
State of the Union: Let's make the most of the momentum to shape an ambitious future

- Roadmap to EU 2025 built on democratic values and efficient decision-making
- Complete Defence, Security, Energy, Digital, Monetary and Capital Markets Union
- Offer equal opportunities to all citizens and strengthen industrial competitiveness
- Create EU agencies for workers' rights, cybersecurity and counter-terrorism

Political groups welcomed Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker's ambitious vision for a strong and united Europe 2025 in the annual "State of the Union" debate this morning.

Plans on defence, security, legal migration, international trade, social equality and on how to strengthen the Union's budgetary capacity and democratic decision-making process were discussed by political group leaders in a three-hour debate.

[Antonio Tajani](#), President of the European Parliament, welcomed Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, the college of Commissioners and the Estonian Presidency of the Council to Parliament for the annual "State of the Union" debate. He outlined European citizens' expectations for more cooperation between EU institutions and member states on migration, terrorism, economic growth and social rights.

To listen to the full statement by individual speakers, click on the names.

Budgetary stability, more people at work than ever and continuing economic recovery open a window of opportunity for ambitious reform of the EU, built on freedom, equal rights and the rule of law, said Mr Juncker.

Mr Juncker announced proposals for a European finance minister, legal migration, cybersecurity, freedom and rights of workers, international trade and the Defence Union, for Parliament and Council to discuss and decide on before the end of term. To represent a strong Union, he would like to see the European Council and Commission Presidency taken up by the most successful “Spitzenkandidat” to be elected by EU citizens in the next European elections, in June 2019.

[Juncker1](#) [Juncker2](#) [Juncker3](#) [Juncker4](#) [Juncker5](#)

Read his speech in full [here](#).

EPP group President [Manfred Weber](#) (DE) welcomed Mr Juncker’s vision for deepening the EU: “The world does not wait for us“. But he highlighted people’s worries, like the fear of globalisation: “we need a social market economy”, and also to “secure our borders to stop illegal migration”. People are shocked about Turkey: “Turkey cannot become a full member of the EU”. And people are afraid when looking eastwards: “We need a European Defence Union to defend the European way of life”, Mr Weber said, and to stop Nord Stream 2.

S&D leader [Gianni Pittella](#) (IT) proposed that EU member states “hit all multinationals which defraud fiscal authorities by obliging them to refund”, adopt measures “against the exploitation of young people” and a “child guarantee” and ensure education and shelter for all children in the EU. On migration, he called on the EU Commission to “have the courage to open legal channels”, as closing illegal routes is not enough.

[Syed Kamall](#) (ECR, UK) underlined that, if it really wants to protect citizens, “Europe can’t be protectionist”. In order for the European economy to thrive, we need to create more opportunities, not more regulations, he said, adding that “EU growth plans don’t create jobs. Businesses create jobs”. People outside the European Parliament want to know that we “continue to steady the ship and will not set sail into yet more storms”, he concluded.

ALDE leader [Guy Verhofstadt](#) (BE) said that Mr Juncker’s speech was “full of vision and ambition for 2019”, partly because “a lot has changed”, with the “populist spring” grinding to a halt in Austria, the Netherlands and France. “Welcome all to the side of reason!”, he said, adding that “Only Nigel Farage doesn’t get it!”, referring to a majority of EU citizens wanting

more European action. "The EU is necessary to withstand alt-right governments."

[Patrick Le Hyaric](#), vice-chair of the GUE/NGL group, suggested turning the Juncker fund "into a large social and environmental fund". "There is an urgent need to exit the competition EU and build a Union combining social humanism and ecological progress with a fair directive for posted workers, minimum wages, pension protection, poverty eradication and equality between men and women", he added.

[Philippe Lamberts](#) (BE), co-chair of the Greens/EFA, advocated "reconciling European citizens with the very idea of the EU". To do so, Mr Juncker's speech should have sought to "reduce inequalities", "limit our ecological impact to the bounds set by nature", "reorient trade policy", "freeze CETA", "get rid of glyphosate and strengthen the definition of endocrine disrupters", he added.

"You have learnt nothing from Brexit", claimed [Nigel Farage](#) (EFDD, UK), who criticised Mr Juncker's proposals to deepen European integration "without the consent of the people". The EU Commission's attitude towards Poland and Hungary reminded him of the former Soviet regime, he added.

[Harald Vilimsky](#) (ENF, AT) stressed that the ENF does not want the "failed" Euro to expand and opposes a Defence Union and free movement of workers within the EU. Internal borders must be kept up to stop "millions of Africans and Arabs swamping the Union", he concluded.

Statement by Estonian presidency

Juncker concluding

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Political groups

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