This document is a compilation of briefings that track the commitments made by the Vice-Presidents and Commissioners to the European Parliament – in their written answers to Parliament’s questions, at their hearings, and, in some cases, in subsequent appearances before Parliament’s committees. The document provides an overview of the state-of-play at the mid-term of the von der Leyen Commission.

Since many of these commitments were made, major international crises have shifted some political priorities. The Vice-Presidents’ and Commissioners’ progress on their commitments should be considered in this context.
Tracking the EU Commissioners’ commitments

Von der Leyen Commission 2019 - 2024
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FRANS TIMMERMANS
Executive Vice-President
The European Green Deal

This briefing follows up the commitments made by the commissioner since 2019.

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<td><strong>The European Green Deal</strong></td>
<td>The European Commission presented [the European Green Deal Communication and a roadmap with actions (COM(2019)640)] on 19.12.2019. The European Green Deal provides an action plan to boost the efficient use of resources by moving to a clean, circular economy and restore biodiversity, and cut pollution. The plan outlines investments needed and financing tools available. It explains how to ensure a just and inclusive transition.</td>
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<td>“[…] the European Green Deal must put Europe on the right track to a sustainable future, and ensure that every European is on board and that no one is left behind. Our ambition is to make Europe the world’s first climate-neutral continent. We can achieve this by 2050 if we plan well and start straight away.” “[…] I think one of the most complicated tasks I’ll have to face is to make sure that there is joined-up thinking, there is consistency there [in our policies] […]. I am under no illusions that I am going to be able to take the 100 days and sort everything out. But to identify where there is a lack of consistency and then move on to come up with steps and legislation […] I think would be a very complicated task.” “We’ll certainly work on a hydrogen strategy because I also believe Europe can really lead on this. We would still have an advantage vis-à-vis other parts of the world if we speeded up. I also believe in it because you have no energy loss when you store energy in hydrogen.”</td>
<td>The Commission proposed [a European Strategy for Hydrogen (COM(2020)301)] on 08.7.2020. The renewable hydrogen (also called green hydrogen) is expected to play a key role in the decarbonisation of sectors where other alternatives might not be feasible or be more expensive. This includes heavy-duty and long-range transport and energy-intensive industrial processes. The Commission also adopted [a legislative proposal] on 15.12.2021 to decarbonise the EU gas market by facilitating the uptake of renewable and low carbon gases, including hydrogen, and to ensure energy security in Europe.</td>
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The European climate law and the 2030 Emissions Reduction Target

“I will propose a climate law within 100 days of taking office to enshrine in legislation the EU’s 2050 climate neutrality objective. This law will set the long-term direction of travel for all our policies.” “[...]
I want to come before Parliament with a draft climate law that goes as far as we can in terms of stipulating exactly not just where we need to be in 2050, but also what we need to do in intermediate steps to get there by 2050.” “I honestly believe that this climate law will give us the framework which we urgently need to discipline Member States to come up with plans that are concrete enough so that we can sort of look at the stages we will have to go through to get where we need to be in 2050. [...] So in that sense, I think it’s the best framework we can have for our common future.” “I will also start work immediately to deliver a higher level of ambition for 2030. As soon as possible, I will put forward legislative proposals that will help us to reduce emissions by at least 50%, or even better, by 55%.” “But I think my position will be stronger if I can back it up with the analysis we are doing right now. [...] Again, however, let me be clear: I would be extremely surprised if the outcome of this were anything other than at least a 55% reduction by 2030.”

The Commission proposed the “European Climate Law” (COM(2020)80) on 04.03.2020. This legislative proposal for a European climate law is setting the objective for the EU to become climate-neutral by 2050 and establishing a framework for achieving that objective. The Commission proposed the climate targets 2030 (Communication and amendments to draft 2050 Climate Law, COM(2020)562 and COM(2020)563) on 17.09.2020.

On 14.7.2021, the Commission adopted a package of proposals to make the EU’s climate, energy, land use, transport and taxation policies fit for reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels. The package, known as “Fit for 55”, enables the necessary acceleration of greenhouse gas emission reductions in the next decade. They combine: application of emissions trading to new sectors and a tightening of the existing EU Emissions Trading System; increased use of renewable energy; greater energy efficiency; a faster roll-out of low emission transport modes and the infrastructure and fuels to support them, etc. Moreover, the Commission presented on 5.4.2022 a strengthened F-gas (fluorinated greenhouse gases) proposal aiming to save the equivalent of 40 million tons of carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions by 2030. The Commission also presented an EU strategy to reduce methane emissions on 14.10.2020. Methane is the second biggest contributor to climate change, after carbon dioxide. Tackling methane emissions is therefore essential to reaching our 2030 climate targets and the 2050 climate neutrality goal. The Commission was also following up on the EU Methane Strategy and its international commitments with a proposal on 15.12.2021 to reduce methane emissions in the energy sector in Europe and in our global supply chain.

The revision of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) adopted on 15.12.2021 upgrades the existing regulatory framework to reflect higher ambitions and more pressing needs in climate and social action while providing Member States with the flexibility needed to take into account the differences in the building stock across Europe. The revised directive sets out how Europe can achieve a zero-emission and fully decarbonised building stock by 2050.
**Lead international negotiations**

“We need to work to convince others to step up their ambition as well. I am fully committed to strengthening our international climate diplomacy and implementing the Sustainable Development Goals.”

At the COP26 UN Climate Conference, the Commission supported the consensus reached by over 190 countries following intense negotiations. COP26 resulted in the completion of the Paris Agreement rulebook and kept the Paris targets alive, giving a small chance of limiting global warming to 1.5 ° C. To help the most vulnerable countries and small island states in particular in their mitigation and adaptation efforts, the EU is the largest donor, contributing over a third of the current pledges by developed countries, accounting for €23.39 billion of climate finance in 2020.

**Just Transition Fund**

“We need a dedicated Just Transition Fund to support the people and communities most affected, including those in industrial, coal and energy-intensive regions.”

“So, that is what we want to put in the Just Transition Fund: a mix of fresh money combined with co-financing nationally, also linking to the different funds we already have – whether it’s the Agricultural Fund, the Structural Fund, the Cohesion Fund – and also making sure that there is, through the help of the EIB that has been extremely successful in InvestEU, that there is a huge access to funds to make this transition to the green economy.”

“It is absolutely clear that for this transition, especially in those countries still heavily dependent on coal, we will need much, much bigger funds than even what a Just Transition Fund can muster. But it’s also absolutely clear to me that there is no future in coal.”

The Commission proposed a Regulation establishing the Just Transition Fund on 14.01.2020. The Just Transition Mechanism will focus on those regions and sectors that are most affected by the transition given their dependence on fossil fuels or greenhouse gas-intensive industrial processes. An amended proposal for a Regulation establishing the Just Transition Fund was proposed by the Commission on 27.05.2020. This proposal provides for additional resources to be made available for the Just Transition Fund.

The Commission also published a proposal for a Regulation on Public sector loan facility under the Just Transition Mechanism on 28.05.2020, as part of the sectoral legislation governing the programmes of the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework. The Public sector loan facility will seek to mobilise additional investments for affected regions.

**Protecting biodiversity**

“[...] we will present a robust and ambitious biodiversity strategy for 2030 and [...] the EU must champion the most ambitious commitments possible at the next UN Conference of the Parties on Biodiversity in China in October 2020.” “So I want the EU to be extremely well prepared, through an intensive dialogue with this Parliament, for the next biodiversity conference [...] so that we have concrete proposals on the table to try and convince the rest of the world that we now need to take urgent action on safeguarding our biodiversity.” “What I want to do is to engage with the scientific community to make sure that we’re able to find some benchmarks against which we can then devise our policies, and we need to do this before we go to Beijing.”

The Commission published a new EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 on 20.5.2020. This strategy aims to ensure that Europe’s biodiversity will be on the path to recovery by 2030 for the benefit of people, the planet, the climate and our economy, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and with the objectives of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. On World Wildlife Day (3 March 2020), the Commission launched a new Global Coalition for Biodiversity in view of the COP15 in China. With this communication campaign, the Commission is calling for stronger mobilisation in raising awareness about the need to protect biodiversity.
“We need a strategy for reforestation, and reforestation in a way that does not contradict other goals. [...] So we have to look at this in a sensible way and I think the only way we can do that is to have a Europe-wide strategy to help reforestation.” “[...] consumers need to be better informed. [...] I want to be able to tell them, at some point, this [product] is deforestation-free. We can’t say that today. So we need to work with our international partners to make that happen in the future, because now 80% of deforestation is a consequence of the search for new arable land to create new foodstuffs and sometimes it’s the food we import directly. Sometimes it’s even the feedstuff we give our animals that are produced in Europe. So we have a lot to do to inform our consumers and we will have to regulate in that sphere as well.”

The Commission presented a new EU Forest Strategy on 16.7.2021 which sets a vision and concrete actions for increasing the quantity and quality of forests in the EU and strengthening their protection, restoration and resilience. The proposed actions will increase carbon sequestration through enhanced sinks and stocks thus contributing to climate change mitigation. The Strategy commits to strictly protecting primary and old-growth forests, restoring degraded forests, and ensuring they are managed sustainably. The Commission also proposed on 17.11.2021 a new Regulation to curb EU-driven deforestation and forest degradation. Just counting from 1990 to 2020 the world has lost 420 million hectares of forest – an area larger than the European Union. The proposed new rules would guarantee that the products that EU citizens buy, use and consume on the EU market do not contribute to global deforestation and forest degradation. The main driver of these processes is agricultural expansion linked to the commodities soy, beef, palm oil, wood, cocoa and coffee, and some of their derived products.

The Commission adopted on 22.6.2022 a pioneering proposal to restore damaged ecosystems and bring nature back across Europe, from agricultural land and seas, to forests and urban environments. The legislation targets the restoration of Europe’s nature, to repair the 80% of European habitats that are in poor condition, and to bring back nature to all ecosystems, from forest and agricultural land to marine, freshwater and urban ecosystems. In this Nature Restoration Law, legally binding targets for nature restoration in different ecosystems will apply to every Member State, complementing existing laws. The aim is to cover at least 20% of the EU’s land and sea areas by 2030 with nature restoration measures, and eventually extend these to all ecosystems in need of restoration by 2050.

Zero-pollution ambition

“[...] Europe needs to move forward towards a zero-pollution environment to tackle environmental degradation and pollution, address air and water quality, hazardous chemicals, industrial emissions, pesticides, endocrine disruptors and microplastics”. “Clean air in our cities and clean water in our rivers and oceans – that is what we need so that we can lead healthier lives on a planet that can sustain all of humanity, and where the economy grows to the benefit of the many, not the few, with jobs for everyone.”

On 12.5.2021, the Commission adopted the Action Plan: Towards a zero-pollution for air, water and soil. This zero-pollution vision for 2050 is for air, water and soil pollution to be reduced to levels no longer considered harmful to health and natural ecosystems.

The Commission also proposed a new Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability - Towards a toxic-free environment (COM(2020)667) on 14.10.2020. The strategy sets out a coherent, predictable and stronger regulatory framework, combined with non-regulatory incentives, which will drive the necessary
innovation, deliver increased protection, while enhancing the competitiveness of the European chemical industry and its value chains. Moreover, the Commission presented on 5.4.2022 a proposal to update and modernise the Industrial Emissions Directive, key legislation to help prevent and control pollution.

Transport

“[..] transport is one of the most polluting sectors of our economy. We need to tackle this head-on. All over Europe, people depend on their cars for the quality of their daily lives, not seldom even for their livelihoods. I know that, and I don’t want a car-free Europe; I want emission-free cars in Europe, and I want people to use clean public transport.”

“We need to cut emissions in the aviation and maritime sectors in particular if we are to meet our climate goals. This requires a careful mix of tools. We need to invest, for example, in our railways.”

“I want Europe to have the best transport systems in the world.”

“[..] the ETS [Emissions Trading System] should be extended to shipping. But we also need a broader policy mix. I want us to have green ports. I want us to be able to force shipping to take the electricity that’s offered to them in ports rather than burn the most horrible stuff when they’re in cities.”

“We need third-generation biofuels. They can be a constructive part of our energy mix because in some areas – take aviation – we will probably need more biofuels. I might be short of imagination but I don’t see electric flying happening on a huge scale any time soon.”

Circular economy

“We need to take our work on the circular economy to a new level, focusing on sustainable products and waste prevention. We must reduce, reuse and recycle to unlock all its potential for a low-carbon economy. We will propose a new Circular Economy Action Plan, focusing on sustainable products and resource use, especially in resource-intensive sectors, such as textiles and construction.”

The Commission presented four proposals on 14.12.2021 aiming to modernise the EU’s transport system. By increasing connectivity and shifting more passengers and freight to rail and inland waterways, by supporting the roll-out of charging points, alternative refuelling infrastructure, and new digital technologies, by placing a stronger focus on sustainable urban mobility, and by making it easier to choose different transport options in an efficient multimodal transport system, the proposals will put the transport sector on track to cutting its emissions by 90%.

The Commission proposed the Sustainable and Smart Transport Strategy with an action plan on 09.12.2020. This strategy lays the foundation for how the EU transport system can achieve its green and digital transformation and become more resilient to future crises. As outlined in the European Green Deal, it aims at a 90% cut in emissions by 2050, delivered by a smart, competitive, safe, accessible and affordable transport system.

The Commission proposed a European Strategy for Energy System Integration on 08.07.2020. The strategy explores how to support the quick development of innovative low-carbon fuels such as advanced biofuels, alongside synthetic fuels, across the whole value chain of the industry in Europe, leading to better coordination of the market actors and rapid increase of production capacity.
consumers for the green transition. The new rules to make almost all physical goods on the EU market more friendly to the environment, circular, and energy efficient throughout their whole lifecycle from the design phase through to daily use, repurposing and end-of-life. The proposals include a new strategy to make textiles more durable, repairable, reusable and recyclable, a Regulation on Ecodesign for Sustainable Products, and the revision of the Construction Product Regulation.


Farm to Fork strategy for sustainable food

“[...] I want to underline this – without our farmers we will not attain our sustainability goals and we need to find a Common Agricultural Policy that supports this and that also leads to fair competition for our farmers, also internationally. I think the reforms set in motion by Phil Hogan lead us a long way in that direction and let’s check where we can improve this using the Farm to Fork principle.”

“[...] what we have to do is to look at the Common Agriculture Policy against that backdrop [of funding intensive farming], how we can guarantee a future for European farmers and produce food which no longer pollutes. [...] that has already been placed into the reforms during the Juncker period, but that’s also going to be the front and centre in the Farm to Fork policy as well.”

“We need to make sure that we put sustainable food on the table. We need to make sure that we put farmers in a position where they can maintain our rural areas and they can have a constructive relationship between the rural areas and the more metropolitan areas in the European Union. We cannot do this without the farmers.”

“My intention is to make sure that policy is framed, [...] that animal husbandry can be done in a manner, and is done in a manner, that is more environmentally friendly. I’m prepared to work hard to make sure that animal welfare is given greater attention and there’re improvements in animal welfare whether it is in animal husbandry or transporting or slaughtering of animals. Those are measures that [...] the European authorities indeed ought to be taking.”

The Commission proposed the ‘Farm to Fork Strategy (COM(2020)381) on 20.5.2020. The Farm to Fork Strategy is a new comprehensive approach to how Europeans value food sustainability. It is an opportunity to improve lifestyles, health, and the environment. The creation of a favourable food environment that makes it easier to choose healthy and sustainable diets will benefit consumers’ health and quality of life and reduce health-related costs for society.

The Commission adopted on 15.12.2021 a Communication on Sustainable Carbon Cycles, setting out how to increase removals of carbon from the atmosphere. To balance out the impacts of our CO2 emissions, the EU needs to drastically reduce its reliance on fossil carbon, upscale carbon farming to store more carbon in nature, and promote industrial solutions to sustainably and verifiably remove and recycle carbon.

