Council of 28 June 2016	20-21 October European Council
Spring 2017: review progress on delivery of the different Single Market strategies (including Digital Single Market, Capital Markets Union, Energy Union)	European Council of 28 June 2016	Scheduled for 22-23 June 2017 European Council
October 2016: how to ensure a robust trade policy that reaps the benefits of open markets while taking into account concerns of citizens	European Council of 28 June 2016	20-21 October European Council 9 March 2017 European Council
December 2016: decisions on EU support for Member States in fighting youth unemployment and on enhanced EU programmes dedicated to youth	Increased funding for YEI agreed by the Commission, 14 September 2016	15 December European Council 9 March 2017 European Council

Further reading

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The Rome Declaration of 25 March 2017, issued by the Heads of State or Government of the EU-27 on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome, marked the end of a process that started after the UK referendum on EU membership on 23 June 2016.

The aim of this In-depth Analysis is to assess the outcomes of the various EU-27 and European Council meetings in the period between the Bratislava summit of 16 September 2016 and the Rome summit of 25 March 2017, in relation to the objectives laid out in the Bratislava Declaration and Roadmap.

The analysis shows that substantial progress has been made on the Bratislava commitments for all three policy priorities listed therein – migration, security, and the economy. It also reflects on how the Rome Declaration and Bratislava process were shaped by the overall context of the growing concerns of EU citizens and their attitude towards the EU and demonstrates how the views of the different EU institutions and the various Member States have converged during this process, leading to a consensual Rome Declaration.

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