The Commission presented on 17.11.2021 a new EU Soil Strategy for tackling the climate and biodiversity crises. Healthy soils are the foundation for 95% of the food we eat, they host more than 25% of the biodiversity in the world and are the largest terrestrial carbon pool on the planet. The Strategy sets a framework with concrete measures for the protection, restoration and sustainable use of soils and proposes a set of voluntary and legally binding measures. This strategy aims to increase the soil carbon in agricultural land, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, and ensure that by 2050, all soil ecosystems are in a healthy condition.

On 22.6.2022, the Commission adopted a proposal for a regulation on the sustainable use of pesticides, which would repeal and replace Directive 2009/128/EC. The proposal sets legally binding
targets at EU level to reduce by 50% the use and the risk of chemical pesticides, as well as the use of the more hazardous pesticides by 2030, in line with the EU’s ‘farm to fork’ strategy.

**Tax policies to deliver on climate**

“My idea would be to say to our international partners that we are making this transition to a climate-neutral continent by 2050. To do that, we will take these measures. These measures will obviously have an impact on our economy. If you take the same measures, or comparable measures but going in the same direction, we will make this voyage together. If you don’t do that, then of course we have no choice but to protect our society and our economy, and then we will have to have a carbon border tax.”

“Our Energy Directive is nowhere near where it needs to be, we need to revisit that. And I want to have the possibility to at least have the possibility to envisage taxation of kerosene, because I don’t see the logic of why that energy source should be exempt from tax.”

“I think that it is unescapable that we’ve got to reduce and phase out subsidies which are still being directed towards fossil fuels. I acknowledge that we need a very practical timetable with milestones, step-by-step, which can be discussed with Member States. But that’s one of the most manifest, one of the most flagrant contradictions that we have to avoid going forward.”

Moreover, as part of the same package, A revision of the Energy Taxation Directive proposes to align the taxation of energy products with EU energy and climate policies, promoting clean technologies and removing outdated exemptions and reduced rates that currently encourage the use of fossil fuels. The new rules aim at reducing the harmful effects of energy tax competition, helping secure revenues for Member States from green taxes, which are less detrimental to growth than taxes on labour. The overall aim is a tax system for energy products which safeguards and improves the Single Market and supports the green transition by setting the right incentives.

The proposal also puts an end to the full exemption of kerosene used as fuel in the aviation industry for intra-EU voyages in the EU.

**Enforcement and implementation**

“Well, the rules [of the Ambient Air Quality Directive and similar legislation] are very clear, and I think we should be doing more to enforce the rules in our Member States. [...] This is legislation that is urgently needed, but it is not applied in many Member States. I think the Commission will have to toughen up in terms of starting infringement procedures and it is, I feel, my personal responsibility to make sure that that’s going to happen.”

“[...] we will enforce the emissions legislation with every instrument we have. I think the car industry has outlived its position of being in a comfy position. They need to deliver. They have not delivered in the past, they need to deliver and the Commission will enforce what they need to deliver.”

No specific actions have been identified.
“[...] {Concerning} what I will enforce in terms of removing contradictions in the policies we have. Already, I believe, we’ve made a step in the right direction in terms of palm oil with the decision taken by the present Commission, but we will have to look at more of these commodities to make sure we remove actions that add to deforestation. We need to create more transparency to know exactly where that is headed, but to do that, we will also need a dialogue with the countries of origin. They of course have their own demands in terms of fair trade and in terms of the relationship with the EU.”

### Implementation of the legislative instruments

“We will review and update our existing climate and energy legislation. It is also clear that we have to consider additional measures to achieve our goals of cleaner transport, less energy-hungry buildings, a more sustainable food system. We cannot afford the luxury of complacency.”

“So, yes, I believe there is room for better regulation. Yes, I believe there’s room for more tailor-made regulation. I also believe that by doing decent impact assessments, by having a Regulatory Scrutiny Board, which looks into this, we already have better regulation. I also believe that we need to look at a lot of existing regulation in a lot of areas to see whether it’s fit for purpose.”

“I think we need to extend the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) to other sectors such as aviation and the maritime sector but I also believe we have in existing legislation the possibility to look for tougher norms, if that is necessary, emission norms or in other areas. We will also have to review our energy directives and other directives.”

The Commission proposed a Renovation wave for Europe - greening our buildings, creating jobs, improving lives on 14.10.2020. The objective is to at least double the annual energy renovation rate of residential and non-residential buildings by 2030 and to foster deep energy renovations. The Commission also proposed on 15.12.2021 to align the rules for the energy performance of buildings with the European Green Deal and decarbonise the EU’s building stock by 2050. This proposal facilitates the renovation of homes, schools, hospitals, offices and other buildings across Europe to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and energy bills.

The Commission presented the Strategy on Offshore Renewable Energy on 19.11.2020. The strategy presents a general enabling framework, addressing barriers and challenges common to all offshore technologies and sea basins. It aims to make offshore renewable energy a core component of Europe’s energy system by 2050.

The Commission also proposed on 14.7.2021 to phase out free emission allowances for aviation and align with the global Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA) as well as to include shipping emissions for the first time in the EU ETS.

### European Climate Pact

“The Climate Pact will bring together initiatives and pledges from communities, companies and neighbourhoods, sharing knowledge and data, helping and inspiring each other with best practices and concrete results.”

The Commission launched the European Climate Pact (COM(2020)788) on 09.12.2020. The Pact aims to connect people from all walks of life to improve their understanding of the challenges, to invite all Europeans to participate and benefit, to develop solutions big and small and to trigger and scale up positive change.

The Commission launched a new EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change (COM(2021)82) on 24.02.2021. The strategy aims to realise the 2050...
vision of a climate-resilient Union by making adaptation smarter, systemic, swifter, and by stepping up international action.
MARGRETHE VESTAGER
Executive Vice-President
A Europe Fit for the Digital Age and Competition

This briefing follows up the commitments made by the commissioner since 2019.

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<td><strong>Long-term strategy for Europe’s industrial future</strong></td>
<td>Communications of 10 March 2020: An SME Strategy for a sustainable and digital Europe; A New Industrial Strategy for Europe. On 5 May 2021 the Commission updated the EU industrial strategy to take full account of the new circumstances following the COVID-19 crisis and help to drive the transformation to a more sustainable, digital, resilient and globally competitive economy. On 25 November 2020, the Commission proposed a Regulation on European Data Governance (DGA) in order to better exploit the potential of ever-growing data in a trustworthy European framework. The Regulation will facilitate data sharing across the EU and between sectors to create wealth for society, increase control and trust of both citizens and companies regarding their data, and offer an alternative European model to data handling practice of major tech platforms. Building on the existing cross-border legal framework for trusted digital identities, the European electronic identification and trust services initiative (eIDAS Regulation), on 3 June 2021, the Commission proposed a framework for a European Digital Identity and invited Member States to establish a common toolbox, which should include the technical...</td>
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On 28 April 2022, the EU, the United States, and several international partners, proposed a Declaration for the Future of the Internet, setting out the vision and principles of a trusted Internet. The declaration envisions an open, free, global, interoperable, reliable and secure Internet. It builds on the Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles that the Commission proposed to co-sign together with the European Parliament and the Council.

“We will bring together entire value chains – universities, suppliers, manufacturers – all the way to those who recycle the raw materials that are used in manufacturing.”

On 23 February 2021, the Commission proposed to set up 10 new European Partnerships between the European Union, Member States and/or the industry.

New SME strategy

“This work [on the industrial strategy] will include coming up with a new strategy to support the heart of Europe’s economy – the small and medium-sized businesses.”

“We should also make sure that we have instruments that can provide for financing. The Juncker Investment Plan provided for financing for 900,000 small and medium-sized businesses, and I think that is a good act to follow, to make sure that you can actually provide financing and allow people to grow.”

On 10 March 2020, the Commission published the Communication An SME Strategy for a sustainable and digital Europe and A New Industrial Strategy for Europe.

On 10 January 2022, the Commission and the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) launched the new EU SME Fund, which offers vouchers for EU-based SMEs to help them protect their intellectual property (IP) rights.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

“[…] we need rules to make sure that Artificial Intelligence is used ethically, to support human decision-making and not to undermine it. I will put forward proposals developing the European approach to Artificial Intelligence within the first 100 days of my term in office.”

“[…] the only way that we can be successful is to build the AI that we can trust. To build AI that is based on fundamental values.”

“[…] this question about how to avoid biases is one of the core questions when we are to discuss how to put a framework in place that will allow us to trust the technology.”

“And we will have the results [of the assessment of the Ethics Guidelines for Trustworthy AI] in by December. That, of course, will inform the work that we do […]”


On 21 April 2021, the Commission presented its AI Act, the first legal framework on trustworthy AI.

On 25 November 2020, the Commission proposed a Regulation on European data governance to boost data sharing across sectors and Member States. As a key pillar of the Data Strategy, this new way of data governance will increase trust in data sharing, strengthen mechanisms to increase data availability and overcome technical obstacles to the reuse of data. On 26 January 2022, the Commission proposed a Declaration on digital rights and principles for a human-centred digital transformation.
“Because, obviously, more investment is needed. Europe is behind on a factor of I think three or four when it comes to investing in AI [...]”

On 9 March 2021, the Commission presented the Communication “2030 Digital Compass: the European Way for the Digital Decade”.

On 8 February 2022, the Commission presented a "European Chips Act package", a set of measures to strengthen EU’s resilience and technological leadership in the field of semiconductors, that includes a “Chips for Europe” initiative, a new framework to ensure the security of supply, and a dedicated Chips Fund to facilitate access to finance for start-ups.

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“ [...] we need to engage with people’s concerns about technology and, in that process, to build trust. I will work on a Digital Services Act that includes upgrading our liability and safety rules on digital platforms, services and products. We may also need to regulate the way that companies collect and use and share data – so that it benefits all of society.”

“ [...] it’s important that we make the most of what we have, since we’re in a hurry. It is important to take stock of what I would call digital citizens’ rights – the GDPR – so that we can have national authorities enforcing that in full, and hopefully also have a market response, so that we have privacy by design [...]”

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that we should do it ourselves. Obviously, we commit to producing a proposal if there is not a global agreement by the end of 2020.”

international tax system based on a two-pillar approach (1. place of taxation where value is created, regardless of a physical presence in the country; and 2. minimum taxation).

On 22 December 2021, the Commission proposed a Council Directive on ensuring a global minimum level of taxation for multinational groups in the Union. The proposal concerns pillar 2 agreed in the IF on BEPS; it states that it follows the global minimum tax model rules published by the G20/OECD inclusive framework on BEPS on 20 December 2021. The Council aimed to adopt the draft directive during the first half of 2022, after receiving a formal opinion from the European Parliament. The transposition by Member States would be expected by January 2023, in line with the OECD inclusive framework’s timetable. On 19 May 2022, the EP adopted a resolution under the consultation procedure.

Initially, the Commission has announced that it will also make a proposal during 2022 on the reallocation of taxing rights (pillar 1), “once the technical aspects of the multilateral convention are agreed.” Under the OECD/G20 Inclusive Framework on BEPS, a decision has been made to revise the timeline for finalisation of a multilateral convention on pillar 1, now foreseen to be signed in the first half of 2023, with entry into force in 2024.

"Yes, I find that the possibilities of using Article 116 are indeed there. Now we have a process where every Member State, obviously, is invited to take part, but 116 will say: well, if a Member State or some Member States have provisions that are harmful to competition, you can take up negotiations with that Member State in order for them to change those provisions. If that is unsuccessful, you can table proposals, and those proposals can be decided in a normal or the ordinary legislative decision-making process, and I think definitely that we should start exploring what that would entail. I don’t think that it’s a given that it would be successful, but I think it’s important that we take the different tools that the Treaty gives us and use these tools if need be.”

Answer to question E-005215/2020 of 8 December 2020: "President von der Leyen has been clear that the Commission should make full use of the provisions in the Treaties that allow taxation proposals to be adopted through the ordinary legislative procedure. The Commission is exploring how to make use of provisions that provide for that procedure, including Article 116 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU). An initiative under Article 116 TFEU could be used, under certain conditions, to address a distortion of competition in the internal market derived from differences in Member States’ legislations."

On 23 March 2021, Executive Vice-President Vestager stated in the FISC Committee meeting: "If it is to be found that in one Member State the tax system becomes a burden on neighbouring countries within the Union, then after having tried to solve it out with the Member State in question, one can table a proposal which can then be adopted by qualified majority. And I think it is really important to insist because if there is a hint of suspicion that this is a game to circumvent unanimity, then of course Member States may just take us to court to say why are you not using the treaty in the way it should be used. For the Commission being guardian of the treaty we will keep an eye to see whether there will
be relevant cases for the use of article 116. If that will be the case we will go forward, no doubt about it.”

There is no indication of the use of Art. 116 on the Commission website.

The reply of the Commission (published on 2/2/2022) to the Lalucq-report on “Reforming the EU policy on harmful tax practices (including the reform of the Code of Conduct Group)” states in this regard: The Commission is exploring options on a possible first case that would justify the use of Article 116 TFEU. The Commission shares the view that it should use all possibilities offered by the Treaties to move forward its agenda for a fair and efficient taxation, including Article 116 of the TFEU, which entails using the ordinary legislative procedure and thus a stronger role for the Parliament.”

Strengthening competition enforcement

“Markets are moving fast, the law is moving the way the law is moving. Obviously, to some degree, there is an inherent asymmetry here. There’s a limit as to how fast law enforcement can work, because we will never compromise on due process. On the other hand, we should be able to work as fast as possible. We actually have a case right now where we are trying to use what we call interim measures, where we’re saying to a business: you’ve got to stop what you’re doing because we think that you’re harming competition, and when you stop, we will then do, of course, a full casework in order to prove the harm that’s been done. That, of course, is the first for 20 years, but I think it’s a good reflection of the fact that we find it a very high priority to speed up in what we do.”

The recently adopted Digital Markets Act (DMA) aims to complement competition law and builds upon the Commission’s case practice in the digital sector. It also provides for the use of interim measures.

In October 2021, the Commission applied, for a first time, interim measures in a merger case.

Review Europe’s competition rules

“These are challenging times and they are also challenging in terms of competition enforcement because markets are changing fast – and we have even bigger changes ahead of us. Human nature though – with basic motives like greed and fear – does not change. So the principles that guide our competition rules are as relevant today as they were when the Treaty of Rome was signed more than 60 years ago. But we need to make sure that the way we apply those principles is fit for a world that’s changing fast. So, I will move forward with the review that we’ve started of our rules on antitrust, mergers and state aid. In this process, we’ll be guided and

Early after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Commission put in place the State aid Temporary Framework to mitigate the economic shocks in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Overtime, it was amended six times and eventually expired on 30 June 2022. A similar Temporary Crisis Framework was put in place in March 2022 to support the economy in the context of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. On 11 July, the Commission launched a consultation with the Member States on possible amendments to this Temporary Framework, notably to facilitate investments in line with the RePower EU plan. This amendment was adopted on 20 July.
helped by the insights we’ve gained from looking into how digitisation affects competition – including the independent report by three special advisers, which they delivered earlier this year.”

“[...] we have started a full first fitness check and then eventually a review of a huge number of our guidelines. One thing is running ahead of that programme, and that is the guidelines for the Emissions Trading System, the ETS. That is because we want to be ready when the new trading period starts. So that is a thing to be aware of, that we will start a public consultation on that within a relatively short timeframe.”

“[...] we will continue. We still have open cases and we have just asked every Member State to give us a status of how they use tax rulings in order to update all the material we have from when we did this the last time a couple of years ago.”

In the meantime, the Commission continued with its policy reviews of EU antitrust, mergers and state aid rules. In its Communication on a competition policy fit for new challenges of 18 November 2021, the Commission outlined its views on the role of competition policy and the contribution of the ongoing review to delivering the green and digital transitions in a resilient Single Market. An overview of timelines for the main initiatives in the policy review (2020-2024) can be found under Mergers and Antitrust and State aid.

A few of the planned reviews were published in late 2021, including the new Communication on Important Projects of Common European Interest (IPCEI), the new Guidelines on State aid for climate, environmental protection and energy 2022 and the revised Guidelines on State aid to promote risk finance investments.

On 21 September 2020, the Commission adopted the revised EU Emission Trading System State aid Guidelines.

“[...] we will continue. We still have open cases and we have just asked every Member State to give us a status of how they use tax rulings in order to update all the material we have from when we did this the last time a couple of years ago.”

On 5 May 2021, the Commission proposed a Foreign Subsidies Regulation, which aims to address distortions on the internal market caused by foreign subsidies that fall outside the EU State aid, merger control and antitrust rules. Agreement was reached on 30 June 2022.

Foreign state ownership and subsidies

“Obviously, we welcome investors, but they should come here for business reasons. One of the open questions is, of course, to make sure that if a state-owned company from abroad buys a European business, that no foreign state aid is coming into Europe undermining the level playing field here. And here, we work with colleagues working on trade and on the Single Market in order to get a functional tool, because that, unfortunately, we don’t have yet but it’s a matter of high priority.”

On 5 May 2021, the Commission proposed a Foreign Subsidies Regulation, which aims to address distortions on the internal market caused by foreign subsidies that fall outside the EU State aid, merger control and antitrust rules. Agreement was reached on 30 June 2022.
I. Follow-up of the commitments made by Dombrovskis in his capacity of Executive Vice-President since 2019.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Commitment</th>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;We will present an action plan for implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights effectively across the EU.&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;So let me mention some concrete proposals which are in the pipeline. [...] a legal initiative on fair minimum wages, and that was in first 100 days of the mandate; a European child guarantee; a strengthened youth guarantee; ...&quot;</td>
<td>October 2020: Proposal for an <a href="https://eur-lex.europa.eu/doc/document/leg/rap/2020-rap-253089_en.htm">EU directive on adequate minimum wages in the European Union</a>. A provisional agreement was reached between Parliament and Council in June 2022.</td>
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... A European Unemployment Benefit [Re]insurance Scheme [...];

... an updated skills agenda; improved labour conditions for platform workers [...] and also a new European gender strategy, including measures on binding pay transparency.”

The 2020 Commission Work-programme included a legislative initiative on a European Unemployment Benefit [Re]insurance Scheme but this proposal was never tabled and was no longer mentioned in the 2021 and 2022 work programmes. The focus of Commission action has shifted to active labour market policies such as EASE (Effective Support to Employment) and RRF (Recovery and Resilience Facility) support.


July 2020: Communication on a European Skills Agenda.
December 2021: Proposal for a directive on improving working conditions in platform work.

Role of social dialogue

..... “[...] we intend to continue to develop social dialogue.” “[...] involvement of social partners in the European Semester at European and national levels, consultations on key policy proposals [...] support for capacity building, and we will continue along those avenues.” “[...] we have always very strongly emphasised that we want to respect collective bargaining models in different Member States, especially where those models work very well, like in Nordic countries. [...] this is our guiding principle and will be so in the future.” “We also need to strengthen the effectiveness and functioning of cross-industry and sectoral-social dialogue [...]”

February 2021: Publication of a report on strengthening EU social dialogue by Special Advisor on Social Dialogue to Commissioner Schmit, Andrea Nahles.

In April/May 2022 the European Commission held consultations with social partners in preparation for the Communication.

Social security systems

"...what we need to ensure is that [...] people, also in the digital economy and platforms [...] contribute to the social systems and they are covered by the social systems." "[Regarding] [...] portability of pensions in cross-border situations [...], this is a right that should be available to mobile workers. So we are ready to work to improve the practical situation on the ground."

Already in December 2016, the Commission proposed a Regulation amending Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 on the coordination of social security systems. In December 2021, Council and Parliament reached a provisional agreement but the file is now on hold.


Anti-discrimination and equal opportunities

"[...] we will continue to promote adequate income and income support [...] to those in need. [...] the principle of equal opportunity is there and the Commission will continue to rigorously apply it." "On gender, there will be a dedicated strategy, among other things, looking at, for example, women’s access to the labour markets and also the pay gap." “[...] further supporting people with disabilities is also something which is going to be on the Commission’s agenda.”


September 2020: EU anti-racism action plan 2020-2025.


Legislative initiative on Strengthening the role and independence of equality bodies planned for Q3 2022 (Commission work programme 2022).
Tax fairness

**Tax fairness** "[...] there is no social fairness without tax fairness." "I will keep the fight against tax avoidance high on my agenda [...]. Multinationals must be taxed effectively, so that our citizens and SMEs don't have to bear an unfair tax burden."

See Commissioner’s Gentiloni separate note.

Support for the green and digital transformation

"My [...] objective will be to use fiscal, economic and financial policies to support the green and digital transformation."

"The green and digital transformation can only succeed if it is seen as socially fair. [...] So my [...] objective is to make sure that our social policies evolve to accompany these transformations."


December 2020: the European Parliament and the Council agreed on the Commission's proposal for a Just Transition Fund (JTF) with an overall budget of €17.5 billion. The JTF is a key element of the European Green Deal and the first pillar of the Just Transition Mechanism.

March 2022: [Communication on the European Growth Model](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/growth-and-economic-affairs/energy-and-climate-environment/green-deal/green-growth-model/). It recalls the common objectives the EU and its Member States have committed to with respect to the green and digital transition and strengthening social and economic resilience.


"... [digital divide] is an important part of our skills agenda, because to equip people for the digital age, you obviously need digital skills, and there clearly is a shortage."

"[...] we will help to support the people and regions most affected by the green transformation through a new Just Transition Fund."

"[...] we will be working closely with the European Parliament [...] to see what additional elements are needed and how they can be integrated within the MFF framework – for example the Just Transition Fund."

July 2020: [European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience](https://ec.europa.eu/skills-platform/en/programme/european-skills-agenda).

July 2020: Commission proposal for a Council Recommendation on Vocational education and training for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience (adopted November 2020).

Recommendation on improving the provision of digital skills in education and training planned for Q3 2022 (CWP 2022).
Recommendation on the enabling factors for digital education planned for Q3 2022 (CWP 2022).

The Sustainable Europe Investment Plan

"[...] there will be several work strands. So, first it's a financial work strand: support from the EU budget and the EIB to attract investment and also advisory support to create a pipeline of eligible projects. Because we don't only need to mobilise money, we also need good-quality projects which actually enable the sustainable transition."

"[...] the aim is to mobilise one trillion euros in sustainable investment by leveraging private money via the InvestEU programme, via the EIB, where we, as you know, intend to move up this target for climate financing from 25% to 50%. That's going to be fresh money, and through other contributions in the EU budget."

"We will also encourage Member States to allocate up to 5% of their funds under shared management for the InvestEU programme, which again will allow us to leverage substantial amounts of fresh money."

EIB as a climate bank

"[...] the flagship part of turning the EIB into a climate bank is to increase the share of its financing which is dedicated to climate from the current 25% to 50% [by 2025]. So that's a first important step, and phasing out the financing of fossil energy is part of this strategy."

"In terms of estimates, you mentioned EUR 50 billion per year. Well, with additional EIB financing typically you can leverage at least two-thirds coming also from project partners, so at least EUR 45 billion per year. So if we are talking about a 10-
Refocusing the European Semester

"We must continue to build on the European Semester. Social considerations already account for nearly half of our country-specific recommendations. I intend to keep this focus in our future economic governance. We will also integrate the UN Sustainable Development Goals into the Semester objectives to promote both inclusive and sustainable growth."

"There should be regular monitoring of progress towards sustainable development goals – targets within the Semester. We will also put forward systemic considerations in policies relevant for green transition, like a green investment, circular economy, resource efficiency and just transition across all policy sectors."

"[...] we’ll assess how to integrate sustainability into the macroeconomic imbalances procedure, but we also have binding sustainability targets, for example emission-reduction targets in other policies like in energy union, and lock in our commitments to implement the Paris Agreement."

Simplification of the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP)

"[...] we will be working on the basis of the report of the European Fiscal Board, which sets out some ideas on simplification of the rules of the Stability and Growth Pact, so that they are also simpler to apply and simpler to explain to the broader public because currently the rules are – as we know – actually too complex."

"[...] on EU fiscal rules, we can indeed take the work of the European Fiscal Board on expenditure benchmark with a debt anchor and as I put it, a 'limited golden rule', as a basis for our considerations. Of course it will be important to build a broad consensus so that we agree on the way to adjust and simplify our fiscal rules."

"[As regards red lines in relation to flexibility in the Stability and Growth Pact] I think, as a general principle in Europe, we should avoid drawing too many red lines and rather work in a spirit of compromise. That’s how the EU is working."

26 February 2021: Vice President Dombrovskis stated "Over time, our fiscal framework has grown to serve an increasingly wide range of objectives... Perhaps 'less is more'. ... We are now considering to what extent it should pay more attention to investment and growth, or to challenges such as the green and the digital transitions... One avenue for simplifying the framework would be to move away from indicators that are not directly observable, such as output gaps and structural balances. Another important element is to make sure that the framework delivers sustainable fiscal positions in all Member States. We need a credible debt anchor that is adhered to. These ideas reflect what the European Fiscal Board already said in its September 2019..."
European Stabilisation Function

"[...] we have put forward two proposals. One is the reform support programme, on which basis we are now discussing a Budgetary Instrument for Competitiveness and Convergence. [...] And the other proposal was on the stabilisation function: we put forward a concrete proposal on the European Investment Stabilisation Function [...]. Now we are considering to what extent we can find synergy with the [...] proposal on the Stabilisation Function and a European Unemployment [Re]insurance Scheme."

The Commission proposal for the governance of Budgetary Instrument for Convergence and Competitiveness (BICC) as agreed by the Eurogroup in October 2019 was withdrawn in the context of the EU Recovery Plan, which includes:

- the EU Recovery Instrument (EURI) that allows the Commission to borrow up to €750 billion, and
- the Recovery and Resilience Facility, which provides Member States with grants and loans to be used to fund investments and reforms. The facility is strongly interlinked with the European Semester for economic policy coordination.

The RRF provides for temporary stabilisation in the context of the pandemic.

In May 2018, the Commission had proposed the "European Investment Stabilisation Function": apparently, there has not been any follow up by the co-legislators.

Financial services, financial stability and the Capital Markets Union

After a reshuffling of the Commission portfolios, in October 2020, Commissioner Mairead McGuinness took over this part of the portfolio (see a separate note).
II. Follow-up of the commitments made by Dombrovskis in his capacity of Commissioner for Trade (and his predecessor, Phil Hogan) since 2019.

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<td><strong>Reform EU Trade Policy and the World Trade Organisation (WTO)</strong></td>
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<td>Launch a ‘wide review of EU trade policy ... to design a new direction for EU trade, based on the concept of open strategic economy.’</td>
<td>Following public consultation in 2020, the Communication ‘Trade Policy Review – An Open, Sustainable and Assertive Trade Policy’ was published on 18/02/2021.</td>
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<td>‘Reform of the WTO rules-based system of global economic governance.’</td>
<td>At the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference in June 2022, WTO members agreed on specific next steps toward WTO reform, including restoring a fully functioning dispute settlement function.</td>
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<td>‘I will come back to the INTA committee to discuss ... and your views will be incorporated in the Commission’s communication.’</td>
<td>Dombrovskis participated in the Trade Policy Day of Parliament’s International Trade Committee (INTA) on 12/10/2020 and in a plenary debate 24/11/2020 on the review process. He presented the communication, which largely took Parliament’s views into account, to INTA on 24/02/2021.</td>
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<td><strong>Strengthen EU tools and enforcement</strong></td>
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<td>To level the playing field, “launch a new legal instrument dealing with distortions from foreign subsidies in our internal market.”</td>
<td>Following the release of a White Paper in 2020, a regulation on foreign subsidies distorting the internal market was proposed on 15/05/2021. After interinstitutional trilogue negotiations, a provisional agreement was reached on 30/06/2022.</td>
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<td>To level the playing field, “(...) to rein in practices causing market distortions.”</td>
<td>The first report on screening foreign direct investment was issued in November 2021. A proposal on mandatory due diligence, including the ban of forced labour products, was published on 23/02/2022.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Put forward a new mechanism to protect the EU from economic coercion by trade partners.</td>
<td>A legislative proposal on anti-coercion was published on 08/12/2021. A communication titled The European economic and financial system: fostering openness, strength and resilience was published on 19/01/2021. An amendment of the blocking statute regulation is expected in 2022.</td>
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<td>Seek agreement on the International Procurement Instrument.</td>
<td>An agreement was reached in interinstitutional trilogue negotiations on 14/03/2022, and the regulation was published on 30/06/2022.</td>
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Renew the Generalised System of Preferences. A legislative proposal was published on 22/09/2021. The European Parliament adopted its position in May 2022; the Council’s position remained pending in July 2022.

Step up efforts to implement and enforce existing agreements. Chief Trade Enforcement Officer appointed in July 2020. Single entry point for complaints on market access and TSD chapters launched in November 2020. After an agreement was reached in interinstitutional trilogue negotiations, the amended Enforcement Regulation entered into force on 13/01/2021.

Advance the review of 15-point trade and sustainable development action plan to 2021. Following a Civil Society Dialogue held on 19/07/2021 and the public consultation concluded on 05/11/2021, a communication titled ‘The power of trade partnerships: together for green and just economic growth’ was published on 22/06/2022.

Transatlantic relations

“In the absence of a negotiated settlement, ... we will ... impose our tariffs in line with the WTO ruling in the Boeing case.” With the WTO’s authorisation, the Commission responded to US subsidies to Boeing with countermeasures against US exports. An agreement was reached with US to mutually – but temporarily – suspend tariffs on civil aircraft on 15/06/2021.

“I will spare no effort in revitalising our strategic partnership with the United States.” The Commission released ‘A new transatlantic agenda for global change’ on 02/12/2020. De-escalation efforts supported by the EP include eliminating duties on lobsters in 2020 and pausing steel and aluminium tariffs on 31/10/2021. An EU-US Summit in June 2021 announced the establishment of an EU-US Trade and Technology Council, which held its first meeting on 29/09/2021 in Pittsburgh and second meeting on 15-16/05/2022 in Paris. Both Commissioners Dombrovskis and Vestager have closely engaged with the Parliament in the scrutiny of the process.

China

“We will work to enhance our trade and investment relationship with China, notably by concluding the Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI).” The EU and China concluded an agreement in principle for the CAI on 30/12/2020. The ratification procedure was suspended due to China’s sanctions against several MEPs.
Other trade/investment negotiations

To continue to deepen our strategic relationships and diversify our trade ties.

The EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement entered into force on 01/05/2021. By the end of June 2022, some trade negotiations had been completed (Mercosur, Mexico, New Zealand), some were close to completion (Chile), and others had advanced (Australia) or resumed (India). However, none of these trade agreements had been formally referred for Parliament’s consent.
JOSEP BORRELL FONTELLES
High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President
A Stronger Europe in the World

This briefing follows up the commitments made by the High Representative / Vice President since 2019.

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<td>Qualified majority voting (QMV) in the Council</td>
<td>Serious attempts to introduce qualified majority voting QMV for sanctions, but unsuccessful so far:</td>
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<td>“I will try to use the provisions of the Treaty” to apply qualified majority voting for “sanctions, human rights and CSDP missions”.</td>
<td>- In November 2020, the Council approved the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024. HR/VP Borrell said ‘The Member States did not agree’ to adopt implementing decisions by QMV – a proposal of the Commission and the HR/VP.</td>
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<td>- In December 2020, the Council adopted the new EU global framework for human rights sanctions. The framework did not include the use of QMV for individual sanction (de-)listings, contrary to the proposal made by the Commission and HR/VP. The European Parliament had requested that QMV be used in resolutions in March 2019, January 2021, July 2021 and February 2022.</td>
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<td>- In a press conference on 13/12/2021, the HR/VP expressed ‘frustration’ about the Council’s failure to adopt sanctions on Ethiopia due to the lack of unanimity.</td>
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<td>The Council has used the unanimity rule when adopting extensive sanctions against Russia and against Belarus since February 2022, in response to the war in Ukraine. This has caused significant delays in the adoption of a sixth package of sanctions against Russia.</td>
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The progressive switch from unanimity to QMV in all areas of foreign and security policy was one of the final proposals of the Conference on the Future of Europe. In June 2022, the HR/VP used his blog to call for switching from unanimity to QMV, not only for the adoption of sanctions, but also for enlargement.

Human rights and democracy

“I will launch a new human rights action plan in which I plan to involve the EP”. “I ask Parliament to work with me to ensure that … the EU remains an example for the defence of human rights in the world”.

... Human rights are not just the cherry on the top of a trade agreement. It is an integral part of it, not only during the drafting of the agreement but also when it comes to monitoring its implementation’ I will see that a human rights clause be included in all bilateral trade agreements and that dialogues on human rights with these countries deliver results that take into account each country’s specificity”.

...we need coherence between internal and external policies...”. “The promotion of human rights should not only be an issue of external policy that you relegate to a corner, it must be at the centre”.

Ukraine and a common strategic culture

“Ukraine remains central to the strategic challenge... that Russia poses, and it is the most important, one of the biggest priorities, in order to develop a credible foreign policy.”

The EEAS and Commission Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024 was adopted by the Council on 17/11/2020. The European Parliament’s Human Rights (DROI) subcommittee was informed, but expressed ‘disappointment’ that the EEAS had not involved the committee and Parliament more. Council adopted a new human rights sanctions regime on 7/12/20, but without covering corruption, as requested by Parliament. A first set of human rights sanctions was agreed in March 2021, and sanctions against the Wagner Group were added in December 2021.

While human rights clauses are included in EU trade agreements, there is no dedicated monitoring and problem-solving mechanism to improve their use and enforcement. The EU guidelines on human rights dialogues with non-EU countries were updated in February 2021, but lack indicators for evaluating dialogues’ results and an operational link to the human rights clauses.

The Action Plan aims ‘to enhance coherence ... between internal and external policy areas’, and integrate human rights ‘into all areas of external action’. The Commission updated and extended the toolkit for a human rights-based approach to international partnerships (June 2021) (although this was not signed by the EEAS). The Commission and EEAS issued joint guidance for companies on forced labour on 12/07/21. After delays, the Commission’s proposal on corporate sustainability due diligence was published on 23/02/2022.

HR/VP Borrell helped maintain Member States’ unanimity on various sanctions responding to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Member States have also agreed to the six-monthly renewal of restrictive measures in place since 2014 targeting Russian actors. Impressive speed and adaptability were shown with the use of the European Peace Facility (expanded with up to
Tracking commitments of Josep Borrell Fontelles

EUR 2.5 billion for Ukraine by mid-2022) and a Clearing House Cell, established to coordinate the delivery of priority weapons according to Ukraine’s requests. This unprecedented reactivity in decision making suggests a new geopolitical turn for the EU as it develops a strategic culture on security and defence.

“We need to progress towards a common strategic culture, e.g. via a more coherent strategic approach to our many actions, and operationalising the EU’s level of ambition.”

The ‘Strategic compass for security and defence’, published on 24/03/2022 and endorsed by the Council two days later, was launched in order to: formulate a common threat analysis at EU level; agree on clear and achievable strategic objectives; and offer political guidance for future military planning processes.

The Compass sets out concrete actions in four work strands so that the EU:
• acts more quickly and decisively when facing crises;
• secures citizens against fast-changing threats;
• invests in needed capabilities and technologies; and
• partners with others to achieve common goals.

Of the 80 commitments in the Strategic Compass, 51 are due this year.

The Compass proposes reinforcing civilian and military CSDP missions and operations by making them more robust, flexible and modular, thereby contributing to making the EU’s CSFP more operational and credible.

Gender equality

“We have to introduce gender as a value in diplomatic and military activities”.

The EU’s 2021-2025 Action Plan on Gender equality and women’s empowerment in external relations was published on 25/11/2020. The HR/VP and Commissioner Urpilainen presented it to Parliament on 3/12/2020. Specific objectives and indicators for diplomacy and women, peace, and security agenda are integrated.

A new EEAS Principal Advisor on Gender was appointed, after a delay, with ‘diversity’ added to the post’s responsibilities. (In 2021 Parliament asked that the EEAS ‘establish one role for each of these issues’)

The ‘Strategic compass for security and defence’, published on 24/03/2022, includes gender-related goals. It will be important to see progress in these, as CSDP Missions and Operations frequently fail to achieve their gender targets. EEAS figures state that women constitute 24 % of international staff in civilian missions and only 7 % of total staff in military missions and operations.

“A good target, the one we have to fight for, is about 40 % of women in EEAS management posts.”

According to EEAS data, despite a slight upward trend, women account for only 35.7 % of EEAS middle management and 28.3% of senior management. The EEAS established a Joint Committee on Equal Opportunities (COPEC) in 2020.
Cooperation with the European Parliament

“I will be happy to work in close collaboration with the European Parliament, because I am convinced of the potential of parliamentary diplomacy’. ‘I must commit myself here to … consulting the Parliament, in plenary, in the committee and in the special committee, to explain to you the most sensitive elements of the foreign, security and defence policy’.

The HR/VP’s briefings to the coordinators of Parliament’s Foreign Affairs (AFET) committee and to the chairs of the Human Rights and Security & Defence subcommittees (DROI and SEDE) before and after the Foreign Affairs Council have been on hold since the start of the COVID pandemic. Discussions about the resumption of such briefings are ongoing. The EEAS is aware that these were commitments made by the HR/VP during the hearing. One possibility being discussed is that these briefings would be delivered by the EEAS Secretary-General in the future.

AFET receives regular debriefings from the EEAS Secretary General on the outcome of EU-US high-level dialogue meetings.

The Parliament has to have access to the documents it needs to exercise its scrutiny role, be they classified or not... the instrument in force for classified information in CFSP/CSDP matters – the 2002 Interinstitutional Agreement – dates back to Pre-Lisbon, and is no longer in line with the current institutional setup and needs to be replaced. Following Council’s recent endorsement to restart the negotiations with the Parliament on a successor arrangement to replace the 2002 Interinstitutional Agreement, I believe that negotiations should start immediately and I am fully committed to reaching an agreement as swiftly as possible in the new mandate.”

“I also commit to explain… the negotiations of international agreements”.

“I also commit... to hold at least five times a year the joint consultation meeting on the execution of the CFSP budget”.

“I also commit to engage with the rotating presidency of the Council to make sure the AFET Chair is invited to Gymnich meetings”.

The EP and EEAS are still discussing how to improve EP access to EEAS documents, including confidential ones. The EEAS may only share some information with Parliament if the Council agrees, but negotiations to revise the related Parliament-Council Agreement of 2002 are ongoing.

When Parliament does not receive CSDP documents, the institution’s Treaty responsibility in this area is undermined.

Regarding international agreements, the EEAS sends a representative to Parliament to explain the state-of-play of negotiations when requested by the Parliament.

The joint consultation meeting with the PSC Chair, Commission and Parliament on the CFSP budget was held once in the first half of 2022, twice in 2021 and three times in 2020.

The AFET Chair has been invited to all Gymnichs (informal foreign ministers’ meetings) organised by the rotating Council Presidencies. Since the Gymnich organised in August 2020, the Chair has attended the entire programme. In January 2022, the SEDE Chair attended the Gymnich in informal defence ministers format.
Involving the EP in external financing instruments

“I will ensure, in cooperation with the Commissioners for International Partnerships and for Neighbourhood and Enlargement, that Commission services and EEAS continue to associate the co-legislators closely with the preparation of EU cooperation programmes.”

“I agree with the EP on the need for horizontal steer and coordination of EU external financing.”

“I also commit myself to jointly explore ways of ensuring a meaningful in-depth dialogue on documents for the strategic planning phases of the financial instruments under my remit.”

The Commission’s efforts to involve the Parliament in its Neighbourhood, development and international cooperation instrument (NDICI)-Global Europe Regulation, adoption of Delegated Act, and programming are the following:

- the 2021 Commission declaration attached to the NDICI-General Europe Regulation, established a regular high-level geopolitical dialogue with Parliament (the AFET & Development (DEVE) committees);
- HR/VP Borrell appeared in both dialogues with AFET-DEVE in June and October 2021; and
- Members of AFET and DEVE had a very fruitful exchange of views with the HR/VP on NDICI-General Europe in June 2022.

While Parliament welcomed the geopolitical dialogues in a resolution from February 2022, it also pointed to the need to ‘receive relevant preparatory documents sufficiently on time and with an adequate level of detail in order to carry out a meaningful scrutiny’. It remains to be seen to what extent the Commission takes into account Parliament’s positions, expressed during and following the dialogues.

Parliament’s request for an update of Article 9 of the Council Decision establishing the EEAS, assigning responsibility of various Commissioners for EU’s external financing instruments, remains unanswered.

Global connectivity and an integrated policy approach

“Addressing connectivity requires ... a whole of EU approach”.

A Global Gateway initiative – a joint communication of the Commission and the HR/VP (EEAS) – was adopted on 1 December 2021, promising up to 300 billion in sustainable and rules-based connectivity worldwide.

Connectivity is also a theme in many of the earlier initiatives that contributed to the Global Gateway, including economic and investment plans for the Eastern Partnership, the Southern Neighbourhood, and the Western Balkans; as well as the strategy for Africa and the related investment package for Africa.

Operations on the ground / European Peace Facility

“We have to be more operational on the ground and deploy forces, e.g. in our neighbourhood; the proposed European Peace Facility (EPF) should bring a step-change in EU efforts abroad.”

CSDP missions and operations face different challenges, including personnel and equipment shortages, with military headquarters (MPCC) also short-staffed. The Strategic Compass, adopted on 24-25/03/22, foresees a reform of CSDP deployments in response to this. The
model of military CSDP missions and operations will be adapted by mid-2022. For example, the document proposes to incentivise force generation by expanding the scope of common costs under the European Peace Facility (EPF). As for civilian interventions, a new Civilian CSDP compact will be adopted by mid-2023.

The EPF was created to finance CFSP actions with military or defence implications. On 18/12/21, the Council reached a political agreement on the off-budget instrument, worth EUR 5.7 billion for 2021-2027. Its implementation since 2021 has contributed to lethal and non-lethal capacity building for the EU’s partners. In the context of Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine, the Council had adopted five assistance measures to the benefit of the Ukrainian Armed Forces in 2022 (28/02, 23/03, 13/04, 23/05 and 22/07) by late July 2022, bringing the Union’s overall military assistance to Kiev through the EPF to EUR 2.5 billion. Continuous financial support of the Ukrainian war effort has raised questions about the EPF’s capacity to sustain other CSDP military operations, notably in the Western Balkans and Africa.

Hybrid and cyber threats and disinformation

“We need to make further progress as far as EU protection against hybrid threats is concerned, in particular to counter cyber-attacks and disinformation.”

Two joint staff working documents were issued in July 2020, focusing on mapping measures and addressing hybrid threats.

A joint communication on Tackling COVID-19 disinformation was published on 20/06/2020, and the European Democracy Action Plan from December 2020 includes responses to disinformation.

The EEAS’s StratCom team has been reinforced and the Rapid Alert System upgraded.

A new Cybersecurity Strategy was issued on 16/12/2020.

The Strategic Compass, adopted in March 2022, paves the way for a ‘global’ EU response and strategy to hybrid threats (including cyber and disinformation), with a comprehensive EU Hybrid Toolbox and the development of ‘Response Teams,’ an EU Cyber Diplomatic Toolbox and Cyber Defence Policy (detailed in the ‘Secure’ part of the Compass).

(In the EP’s 2021 enlargement reports, Parliament reiterated the need for stronger efforts to fight disinformation and hybrid threats that seek to undermine the EU perspective of the Western Balkans.

Mediation

“In short an EU high-level advisory board on mediation will be set up to enhance EU

The updated mediation concept was presented in October 2020 and endorsed in Council Conclusions in December 2020. The EEAS set up a pool of mediation experts,
strategic capacity to engage through a pool of experienced senior mediation advisors." 
“A process of updating the 2009 concept on strengthening EU and mediation capacities has also been launched.”

initiated a taskforce with Managing Directors in 2020 to steer the process politically, and published guidelines. External support is available through the EEAS framework contract on conflict prevention and mediation, implemented through the third phase of the European Resources for Mediation Support (ERMES) project. However, no High Level Advisory Board including other institutions has been created.
This briefing follows up the commitments made by the commissioner since 2019.

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<td><strong>Alleviating the regulatory burden for people and for business</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Applying the new ‘One In, One Out’ principle</strong></td>
<td>The Commission introduced the ‘one in, one out approach’ as a pilot in the second half of 2021. It is now being fully implemented in 2022. The objectives of the approach are to ensure that regulation achieves benefits, is targeted, easy to comply with and does not add unnecessary regulatory burden.</td>
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<td>“[...] I will apply the ‘one in, one out’ principle, [...] , meaning that every legislative proposal with a new burden for the users should be offset by an equivalent reduction elsewhere. This is particularly key for small and medium enterprises, and I will make sure that this new principle is applied in all areas. However, [...] I say a clear ‘no’ to a mechanical approach and to endangering our high standards, especially social and environmental.”</td>
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<td><strong>REFIT Platform</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Rebranding the REFIT Platform into a ‘Fit for the Future Platform’</strong></td>
<td>The Fit for Future Platform is a high-level expert group that is helping the Commission in its efforts to simplify EU laws and to reduce related unnecessary costs. It is examining whether existing laws can achieve their objectives efficiently as we tackle new challenges such as digitalisation. The Commission is taking into account the Platform’s opinions to ensure EU laws help, not hinder, people</td>
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and business, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises. It will also report on the Platform’s work in its Annual Burden Survey. These efforts are part of the Regulatory fitness and performance (REFIT) programme.

**Enhancing Public Consultations**

“[…we will need to take out public consultations much more to our countries, to our regions, talk to professional associations, to make sure that we will have a better response in the future.”

In July 2020 the Commission launched the new version of the Web portal “Have your say”. This version makes it easier for the public to find on the portal the Commission initiatives they are most interested in, thanks to improved search functionalities.

Recently four important public consultations were carried out by the new portal: the consultation on the Digital Services Act: deepening the Internal Market and clarifying responsibilities for digital services; the one concerning compulsory licensing of patents; the consultation on Sustainable and Smart Mobility and the consultation on a New consumer agenda.

**Producing a yearly Foresight Report**

“[… the President elect’s mission letter gives me mandate to prepare a yearly Foresight Report on the most relevant emerging trends. This Report will inform the State of the Union speech and our programming exercises. Based on it, I will champion strategic debates in the European Parliament as well as at the European Council. I want us to agree on transformative megatrends that we need to approach strategically and develop our long-term vision for Europe […]”

In 2020, the Commission published its first annual Strategic Foresight Report, introducing resilience as a new policymaking compass and outlining ways to embed strategic foresight into EU decision-making. In 2021, the second Strategic Foresight Report focussed on the geopolitical dimension of resilience and identified 10 areas of action in which the EU could strengthen its open strategic autonomy and global leadership.

The Commission adopted in June 2022 the new 2022 Strategic Foresight Report – “Twinning the green and digital transitions in the new geopolitical context”. The objective is maximising synergies and consistency between climate and digital ambitions. The aim is to strengthen EU strategic autonomy and resilience face to global challenges by 2050.

**Setting up the EU Network of Strategic Foresight**

“[…]We need to set up an EU Network of Strategic Foresight, bringing together the best of EU institutions and the Member States.”

Announced in the Commission’s 2020 Strategic Foresight Report, the EU-wide Foresight Network of 27 “Ministers for the Future” was launched in May 2021, in close cooperation with the Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

This Network builds on shared intelligence, analytical
Commitment to act on Parliament’s Article 225 TFEU resolutions on legislative initiatives

“[...] a Right of Initiative for the European Parliament that would mark the start of a new institutional era. As announced by the President elect, when the Parliament, acting by a majority of its Members, requests a legislative proposal, the Commission will respond with a legislative act, in full respect of the proportionality, subsidiarity and better law-making principles.”

On the 18 adopted resolutions pursuant to article 225 of the Parliament, the Commission followed up, with a reply, on 15 of them.

There was only one negative reply (no follow-up) in common agreement because it was not necessary anymore – the one on the MFF contingency planning. The 3 months deadline to reply to the remaining two has not yet expired.

Pledge to improve Commission’s handling of petitions

“[...]As input from citizens to detect and, where appropriate, to act upon breaches of EU law, I will work closely with the Committee on Petitions throughout the year and of course, attend its presentation of the annual report...”

The PETI Committee held an exchange of views with the Commissioner on 2 December 2021. Moreover, on 17 December 2021, the Commissioner was present in plenary for the debate on PETI’s Annual Report 2020 (Rapporteur Falca). The Commission has also provided a written follow-up to the resolution on that Annual Report.
Timely responses from the Commission

“If [...] you will just send us really the petitions for which the Commission can do something, and is responsible for. I’ll do my utmost that they will get a good answer in three months and you will have the Commissioners ready to be in your committee.”

The Commission in the structured dialogue explained the efforts made to further improve the speed, quality, and pertinence of its contributions to the replies to petitioners’ concerns and its commitment to continue providing detailed responses to petitions and outlining possible solutions at European or national level.

This includes the modernisation of the IT tools for handling petitions and streamlining the underlying procedures. In addition, Commissioners and high-ranking officials have represented the Commission more and more often at the Committee’s meetings, especially when sensitive petitions were discussed.
This briefing follows up the commitments made by the commissioner since 2019.

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<td><strong>Lead candidate system, transnational lists and electoral law</strong></td>
<td>The Commission did not table specific proposals. Parliament is working toward the revision of the European Electoral Act defining common minimum electoral standards and a Union-wide constituency. On 3 May 2022, Parliament adopted a resolution on the revision of the European Electoral Law. According to Article 223 TFEU, Parliament has the legislative initiative for the European Electoral Act, with the Council acting unanimously. In November 2021, the Commission tabled two proposals to revise rules on EU mobile citizens for the European and municipal elections.</td>
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<td>“[...] we need to improve the lead candidate system, including by addressing the issue of transnational lists.”</td>
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<td>“[...] we will work on the new push for democracy, which will cover elections, and thus electoral law.”</td>
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<td><strong>Right of initiative</strong></td>
<td>The Commission did not table a proposal. However, the Commission has followed up on the Parliament’s legislative initiative reports pursuant to article 225 TFEU. Parliament adopted a resolution on its rights of initiative on 9 June 2022.</td>
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<td>“[...] I can see that Parliament wants to have this fixed in a formal procedure, and this is what I want to support.”</td>
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### Common transparency register

“[...] we should work towards a common transparency register.”

On 20 May 2021, an **Interinstitutional Agreement** was adopted between the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission on a mandatory transparency register.

### Independent ethics body common to all EU institutions

“[...] I will analyse or look into the systems... of the European institutions and will try to filter out ... under the remit of the ethics body.”

The Commission did not table a proposal. In September 2021, Parliament adopted a resolution on setting up an independent EU ethics body.

### Paid political advertising and financing European political parties

“[...] I will work on solutions to bring more transparency on paid political advertising and more clarity on financing European political parties...”

In the **European Democracy Action Plan**, adopted on 3 December 2020, the Commission presented its first assessment of the challenges in relation to political advertising and issues linked to new techniques used to target advertising based on users’ personal data. On 25 November 2021 the European Commission presented a proposal for a Regulation on transparency and targeting of political advertising.

At the same time, the Commission has put forward a proposal to recast the Regulation on the statute and funding of European political parties and foundations, following a resolution of the Parliament. The AFCO committee has started working on the new proposal, so as to have the revised rules in force ahead of the 2024 European elections. A vote in AFCO is foreseen on 13 July 2022.

### Assessment of the Code of Practice on Disinformation

“[...] I will also assess carefully whether platforms have fulfilled the obligations they accepted under the Code of Practice on Disinformation.”

The **EU Code of Practice on Disinformation** laid out self-regulatory standards for online platforms. On 10 September 2021 the first year assessment of the Code was published by the Commission. On 16 June 2022 a strengthened Code of Practice on Disinformation was signed and presented by 34 signatories.

### European Democracy Action

“[...] I will design the European Democracy Action Plan [...] as a vehicle for a new push in addressing the issue effectively so that our democracy is more resilient.”

The **European Democracy Action Plan** and the **Action Plan for the Media** adopted on 3 December 2020 set out measures to promote free and fair elections, strengthen media freedom and pluralism, counter disinformation, support the recovery and
Media pluralism, safety of journalists and funding for media freedom and pluralism

“[…] We should continue to use our funding for independent projects monitoring media pluralism, map violations to media freedom, and support journalists whose safety is under threat.”

“[…] I will work intensively on the proper designing of the funding programme which is under the Creative Europe programme and is intended to support independent journalism.”

The Commission annual Rule of Law reports monitor the situation of media freedom and pluralism in the EU Member States. On 16 September 2021, the Commission presented its first-ever Recommendation to strengthen the safety of journalists and other media professionals. The Commission also announced the presentation of a European Media Freedom Act in 2022, building on the revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive, aimed at safeguarding the independence and pluralism of media.

The Creative Europe programme 2021-2027 has a budget of € 2.44 billion, compared to €1.47 billion of the previous programme (2014-2020). In the period 2021-2027, actions that monitor and assess risks to media pluralism and freedom are supported through the Creative Europe programme. A call for proposals was published on 16 September 2021 for the actions on media freedom and pluralism with a budget of EUR 3.75 million.

EU anti-SLAPP legislation

“[…] I will be mapping all the possible situations of the abuse of litigation against journalists.”

“[…] we have to come up with systematic measures which will cover all the Member States to protect better – not only in situations when systems in the Member States are endangering journalists, but also individual threats to individual journalists. So we will look at the best possible use of this funding.”

On 4 October 2021, the European Commission launched a public consultation on EU action against abusive litigation targeting journalists and rights defenders, while Parliament, in its resolution of 11 November 2021 on strengthening democracy and media freedom and pluralism in the EU: the undue use of actions under civil and criminal law to silence journalists, NGOs and civil society, called once more the Commission to come up with EU-wide legislative and non-legislative measures on the matter.

On 27 April 2022, the European Commission presented the Proposal for a Directive on protection of journalists and human rights defenders from abusive court proceedings. The proposed Directive covers SLAPPs in civil matters with cross-border implications. It enables judges to swiftly dismiss manifestly unfounded lawsuits against journalists and human rights defenders. It also establishes several procedural safeguards and remedies, such as compensation for damages, and dissuasive penalties for launching abusive lawsuits.
In addition to journalists, the proposal includes other categories as well, such as civil society organisations, human rights defenders or politicians. The proposal is now dealt with under the ordinary legislative procedure.

Along with the above proposal, the Commission issued, on the same date, its Recommendation on protecting journalists and human rights defenders who engage in public participation from manifestly unfounded or abusive court proceedings ('Strategic lawsuits against public participation').

Access to documents, transparency of the legislative process, including of trilogues

“[…] on transparency, I would like to come with initial proposals to Parliament and the Council already this year. So this should be started as soon as possible.”

No specific initiative was taken in this field.

Better law-making

“We will have to do more on this and to publish the report on implementation, I see this as a very possible solution.”

On 13 August 2020 the Commission published communication on The EU’s efforts to simplify legislation – 2019 Annual Burden survey.

Annual rule of law review cycle

“[…] I will join forces with the Justice Commissioner to further strengthen the toolbox to deliver on the rule of law, notably with the annual rule-of-law review cycle.”

The Commission effectively implemented the Rule of Law Mechanism by publishing annual reports on Rule of Law (2020 and 2021) that cover four pillars (the justice system, the anti-corruption framework, media pluralism and other institutional issues related to checks and balances). From 2022 on, the reports will also include recommendations, a long-standing EP request. Still, the EP expressed criticism on some aspects of the report, notably on the limited scope that does not cover all Article 2 TUE values.

Fundamental rights, rule of law

The Commissioner committed to promote fundamental rights, the Charter of Fundamental Rights, EU accession to the ECHR, update on the strategy on fundamental rights and use all the tools available to ensure respect of rule of law.

The Commission effectively launched infringement proceedings to defend fundamental rights, led negotiations for the EU accession to the ECHR and presented in 2020 a new Strategy to strengthen the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights in the EU. It also used various tools to counter Rule of Law violations, from Article 7 TEU procedure against Poland to infringement proceedings. After refraining from releasing Resilience and Recovery funds to Hungary and Poland, the Commission applied the conditionality regulation to Hungary and decided to
agree to the Polish national recovery and resilience plan, while conditioning the release of funds to the achievement of “milestones”, something criticised by Parliament.

Engaging to fight all kinds of anti-semitism

“Here, we have to join forces and be absolutely clear in one message – that this is absolutely unacceptable.”

The first-ever EU strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life (2021-2030) was adopted by the European Commission on 5 October 2021.
This briefing follows up the commitments made by the commissioner since 2019.

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<td><strong>Democracy – Conference on the Future of Europe</strong></td>
<td>On 10 March 2021, the Presidents of Parliament, the Commission and the Council signed the Joint declaration on the Conference on the Future of Europe describing the concept, structure, timing and scope of the Conference. It was placed under the authority of these three institutions, their Presidents acting as its Joint Presidency. Further modalities were described in the Rules of Procedure of the Conference (RoP).</td>
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<td>Engaging with Parliament and the Council on the concept, structure, timing and the scope.</td>
<td>In line with the Joint Declaration and the RoP, the Executive Board was co-chaired by the three institutions, each having three representatives and up to four observers. The Executive Board included also observers from the presidential Troika of the Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs of Parliaments of the European Union (COSAC).</td>
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<td>Fully acknowledging leading Parliament’s role and involvement in all stages, and in particular in co-chairing the Advisory board of the Conference together with the Commission.</td>
<td>The Conference Plenary was composed of representatives from Parliament, the Council, the Commission, national Parliaments (on an equal footing), citizens, the European Youth Forum, the Committee of the Regions, the Economic and Social Committee, regional and local authorities, social partners and civil society.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Involving national parliaments, local and regional authorities, NGOs, civil society and people working with minorities.</td>
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Ensuring the follow-up and supporting the idea that the outcome of the conference could lead to treaty changes if considered necessary.

On 17 June 2022, the Commission published a Communication of the Conference on the Future of Europe – Putting Vision into concrete Action, which gives an overview of the current deliveries, the planned actions and next steps. According to the communication, a first set of new proposals would be announced in September 2022, in President von der Leyen's State of the Union address and the accompanying Letter of Intent. These proposals would also be included in the 2023 Commission work programme. The communication states that “some of the ideas set out by the Conference are truly innovative, calling on the EU to take new, as yet unexplored, avenues. Within these, some proposals explicitly call for treaty change. This includes areas such as health or defence”. It is also confirmed that “the Commission will always be on the side of those who want to reform the European Union to make it work better, including through Treaty change where that may be necessary. The Commission stands ready to fully play its institutional role in the procedure set out in Article 48 of the Treaty on European Union, and in particular to give its opinion in response to a consultation by the European Council.” The Commission has not yet identified those proposals requiring treaty change. All in all, more efficient action and initiatives are hoped for.

Working together to improve lead candidate system.

According to report on the final outcome of the Conference, the Conference Proposal 38 (Democracy and Elections) has the objective to “[s]trengthen European democracy by bolstering its foundations, boosting participation in European Parliament elections, fostering transnational debate on European issues and ensuring a strong link between citizens and their elected representatives”. In order to strengthen links between citizens and their elected representatives, “European citizens should have a greater say on who is elected as President of the Commission. This could be achieved either by the direct election of the Commission President or a lead candidate system” (Point 4, first indent). The Commission has not referred to the topic in its above-mentioned Communication on the Conference on the Future of Europe.

Discussing transnational lists which will be put as the first topics of the Conference.

The topic was discussed in the European Democracy Working Group and examined in the Conference Plenary. In this context, the Commission representatives had explained that “it should be implemented after a transition period, not to rush things through” (see footnote x on page 81 of the report on the final outcome of the Conference). Transnational
lists are incorporated in the above-mentioned Conference Proposal 38 which recommends “amending EU electoral law to harmonise electoral conditions (---) for the European Parliament elections, as well as moving towards voting for Union-wide lists, or ‘transnational lists’, with candidates from multiple Member States (---)” (Point 3). On page 6 of the above-mentioned Communication on the Conference on the Future of Europe, the Commission states that “(---) the European Parliament has recently proposed to reform the EU electoral law and made proposals to include transnational lists in the next European elections. The Commission will support the European Parliament in securing an agreement on the electoral law in the Council”.

Parliament’s right of initiative has been taken on board in the Conference Proposal 38: “The European Parliament should have the right of legislative initiative, in order to propose the topics to be discussed and, subsequently, adopt the necessary texts to follow up on the recommendations that emerge from deliberations.” (Point 4, second indent). The matter was not referred to in the Commission Communication on the Conference on the Future of Europe, and the Commission has not tabled a proposal for treaty change. However, the Commission has followed up on the Parliament’s legislative initiative reports pursuant to Article 225 TFEU. In the AFCO meeting of 9 December 2021, the Commission reiterated its commitment to continue working with Parliament on the matter. It underlined the need to draw a clear distinction between the work of the current Commission and previous colleges and took note of Parliament’s request for a broader right of initiative. It was also confirmed that the Commission would be willing to better reflect the origin of a Commission’s proposal when based on a Parliament’s request. Parliament adopted a resolution on its right of initiative on 9 June 2022.

Demography – Supporting Europe through the demographic transition

Coordinating the work on the long-term vision for rural areas in close consultation with local and regional authorities: “We need to enable them to make the most of their potential and support them in facing up to their own unique set of issues”.

European agricultural fund for rural development (EAFRD) for 2021–2027 addresses the long term vision for rural areas. In June 2021, the Commission published a communication on A long-term Vision for the EU’s Rural Areas. In the programming period 2021–2027 of the new cohesion policy and the new CAP, the coordination between rural development and regional development was weakened as the EAFRD was removed from Common Provisions
On 3 May 2022, the Commission adopted the Communication on Putting people first, securing sustainable and inclusive growth, unlocking the potential of EU’s outermost regions. On 4 May 2022, the first concrete actions of the new strategy for the outmost regions was taken: a €1 million call for proposals to help local young people shape projects to develop their regions was launched.

Focussing on the issue of the brain drain, supporting the regions most affected, notably through the Youth Guarantee

The Member States have committed to the implementation of the reinforced Youth Guarantee in a Council Recommendation of October 2020, based on a Commission proposal of July 2020 which is part of the Youth Employment Support package. In March 2022, the Commission presented an initiative on Brain drain for which the public consultation has been opened. Brain drain is also discussed in its communication of January 2020 on A Strong social Europe for just transitions. In December 2021, the Commission adopted an Action Plan for the social economy looking into revitalising Europe’s rural and depopulated areas. The EU Cohesion Policy 2021–2027 addresses brain drain indirectly through its first and fourth priorities. Actions can be financed by ERDF and ESF+.

A new work placement initiative under the ESF+ ALMA (Aim, Learn, Master, Achieve) has been launched to help disadvantaged young Europeans who are not in any kind of employment, education or training.

In March 2022, the European Commission launched the renewed European Apprentices Network (EAN) with the aim of inviting Member States to promote apprenticeships and young people’s engagement.

On 6 May, the Commission published its Flash Eurobarometer on Youth and Democracy, conducted between 22 February and 4 March 2022. As part of the European Year of Youth, the Commission also launched a new online tool, the “Voice your Vision” platform, to make it easier for young Europeans to make their voice heard.

The Commission plans to present a communication on Labour skills and mobility at the end of 2022.

Putting forward a Green Paper on ageing and coordinating the work on better reconciling work and family life as a part of the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights

To Parliament’s Written question of 26 October 2021 on follow-up measures of the Commission’s Green Paper on Ageing, Vice-President Šuica replied on 11 January 2022 that the Commission was working to integrate and mainstream aspects related to demography and equality, including as regards age
discrimination, in all relevant EU policies, legislation and funding programmes. She explained that “[i]n the framework of the action plan to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights and building on the Green Paper on Ageing, the Commission will present a European Care Strategy in 2022 to address both carers and care receivers, from childcare to long-term care”. The Care strategy will include a revision of the Barcelona targets on childcare.

The new EU strategy on the rights of the child and the European Child Guarantee were put forward by the Commission in 2021. According to the Commission, both initiatives have included extensive consultations with citizens, stakeholders and more than 10,000 children.

In May 2022, the Commission presented a Communication on A Digital Decade for children and youth – the new European strategy for a better internet for kids (BIK+) as the digital arm of the EU strategy on the rights of the child. The Communication was accompanied by a proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down rules to prevent and combat child sexual abuse online.
This briefing follows up the commitments made by the commissioner since 2019.

### Youth and sport

“[…] Through our youth programmes (European Solidarity Corps, DiscoverEU), I will try to do as much as I can to promote the sustainability drive involving our youth.”

On 17 November 2021, the Commission launched the call for proposals under the European Solidarity Corps (ESC) for 2022 that supports projects aiming to protect, conserve and enhance natural habitats and the environment, to raise awareness about environmental sustainability and to enable behavioural changes.

“[…] we shall introduce a European Child Guarantee to ensure children at risk of poverty or exclusion have access to most basic rights like healthcare and education.”

The European Child Guarantee was adopted by the Council in June 2021.

“[…] Grassroots contributions that we can make in sport […] is where we should put our money and this is where we should help. One of my priorities will be reaping the benefits of sport as a unifying element of our society.”

On 23 September 2021, the Commission launched the HealthyLifestyles4all. Uniting aspects of sports and grassroots sport are also promoted through the European Week of Sport, the #BeActive Awards and other initiatives.

### Education

“[…] We will work to make the European Education Area a reality and incentivise Member States to reform and modernise their education and

In its communication of 30 September 2020, the Commission shared its renewed vision for the European Education Area, which, however, falls short of...
training systems. [...] I will ensure we use the Erasmus+, the DiscoverEU and the European Solidarity Corps programmes to empower our youth and offer new mobility opportunities.”

“[...] We need to create a European student card.”

“[...] We need to build on the European university alliances.”

“[...] One of my main tasks will be to ensure the future [...] Erasmus+ Fund foster social inclusion [...]. A joined-up approach in the implementation of Erasmus, DiscoverEU and the European Solidarity Corps programmes is essential.”

“[...] We can do more to support efforts to teach about EU.”

Skills

“[...] In terms of skills, I think we have to do two things at the same time, we need to keep investing in skills for the job market and [...] there is [...] the question of soft skills.”

“[...] There are two things to do [...] ‘upskilling’ [...] and bridging the skills gap.”

The more ambitious EP vision for a future European Education Area. The programmes Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps have been included in the new European Education Area to empower youth and increase mobility opportunities. DiscoverEU is a new mobility initiative within the Erasmus+ programme.

The European Student Card Initiative was included in the 2021 Erasmus+ programme guide. The initiative is ongoing; however, it has not yet been deployed. Scaling-up of the European Student Card initiative makes also part of four flagship initiatives of the European Strategy for universities, as announced in the Commission’s higher education package of 18 January 2022.

The communication on the European Education Area emphasised that it would build on the experiences of the European Universities alliances. The higher education package launched by the Commission on 18 January 2022, paved the way for a deeper transnational cooperation between European universities (the package includes a Communication on a European strategy for universities and a proposal for a Council recommendation on building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation; this Council Recommendation was adopted on 6 April 2022).

The new Erasmus+ programme for 2021-2027 places a strong focus on inclusion. On 22 October 2021, the Commission adopted a new framework of inclusion measures of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes 2021-2027.

In its communication on the European Education Area, the Commission commits to stimulate peer learning and the development of a European perspective in education.

In July 2020 the Commission adopted a new European Skills Agenda, focussing on necessary skills for jobs nowadays. No EU document is specifically devoted to soft skills. The European Skills Agenda includes an action ‘Skills for Life’.

The Commission’s communication on the European Education Area addresses the digital skills gap. Under the new Digital Education Action Plan, the Commission
Tracking commitments of Margaritis Schinas

“[...] To accompany lifelong learning is a priority. We have to do it through a comprehensive set of instruments, the New Skills Agenda, Erasmus+ and the ESF.”

promotes the development of a European digital education ecosystem that enhances digital skills.

The European Education area, in synergy with the new European Skills Agenda and other initiatives, has included lifelong learning strategies. 70% of the Erasmus+ budget will support mobility opportunities for all, in a lifelong learning perspective.

Integration of migrants and refugees

“[...] I intend to revisit the 2016 Action Plan on integration of migrants and refugees.”

On 24 November 2020 the EC published the Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027.

New Pact on Migration and Asylum

“[...] Delivering the New Pact on Migration and Asylum [...] is a tall order, [...]. This new pact must be cross-cutting and marry internal and external policies.”

“[...] we have to start keeping our emphasis on the reform of Dublin and the corresponding procedures but to unblock the situation, bring in all the other elements that combine the full picture: returns, new readmission agreements and arrangements, Schengen, borders.[...].”

“[...] Than we have to review the Schengen proposal because internal freedom is linked to the way we protect our borders.”

“[...] All proposals and initiatives of the new pact will be done with the aim – a parallel aim – of lifting internal border controls and returning to a fully-functioning Schengen area.”

On 23 September 2020 the EC published the New Pact on Migration and Asylum.

The New Pact on Migration and Asylum contains among others the following elements:

- for the reform of Dublin the proposal for an asylum and migration management regulation;
- for the reform on asylum procedures the amended proposal for a REGULATION establishing a common procedure for international protection in the Union and repealing Directive 2013/32/EU;
- for returns, the New Pact lists the 2018 proposal for amending the Returns directive as key priority and proposes a EU return border procedure in the amended proposal for a REGULATION establishing a common procedure for international protection in the Union and repealing Directive 2013/32/EU and in section 2.5 of the Communication other measures to make the return system more effective. It also envisages a new strategy on voluntary returns and reintegration for Q 2 of 2021;
- for cooperation on return and readmission, on 10 February 2021, the EC issued a Communication.

On 14 December 2021, the Commission presented a proposal for a Regulation amending Regulation (EU) 2016/399 (Schengen Border Code) on the rules governing the movement of persons across borders.

On 22 June 2022 the Commission welcomed agreement of the Member States to start implementing a voluntary solidarity mechanism by offering
relocations, financial contributions and other measures of support to Member States in need. The Member States agreed on a negotiating mandate to start negotiations with the European Parliament on two key migration management tools: the revised Eurodac database and the Screening Regulation.

On 2 June 2021 the Commission published a new Schengen Strategy along with a Proposal to revise the Schengen evaluation and monitoring mechanism, which was sent by the Council to the Parliament for consultation. The Commission has presented the first annual State of Schengen Report 2022 on 24 May 2022. The document identifies current challenges and recommends priority actions for the way forward as a starting point of the Schengen cycle. This cycle was established with the 2021 Schengen Strategy. On 2 June 2022 the Commission convened the third Schengen Forum, a key component of the yearly Schengen Governance cycle. On 10 June 2022 the Council adopted its general approach on the reform of the Schengen Borders Code.

Creating pathways to legal migration

“[...] I’m very happy to review our Blue Card proposal. [...] we have to continue these humanitarian corridors combined with resettlement, because this is another orderly way to bring in people legally.”

In the communication on the New Pact the EC calls for a swift finalisation of negotiations on the BlueCard and recognises MS’ need for maintaining national schemes, thus abandoning its proposal for abolishing parallel national schemes, and eventually the BlueCard was adopted. In the communication on the New Pact, the EC calls for swift negotiations on the Framework Regulation on Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission. In the New Pact, the EC issues a Recommendation on legal pathways to protection in the EU. In the New Pact, the EC issues a Recommendation on legal pathways to protection in the EU. In the New Pact, the EC issues a Recommendation on legal pathways to protection in the EU. In the New Pact, the EC issues a Recommendation on legal pathways to protection in the EU. In the New Pact, the EC issues a Recommendation on legal pathways to protection in the EU. In the New Pact, the EC issues a Recommendation on legal pathways to protection in the EU. In the New Pact, the EC issues a Recommendation on legal pathways to protection in the EU. In the New Pact, the EC issues a Recommendation on legal pathways to protection in the EU. In the New Pact, the EC issues a Recommendation on legal pathways to protection in the EU. In the New Pact, the EC issues a Recommendation on legal pathways to protection in the EU.

On 27 April 2022 the Commission adopted set of proposals on legal migration and presented Communication on Attracting skills and talent to the EU. To provide a more effective framework for legal pathways to the EU, the Commission is proposing to revise the Single Permit Directive and the Long-Term Residents Directive.
European Security Union

“ [...] my role is also to ensure that whatever we do in security respects fundamental rights. [...] This will also guide my work in implementing the interoperability proposals, which will be particularly important as we move to launch our new information systems.”

On 24 July 2020 the EC adopted EU Security Union Strategy 2020-2025. The New Pact on Migration and asylum has as a goal the full interoperability of IT systems (EC communication of 23 September 2020, section 4.2), and on 23 November 2020 presented a revised proposal for the Eurodac Regulation.

On 11 March 2021, the Commission launched a public consultation on the digitalisation of visa procedures for travel within the EU.

On 25 May 2022 the Commission adopted Communication on the Fourth Progress report on the implementation of the EU Security Union Strategy.

Enhance EU’s stability to prevent, detect and respond to hybrid threats

“ [...] I will promote a coordinated approach to protecting Europeans online, through the adoption of our Terrorist Online Content proposal, by inputting the Digital Services Act to come and by investing in the work of the EU Internet Forum.”

On 10 December 2020 political agreement reached on Terrorist Online Content proposal.

On 9 December 2020 the EC adopted Counter Terrorism Agenda. On 15 December 2020 the EC proposed two legislative initiatives: the Digital Services Act (DSA) and the Digital Markets Act (DMA). Following the adoption of the Digital Services Package in the first reading by the European Parliament in July 2022, both texts now have to be adopted by the Council of the European Union.
This briefing follows up the commitments made by the commissioner since 2019.

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<th>Commitment</th>
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<td><strong>2021-2027 multiannual financial framework and own resources</strong></td>
<td>While the overall agreement including NGEU reaches 1.8% GNI(^1), it challenges the coherence of the EU financial architecture and the role of the EP.</td>
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<td>Support an overall amount of minimum 1,1% Member states GNI</td>
<td>“The maximum total amount that can be used for special instruments in 2021–2027 is approximately EUR 16 billion against the Commission’s May 2020 proposal of EUR 38 billion.”(^1)</td>
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<td>Support flexibility (same or increased)</td>
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<td>Support an own resources reform</td>
<td>The <a href="https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020D0749&amp;from=EN">Interinstitutional Agreement of 16.12.2020 on Budgetary Matters</a> (IIA, Annex II) introduced the principles and criteria for new own resources and established a roadmap with regular dialogue. A new Own Resources Decision, including a new own resource based on plastic waste and new ceiling of 1,40% (+0,60%) of GNI, entered into force in June 2021. On 22.12.2021, Commission proposed three new own resources based on a carbon border adjustment mechanism, revised emissions trading revenue, and a share of the residual profits of the largest and most profitable multinational enterprises (<a href="https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52021D0570">COM(2021)0570</a>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support adjustments needed at mid-term review or before</td>
<td>A targeted amendment of the MFF regulation was proposed to accommodate the new Social Climate (^2)</td>
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Commission proposed to finance the Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA), the Secure connectivity programme and the Chips Act within existing MFF ceilings. Commission stated in November 2020 that it will present a review of the functioning of the MFF by 1.1.2024, and, as appropriate, proposals for a revision. In the light of the war in Ukraine, the Commission announced that this review/revision may be presented at the beginning of the second semester of 2023. In its May 2022 Communication, the Commission acknowledges that the “unforeseen needs created by war in Europe are well beyond the means available in the current multiannual financial framework” and could entail a “targeted revision” of the latter.

Track and adjust climate relevant spending, ensure coherence

The spending target was raised to 30% overall for the MFF 2021-2027 and NGEU. A ‘climate adjustment mechanism’ foresees actions in case it risks not being reached. Commission communicated on 8.6.2021 its intention to extend the RRF climate tracking methodology across the EU budget, reflecting new policy developments, in particular the European Green Deal and the new “Taxonomy of Sustainable Finance”. The Do No Significant Harm principle has been included in the legal bases for the 2021-2027 programmes, with some exceptions. The role of the revenue side of the EU budget is also growing. The Climate Mainstreaming Architecture in the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework was published on 20.6.2022.

Set up a Just Transition Fund (JTF).

A JTF proposal was made in January, updated in May and agreed in December 2020.

Help improve absorption: “We have to help some countries to improve their take-up rate so that the money available is actually used”.

Contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and improve relevant reporting.

In its resolution of 4.5.2022 concerning discharge of the EU budget 2020, the EP insists that more needs to be done.

Reporting is foreseen under the new IIA point 16 (g) and has begun in Programme statements of operational expenditure accompanying the Draft EU budget.

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1 Ukraine relief and reconstruction (COM (2022)0233).
2 COM(2021)0366 on the performance framework for the EU budget under the 2021-2027 MFF.
4 2021/2106(DEC).
Modernisation and digitalisation of the Commission

“I will also work towards ensuring a more comprehensive overview of expenditure and key data”. “One major task for the future [...] is to try and harmonise all of the different systems out there [...] it is not just a question of [...] digitalization within the Commission, it’s a question of interoperability with the systems that our Member states have”

Under the IIA “the Commission will make available an integrated and interoperable information and monitoring system [...] to access and analyse the data [...] with a view to a generalised application by Member States”. On 23.11.2021 the EP requested specific changes to the Financial Regulation to this end. On 16.5.2022, Commission proposed to recast this act, including a “Single integrated IT system for data-mining and risk-scoring”.

On 22.3.2022, Commission proposed new rules to establish common cybersecurity and information security measures across the EU institutions, bodies, offices and agencies.


A Human Resources Strategy was adopted in 2022, emphasising inter alia gender equality in management posts. An Office for Diversity and Inclusion was created in DG HR in 2021. In December 2019, the Ombudsman welcomed the Commission’s new specific procedure for appointing its new Secretary-General.

Protection of the financial interests of the EU

“It is imperative to put into place the Rule of Law mechanism ensuring the protection of the Union’s budget in case of generalised deficiencies in Member States.”

The Rule of Law Conditionality Regulation is applicable since 1.1.2021. The European Court of Justice upheld on 16 February 2022 its validity, dismissing the requests by Hungary and Poland to annul it. On 10.3.2022, the EP insisted that application should be immediate, not subject to guidelines and should cover both the Union budget and NGEU. The Commission’s 2021 Rule of Law report shows a deterioration in several Member states. The

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6 Part IV “Protection of the Union’s budget: quality and comparability of data on beneficiaries”.
7 European Parliament resolution of 23 November 2021 with recommendations to the Commission on digitalisation of the European reporting, monitoring and audit.
9 COM(2020)0152.
12 European Parliament resolution of 10 March 2022 on the rule of law and the consequences of the ECJ ruling.
Commission sent a notification letter to Hungary on 27 April 2022 pursuant to Article 6(1) of the Conditionality Regulation.

The Council appointed 22 European Prosecutors, one for each of the participating EU Member States, on 27 July 2020. The EPPO started operations on 1 June 2021.

European Public Prosecutor’s Office (EPPO)

“It’s important that it starts to become operative. [...] Concerning [...] those who are not yet members [...] I will not miss any opportunity to urge them to follow.”

The absence of Council discharge: “I will address that.”

No progress.
**MARIYA GABRIEL**  
Commissioner  
Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth

This briefing follows up the commitments made by the commissioner since 2019.

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<td><strong>Ensure swift agreement on and full implementation of the future Horizon Europe programme</strong></td>
<td>On 11 December 2020, the EU institutions reached a political agreement on Horizon Europe. The Commission’s proposal for the Horizon Europe budget was €95.5 billion in current prices, or €84.9 billion in constant 2018 prices, a 30% increase versus Horizon 2020 for EU27, in constant prices. On 10 May 2022, the Commission amended the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2021-2022, increasing the budget, including for WomenTechEU, to support women-led start-ups, and other actions to boost European innovation potential.</td>
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“[…] I will vigorously defend the budget increase for the Horizon Europe programme, because it will have to be understood that the budget for Horizon Europe is not an expense, it is an investment.”

“[…] I intend to work extremely closely with Parliament right now. I will not wait until, for example, missions begin in 2021 to keep Parliament informed of what is happening. That's why I suggested for the **mission councils**, the mission boards, to designate each time a person who will be the interface of the Parliament to be able to answer at any time and indicate what are the evolutions and how the decisions are taken.”

On 18 March 2021, in the structured dialogue with the European Parliament, Commissioner M. Gabriel reiterated the involvement of the EP in the organisation of Horizon Europe’s missions. On 15 March 2021, the Commission had adopted Horizon Europe’s **strategic plan**, identifying the **EU missions** to be supported. On 29 September 2021, the Commission launched the five missions to promote research results. In the structured dialogue of 13 June 2022, the Commissioner provided the ITRE Committee with an update on the relevant policy areas, including the state of play on the implementation of the Horizon Europe programme, as well as on special actions of
the European support to the Ukrainian research community.

After the onset of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the Commissioner issued a statement on the relevant EU response. As announced, the Commission took steps to suspend cooperation with Russia (and later Belarus) and to assist Ukrainian researchers, including by launching the ‘European Research Area for Ukraine’ (ERA4Ukraine) portal, the Horizon4Ukraine and ERC for Ukraine initiatives.

“Then, to go even further, I would like to insist on the possibility of launching an information campaign and making sure that ‘science meets young people’. That’s why I’ll be organising a ‘science meets regions and schools’ initiative so that researchers show our young people the results of their research and inspire them to take this path.”

On 1 April 2022, the Commission launched the Horizon Europe calls Youth 2022 initiative in the framework of the European Year of Youth 2022. The aim of the initiative is to allow Master’s students, from any discipline, to witness the evaluation and funding processes of Horizon Europe, thereby increasing the awareness of research and innovation career opportunities, and bringing more young people to research, innovation and knowledge valorisation career paths.

On 23 February 2021, the Commission proposed a new European Partnerships’ (EPS) structure between the EU, Member States and industry to improve transparency and simplify their management. The number of candidate EPS was reduced from over 120 in Horizon 2020 to 49 in Horizon Europe.

On 16 July 2021, the Commission adopted its proposal for a Council Recommendation on “A Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe” to support the implementation of national European Research Area (ERA) policies. The first round of ERA ‘Tour des Capitales’ was followed by digital ERA ‘Tour des Capitales’ in 2020 by means of bilateral meetings, due to COVID-19.

Ensure sufficient investment flows to disruptive research and breakthrough innovations

“I will therefore be extremely careful that, as part of the next industrial strategy, through research and innovation, Europe is investing smartly, Europe is counting on its assets, but Europe as well, does not hesitate to be at the helm of the next wave of innovation.”

On 18 March 2021, Horizon Europe launched the European Innovation Council (EIC), with a budget of €10 billion for 2021-2027. On 6 January 2021, following up on its new industrial strategy, the Commission had announced the first round of direct equity investment for €178 million through the new European Innovation Council (EIC) Fund, providing venture capital for high-risk and high-impact innovation. Grant financing had already been provided since December 2019 through the EIC Accelerator Pilot to enable companies to scale up
faster. Issues arising from restructuring the EIC Accelerator further to the new Horizon Europe legislation are being addressed in the ongoing implementation process.

On 5 July 2022, the Commission adopted a New European Innovation Agenda, proposing 25 dedicated actions under five flagship areas. Its aim is to place Europe in the lead of the new wave of deep tech innovation, which requires breakthrough R&D as well as large capital investment and addresses pressing societal challenges.

The Commission has also set up €20 million support for Ukrainian start-ups through a targeted amendment of the 2022 European Innovation Council (EIC) work programme.

### Build a true European Research Area

“I want give a new life to the European Research Area.” “The European Commission will issue a Communication on the European Research Area in the second half of 2020.”

“I really want to help revitalise the European Research Area: one of the issues I would like to bring to the fore is exactly the brain drain and how to attract and retain talent.”

On 30 September 2020, the Commission adopted a Communication on a new European Research Area for Research and Innovation.


On 5 July 2022, the Commission published the 2022 edition of the Science, Research and Innovation Performance (SRIP) report, with a focus on the EU’s innovation performance in a global context and suggesting measures to address inter alia the difficulty in attracting and retaining talent.

The Staff Working Document (SWD) accompanying the Communication on a new ERA for Research and Innovation focuses on increasing the attractiveness of EU researchers’ careers.

“I will touch on a much more sensitive question; it is the salaries of researchers. We have made the commitment to do a study, to follow the evolution and I am sure that this evolution will give us many lessons to be able to act more quickly.”

“[…] we are committed to thinking about [an] incentive, a scholarship that will allow a researcher to return to their own country and be able to do research there.”

Under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions European Fellowships (part of the ERA Talent Platform) researchers coming back to Europe are given support in finding a new position.

As part of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, the Commission has set up the MSCA4Ukraine scheme, which will support displaced Ukrainian researchers to continue their work in Europe and, when possible, allow them to rebuild Ukraine’s research and innovation capacity.
Ensure that research, policy and economic priorities go hand in hand

“In the next Horizon Europe programme, SMEs will be a prime target of the third pillar “Innovative Europe”, thanks to the creation of the European Innovation Council. Our ambition is to create a one-stop shop for SMEs, so that they can bring us innovative ideas and products and help them access the market faster. They can also participate in other activities. I am thinking, for example, of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and the different Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs). We must ensure synergies between the two.”

“We must help the energy-intensive regions and coal areas in their transition towards a low-carbon economy, we must provide skills. Education and learning will have a key role here. We must ensure that these regions can count on resources so as not to lose their competitiveness at all.”

“I will support space technologies, especially since their potential is huge, but also and above all because space services open up markets in new markets and new applications.”

“Especially since the Parliament was very clear: 70 percent of the budget will be dedicated to SMEs.”

“[… I will also pay particular attention to the activities of the European Institute of Innovation, because they also have initiatives aimed at regional innovation. They are also aimed at small and medium-sized businesses.”

“[… I will place a strong emphasis on the change needed to integrate this culture of exploitation

On 18 March 2021, the Commission launched the European Innovation Council (EIC), established under Horizon Europe, and the EIC Fund, a dedicated equity fund to scale up innovative start-ups and SMEs with a budget of around €3 billion.

On 8 January 2021, the Commission announced the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding between the European Innovation Council (EIC) and the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT). Both of them will contribute to accelerating the twin transition to a green and digital economy as well as to create jobs and opportunities for all the talented innovators across Europe.

On 9 December 2021, the Commission published its annual Education and Training Monitor, which monitors recent policy developments and provides an overview of how Member States will make use of the Recovery and Resilience Facility to adapt and strengthen education and training systems.

On 30 September 2020, the Commission published a Communication on achieving the European Education Area by 2025 and the Digital Education Action Plan to strengthen the contribution of education and training to the EU’s recovery from the coronavirus crisis.

On 15 February 2022, the Commission published a proposal for a Regulation on a space-based secure connectivity and a Joint Communication on an EU approach on Space Traffic Management (STM).

On 22 February 2021, the Commission launched the Action Plan on synergies between civil, defence and space industries.

The European Innovation Council Fund dedicated equity fund to scale up innovative start-ups and SMEs will have a budget of around €3 billion.

On 11 July 2019, the Commission proposed a reinforcement of the activities of the EIT, including in the area of education and in the regional dimension. With two new Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs), the EIT is also able to put more emphasis on its regional dimension: the strengthened EIT Regional Innovation Scheme targets countries that lag behind in innovation performance.

On 7 January 2021, through its Proof-of-Concept grant scheme, the European Research Council
Tracking commitments of Mariya Gabriel

and commercialisation as early as possible, including in universities.”

“[…] I will support all those projects that will allow us to reduce emissions, to have investments in hydrogen, and perhaps to have other solutions that we are not aware of yet.”

“If we really want to succeed in being autonomous, if we want to take the new wave of innovation, it's time to invest. Europe has its assets and now is the time to invest in order to then ensure our technological sovereignty.”

Promote creative industries as a catalyst for innovation, jobs and growth

“The portfolio that the President-elect has in mind for me […] incorporates such prominent programmes as Horizon Europe, Erasmus, Creative Europe or DiscoverEU. This forms a consistent whole and we need to build synergies”. […] “I will remain faithful to the increase [of the Creative Europe budget] that we called for. I’ll secure it and try and achieve the best possible impact by working together with other programmes, such as Horizon Europe.” […] “I reiterate my support to SMEs, particularly regarding culture, that’s where we can really count on creativity and innovation. In the

awarded 55 researchers funding of €8.25 million in total, to help them bring their research findings closer to market and spur innovation.

On 23 February 2021, the Commission proposed to set up 10 new European Partnerships between the European Union, Member States and/or industry to speed up the transition towards a green, digital and resilient Europe. The EU provides nearly €10 billion in funding which the partners match with at least an equivalent amount of investment.

On 23 February 2021, the Commission proposed to set up a new European Partnership on clean hydrogen.

On 15 December 2021, following up on its hydrogen strategy, the Commission proposed a new EU framework to decarbonise gas markets, promote hydrogen and reduce methane emissions.

On 24 June 2022, the Commission launched the Alliance for Zero Emission Aviation, to prepare the aviation ecosystem for the entry into service of hydrogen- and electric-powered aircraft, with a view of the contribution of air transport to Europe's 2050 climate neutrality objective.

On 8 February 2022, the Commission proposed the Chips Act on semiconductor shortages in order to strengthen Europe's technological leadership.

On 15 March 2021, the Commission adopted the strategic plan for Horizon Europe with four strategic orientations for R&I investments. The first orientation promotes an open strategic autonomy.

On 23 February 2021, the Commission proposed to set up a new European Partnership on Key Digital Technologies. The partnership was approved on 19 November 2021.

On 13 January 2022, the Commission adopted the 2022 work programme of Creative Europe, with a budget of around €385 million, nearly €100 million more compared to 2021.

On 14 December 2020, the Commission welcomed the political agreement reached between the European Parliament and EU Member States on the new Creative Europe programme (2021-2027), with a dedicated budget of more than €2.4 billion, made up of €1.8 billion in current prices and an additional top-up of €0.6 billion in 2018 prices, an 36% budget increase.
On 10 December 2020, the Commission welcomed the political agreement reached between the European Parliament and the Council on Horizon Europe (2021-2027), with budget of €95.5 billion in current prices.

On 11 December 2020, the Commission welcomed the political agreement reached between the European Parliament and the Council on Erasmus+ (2021-2027), with budget of more than €26 billion in current prices.

The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) will launch two new Knowledge and Innovation Communities in the coming years, one operating in the field of the Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries.

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In the framework of Horizon 2020, the Commission had a call for Evolving media landscapes and Europeanisation, three research projects on the European media landscape that will start early in 2021.

The Erasmus + programme now incorporates the green Erasmus + initiative, which improves the programme’s environmental sustainability, raises awareness about sustainable internationalisation and channels the funding into research on the programme’s environmental impact.

On 22 October 2021, the Commission adopted a new framework of inclusion measures for the Erasmus + and European Solidarity Corps programmes 2021-2027, at Parliament’s insistence. This framework aims to facilitate access for people with fewer opportunities with a focus on small-scale partnerships, which widen access to the programme.
European Education Area

“I would also like to insist on the new idea of the European Education Area ... where no border hamper learning, studying or carrying out research. I will continue the work started on key competences, quality early childhood education, mutual recognition of diplomas and learning outcomes and language learning.”

In its communication of 30 September 2020, the Commission shared its renewed vision for the European Education Area (EEA), which will strengthen synergies with other initiatives in education and training, including the European Research Area (ERA). However, this proposal still falls short of Parliament’s more ambitious vision for a future EEA. The higher education package launched by the Commission on 18 January 2022, paved the way for a deeper transnational cooperation within the European higher education sector (the package includes a Communication on a European strategy for universities and a proposal for a Council recommendation on building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation; this Council Recommendation was adopted on 6 April 2022).

“The new (research and education) programmes will provide [...] even more synergies. “From this moment onwards, we need to ensure that research is fully integrated in a new vision for European universities.”

As part of the ambitions of the EEA, the Commission announced that Horizon 2020 would support the Erasmus+ European Universities pilot in order to maximise synergies between education and research and innovation. The Horizon 2020 complementary support would further contribute to the research and innovation dimension of the European Universities initiative. A budget of EUR 34 million from Horizon 2020 was made available for 17 European University alliances.

“We do not just learn within the four walls of a school, university or work place. That is part of the thinking of lifelong learning [...]. That is the objective of Erasmus+ and I want to ensure that it is more open [...]. It is important to diversify careers and personalise possible pathways. I will pay attention to how European universities take that into account.”

“As part of its communication on achieving the European Education Area, the Commission expressed its intention to build on the results of the cooperation between EU countries in the field of lifelong learning. It indicated that the EEA would depend on a stronger Erasmus+ programme with innovative lifelong learning strategies and teaching practices in order to foster an inclusive education system.

“I would really like to introduce the European Student Card by 2021.”

The European student card initiative was included in the 2021 Erasmus+ programme guide. While the initiative is still ongoing, it has yet to be deployed. Scaling-up of the European Student Card initiative makes also part of four flagship initiatives of the European Strategy for universities, as announced in the above higher education package of 18 January 2022.

“I will wholeheartedly defend academic freedom. I will defend the freedom for research to be led by curiosity [...]. We have charters at the European level and they are not coincidental. I will really try to do my best to ensure that they are complied with.”

The European Education Area works in synergy with the European Research Area, whose policy agenda for 2022-2024 includes the protection of academic freedom in Europe as one of its main priorities. Nevertheless, academic freedom is still under pressure in some EU Member States.
Digital Education Action Plan

“As part of the next digital education plan, which I want to have updated by next year, we are going to address media literacy.”

“(We need) to equip the young generations with strong digital skills [...] for example through focusing on digital literacy, computer science and informatics for all, so that children and young people understand and deal critically with digital technology[...]. Expanding digital education opportunities (such as) massive open online courses, [...] is another priority [...]. We need to [...] make education both more effective and more inclusive. Teachers should be a particular focus (of an upgrade of the action plan).”

Youth

“My main priority in youth policy is to make sure more young people benefit from EU policies and programmes and to ensure equal participation. [...]”

“We have to make our policies and programmes more inclusive and get more young people to participate regardless of background, educational level or financial means.”

Sport

“After years of blockage [...] the Convention on Manipulation of Sports Competitions process could be unblocked.”

“Integrity of sport [...] is also about promoting good governance, transparency, democracy and gender equality in sport organisations.”

“We need to [...] use sport to enhance the health of European citizens but also to promote social inclusion and gender equality. “The sport part of Erasmus+ can be very effective for integrating migrants.” “In the area of sport [...] my key word is inclusivity. I want to ensure that people with reduced mobility can be included.”

The Commission’s proposal for a renewed digital education action plan for 2021-2027 was adopted on 30 September 2020. This action plan prioritises the fostering of a high-performing digital education ecosystem and the enhancement of digital skills and competences for the digital age. The former addresses the actions taken to improve the digital competences of educators, including teachers. The latter promises to support the provision of basic digital skills and competences from an early age.

In the context of the coronavirus pandemic, the Commission announced that 2022 would be the European Year of Youth. The Year of Youth complements other EU programmes, such as Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps, that implement youth policies focusing on the accessibility of EU programmes, making them more inclusive for people that face barriers or have fewer opportunities in education, training and youth work.

The Convention has still not been signed by the EU.

As part of its sport actions, Erasmus+ provides organisations with opportunities for cooperation partnerships. Promoting integrity and values in sport, combating violence and tackling racism, discrimination and intolerance in sport represent part of the specific priorities of the 2022 Erasmus+ call for proposals for sport.

The new EU work plan for sport prioritises the promotion of physical activity and includes actions on gender equality in sport. The Erasmus+ programme of 2021-2027 aims to promote inclusion at the level of sport policies, taking note of the barriers faced by different groups of people, including those with reduced mobility and people with migrant or refugee backgrounds, as reiterated in the programme guide. Physical activity and inclusion in sport are also promoted through several initiatives,
### Cultural heritage

“I will devote attention to digitalisation of the cultural heritage. [...] I will also use ‘Europeana’.”

“The first pillar of our cultural [heritage] policy has to be increasing accessibility. I will steer policy on [...] inclusion, sustainable development and climate change.”

On 10 November 2021, the Commission proposed a common European data space for cultural heritage, using the digital cultural platform Europeana. The Europeana strategy for 2020-2025 shares its vision for a cultural heritage sector that is open, inclusive and sustainable. Europeana currently offers access to 52 million cultural heritage assets, 45% of which can be reused in various sectors.

### Creative Europe and the cultural and creative sectors:

“We need to build synergies (between Horizon Europe, Erasmus, Creative Europe or DiscoverEU).”

The 2022 work programme announced synergies with other EU funding programmes, such as Erasmus+, Horizon Europe and the European Solidarity Corps. The New European Bauhaus, launched in 2021, also makes use of synergies to bring together partners from the cultural and creative sectors with those from research and industrial fields. A new funding guide, CulturEU, was launched on 29 November 2021. It contains over 75 funding opportunities linked to around 20 EU funding programmes.

“We have created exceptions for research, education, libraries and cultural heritage [in the Copyright Directive]. What I would like now is to follow the process more closely to see how it is implemented.”

On 4 June 2021, the Commission published its guidance on Article 17 of the new Copyright Directive which aims to support a coherent application across the Member States of this important provision of the new EU copyright rules.

### Cultural cooperation

“What cultural diplomacy is a real soft power tool. [...] Our partners in the Western Balkans need to hear that we will provide them with some palpable support. [...] The creative industries and culture [...] are an area in which we will continue to have very close cooperation.”

The Cultural Relations Platform is an initiative funded by the EU, as a response to the Commission’s 2018 new European agenda for culture and the Council’s conclusions on an EU strategic approach to international cultural relations. Through cultural cooperation, the platform aims to strengthen the EU’s ability to engage meaningfully with different audiences and stakeholders in its partner countries, including the Western Balkans.
Nicolas Schmit
Commissioner
Jobs and Social Rights

This briefing follows up the commitments made by the commissioner since 2019.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commitment</th>
<th>State of play</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The European Pillar of Social Rights</strong></td>
<td>March 2021: Communication on The European Pillar of Social Rights Action plan: structured around three chapters: Equal opportunities and access to the labour market, fair working conditions, and social protection and inclusion. It proposes three headline targets (in line with the UN SDGs) to be achieved by 2030: reduce poverty by 15 million (of which at least 5 million children), increase the employment rate to 78% and increase the annual adult participation rate in training to at least 60%. At the Porto Summit in May 2021, the Commission and other partners committed to these targets in the Porto Social Commitment. The Action Plan included a proposal for a revised social scoreboard. The headline indicators were endorsed at the EPSCO Council on 14 June 2021.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A fair minimum wage</strong></td>
<td>October 2020: The Commission proposed an EU directive on adequate minimum wages in the European Union. A provisional agreement was reached between Parliament and Council in June 2022.</td>
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“In close cooperation with Parliament, I will develop an action plan to implement the Pillar both at Union level and in each Member State, building on the achievements made under the Commission of President Juncker and on the political guidelines of President-elect von der Leyen.”

“I will put forward a legal instrument to ensure that every worker in our Union has a fair minimum wage. It is not about setting one single EU wage level, and I will pay particular attention to social models of different Member States.”
European Unemployment Benefit Reinsurance Scheme

“...the resilience of the Economic and Monetary Union depends on stabilisation functions. A future European Unemployment Benefit Reinsurance Scheme requires a careful design to ensure rapid responses to shocks while preserving adequate unemployment protection.”

The 2020 Commission work-programme included a legislative initiative on a European Unemployment Benefit Reinsurance Scheme but this proposal was never tabled and was no longer mentioned in the 2021 and 2022 work programmes. The focus of Commission action has shifted to active labour market policies such as EASE (Effective Support to Employment) and RRF (Recovery and Resilience Facility) support.

April 2020: In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the Commission proposed the Regulation on SURE (Instrument for temporary Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency) as a temporary emergency operationalisation of EUBRS. The Commission published implementation reports on SURE in March 2021, September 2021 and March 2022.

The European Labour Authority

“...the newly-created European Labour Authority (ELA) can play an important role, ensuring cooperation between national authorities, namely carrying out joint inspections. [...] I assure you that it will be rapidly put into place and provided with the adequate means to fulfil its tasks.”

October 2020: Cosmin Boiangiu appointed as ELA Executive Director.

September 2021: The ELA moved to its official seat in Bratislava.

Evaluation of the ELA’s performance planned for 2024.

Promoting social dialogue

“It is important that in this economic upheaval, we make sure that social partners on both sides are strengthened again. The European Union, the Commission, has the means to do this. In the context of this institution building, we have a number of options - including financial options - and these have to be targeted particularly at countries where social partnership is almost unknown.”

February 2021: Publication of a report on strengthening EU social dialogue by Special Advisor on Social Dialogue to Commissioner Schmit, Andrea Nahles.


The Commission work programme 2022 announces a Communication on strengthening social dialogue. In April/May 2022, the European Commission held consultations with social partners in preparation for the Communication.

The European Social Fund Plus, NGEU (RRF, JTF, REACT EU), CARE, FAST-CARE

“Investment in people needs to be recognised as an investment in a better future. The European Social Fund+ is the Union’s prime instrument. It is a tool to support the implementation of the principles of the Pillar by providing resources.”

April 2020: The Commission proposed two packages, Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative Plus (CRII) and Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative Plus (CRII+), to make €37 billion available from the EU
“[…] certainly, the funds we have to dedicate to youth unemployment, we have especially to dedicate them there where youth unemployment remains a major problem. Where youth unemployment is very low, they can tackle their problem more easily, but it’s where the concentration of youth unemployment is high that we have to focus our resources.”

“We all remember the financial crisis and the effects it had on citizens and businesses. We need to be ready to meet future downturns and ensure that the Union is prepared to react in a socially responsible manner to future shocks.”

Structural Funds to mitigate the impact of the crisis, including on labour markets.

April 2020: Proposal to amend the Fead Regulation to respond to COVID-19 related challenges.

May 2020: A revised ESF+ proposal led to the adoption of the ESF+ regulation in June 2021 with earmarking of 25% for social inclusion, 12.5% for NEETs (if above average EU NEET rate), 5% for child poverty and 3% to provide food and basic material assistance to the most deprived.

May 2020: Commission presented the recovery and resilience package including a revised proposal for the MFF 2021-27, a proposal on own resources and an EU recovery instrument (Next Generation EU, NGEU) for 2021-2024 providing finance, inter alia, for the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), React EU and the Just Transition Fund (JTF).


May 2020: Proposal for REACT-EU (Recovery Assistance for Cohesion and the Territories of Europe) - adopted in December 2020 with EUR 47.5 billion in additional funding up to 2027 under Next Generation EU for the ESIFs, including ESF, FEAD and YEI.

May 2020: Proposal to amend the FEAD Regulation, in line with the REACT-EU proposal.

May 2020: Amended proposal on the Just Transition Fund (JTF) - adopted in June 2021 with a budget of EUR 17.5 billion, supplemented by national co-financing and ERDF and ESF+ funds.

September 2021: Commission Delegated Regulation on the RRF defining a methodology for reporting social expenditure.

March 2022: Commission proposal for Cohesion’s Action for Refugees in Europe (CARE) introducing more flexibility in the 2014-2020 Cohesion Policy rules to allow the reallocation of available funds to face the consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Follow-up proposal to increase the amount of pre-financing paid out under REACT-EU for all Member States by EUR 3.4 billion, with a higher share allocated to those Member States confronted with the highest numbers of people fleeing Ukraine.

June 2022: Communication from the Commission on Upgrading Cohesion policy - Flexible Assistance to territories (FAST - CARE) - and a Proposal for a


**Regulation on FAST - CARE**, extending the support already provided under CARE.

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**Strengthening social protection and inclusion**

"I will work closely and regularly with the European Parliament, the Member States, social partners and all stakeholders to pursue a fairer, more social and inclusive Europe."

"Everything in the programme presented [...] has one objective: strengthening social protection [...] in Europe. Strengthening, reactivating social progress while adapting it to a changing economy, to a changing economic environment, and in particular to globalisation. And we cannot be naïve facing this globalisation, that’s why we need to come up with our own ideas, our own concepts on how to manage [it]."


June 2021: Launch of a **European Platform on Combating Homelessness**.

Already in December 2016, the Commission proposed a **Regulation amending Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 on the coordination of social security systems**. In December 2021, Council and Parliament reached a provisional agreement but the file is now on hold.


Communication on a European care strategy, accompanied by the revision of the Barcelona targets and a proposal for a Council Recommendation on long-term care, planned for Q3 2022 (Commission work programme (CWP) 2022).

Report on access to essential services to be presented in 2022 (EPSR Action Plan).

High-level group to report on the future of social protection and of the welfare state in the EU by end of 2022 (EPSR Action Plan).

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**Developing a European Child Guarantee**

"(...) I will lead the work to develop a European child guarantee."

"[...] I could imagine basing [our approach] on the work which has been done in the Parliament to have some kind of recommendation. [...]"


March 2021: **Communication on an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child**.

May 2022: Commission presented a **Communication on A Digital Decade for children and youth – the new European strategy for a better internet for kids (BIK+)** as the digital arm of the EU strategy on the rights of the child. The Communication was accompanied by a **proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down rules to prevent and combat child sexual abuse**.

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**Standards for a minimum income**

"[...] there is [...] common interest in having a guarantee for every European citizen to be able to live decently, even if this person cannot be tomorrow on the labour market and [...] make a living of his or her own, and therefore we have to

The benchmarking framework on indicators for minimum income (Principle 14 of the European Pillar of Social Rights) was finalised by the Social Protection Committee in 2019.
### Tracking commitments of Nicolas Schmit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Look after some kind of criteria, of benchmarks, to permit people to live decently.</th>
<th>A proposal for a Council Recommendation on minimum income is planned for Q3 2022 (CWP 2022).</th>
</tr>
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</table>

### International labour standards

“I will work with my colleagues to ensure that international labour standards are put at the core of our trade agreements and in our multilateral work.”

February 2022: Just and sustainable economy package: 1) Communication on Decent Work Worldwide for a global just transition and a sustainable recovery, and 2) Proposal for a directive on Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence. The Commission is preparing a new legislative instrument to ban products made by forced labour from entering the EU market, as announced by President von der Leyen in her State of the Union address 2021.

### Promoting employment and a well-skilled workforce

“I will pursue two main goals: firstly to boost employment, to promote a well-skilled workforce, responsive to the digital and climate transition ahead of us.”

January 2020: Communication on building a strong social Europe for just transitions.

March 2021: Commission Recommendation for Effective Active Support to Employment (EASE) to promote job creation and job-to-job transitions towards expanding sectors, notably in the digital and green economy.

July 2021: Proposal for a Regulation establishing a Social Climate Fund.


“Secondly, together with jobs, I will put at the centre of my priorities social rights for all and social inclusion. I will pursue high standards on the European labour market, as we need to achieve upward convergence in our living and working conditions.”


March 2022: the Commission launched a Ukrainian version of the EU Skills Profile Tool For Third Country Nationals, which will allow people fleeing Ukraine to map their skills and find jobs and opportunities in Europe.

April 2022: the Commission published a Recommendation on the recognition of academic and professional qualifications for people fleeing Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

June 2022: the Commission made the ESCO (European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations) classification available in Ukrainian.
"[...] recent years have shown us that labour mobility also bears a number of challenges, be it social dumping or brain drain. But we should indeed resist any attempt to limit the opportunity for EU citizens to move freely within the EU. We should rather tackle the underlying issues."

The Commission plans to present a communication on Labour skills and mobility by the end of 2022.
The Commission plans to set up an EU Talent Pool by mid-2023 to match skilled workers wishing to move to the EU with the needs of EU employers.
The Commission aims to launch the first Talent Partnership by the end of 2022 with Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt.

Non-discrimination and inclusion

"I will promote a European labour market that guarantees access and good opportunities for everybody and in particular for persons with disabilities, migrants, Roma communities and the most deprived."

September 2020: Commission adopted the Anti-racism action plan 2020-25.
October 2020: Communication on "A Union of Equality: EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation".
December 2021: Communication on an Action Plan for the social economy. As part of the plan the Commission will propose a Council Recommendation on developing social economy framework conditions in 2023.

"[...] there has to be a progressive integration of [...] persons [with disabilities] into the world of work, into a job. The companies which are doing that have to be accompanied, have to be helped. [...] [The] social economy also can be an answer to this issue."

December 2021: Communication on an Action Plan for the social economy. As part of the plan the Commission will propose a Council Recommendation on developing social economy framework conditions in 2023.

"I will work closely, with the new Commissioner for Equality, to close the gender pay and pension gap, propose binding pay-transparency measures and fully implement the Work-Life Balance Directive for the benefit of both women and men."

November 2012: Proposal for a directive on improving the gender balance among non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges and related measures. A provisional agreement was reached between Parliament and Council in June 2022.
March 2021: Proposal for Directive to strengthen the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between men and women through pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms (Council General Approach adopted in December 2021).

March 2022: Proposal for a directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence. Legislative initiative on Strengthening the role and independence of equality bodies planned for Q3 2022 (CWP 2022).
Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee

"(...) I will reinforce the Youth Guarantee."

"[...] we have to revamp, we have to rethink, we have to adapt the Youth Guarantee to the present situation. [...] the situation of the digital transition is something which is everywhere and, unfortunately, even young people [...] are not always equipped with the knowledge to enter this new digital area. So one of my ideas will be to introduce for every young person going through the Youth Guarantee or being unemployed, a basic fundamental digital training adapted to her or his knowledge, adapting also to the job they are aspiring to, but every young person has to get the tools to enter the digital labour market."

July 2020: Communication on Youth Employment Support: a Bridge to Jobs for the Next Generation.

July 2020: Commission proposed a Council Recommendation on a Bridge to Jobs - Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee (adopted in October 2020). The Commission launched a new work placement initiative under the ESF+ - ALMA (Aim, Learn, Master, Achieve) - to help disadvantaged young Europeans who are not in any kind of employment, education or training. In May 2022, the Commission held an event called Good prospects for all young people, and announced that more than half of the Member States had committed to introduce ALMA in their country.

March 2022: the Commission launched the renewed European Apprentices Network (EAN) with the aim of inviting Member States to promote apprenticeships and young people’s engagement.

Updating the skills agenda

"People need to be accompanied in the upcoming transitions, enabling them to keep their skills updated as the economy evolves. This requires investment as well as a career and skills policy with improved tools to accompany all career transitions at all ages. I will explore the idea of individual learning accounts for people of working age."

"[...] vocational training is essential, and vocational training is not the second best. [...] no. Vocational training is one of the best [...] and therefore we have really to sustain, to support vocational training."

"[...] upskilling is the central issue for the forthcoming years. We have really to make sure that not only the young people have the right skills, [...], but also those who are in a job now get the upskilling or re-skilling to face the transformations of their jobs [...]. [...] ESF+ has to dedicate more money to skilling and upskilling. This is a central issue, and this has really to be integrated also in the country-specific recommendation[s] [...]."

July 2020: Commission presented the European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience.

July 2020: Commission proposal for a Council Recommendation on Vocational education and training for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience (adopted November 2020).


November 2020: Pact for Skills including first European skills partnerships in key industrial sectors launched.


April 2022: Communication on Attracting skills and talent to the EU presented, including a revision of the Long-Term Residents Directive and a review of the Single Permit Directive.

Recommendation on improving the provision of digital skills in education and training planned for Q3 2022 (CWP 2022).

Recommendation on the enabling factors for digital education planned for Q3 2022 (CWP 2022).

Dignified, transparent and predictable

"Working in an SME or working in a big company, that's not the question. Every citizen, every worker in Europe has a right to have a correct salary [...] and correct working conditions. [...] We have to support SMEs in these changes: that's obvious. We have to make them fit for a new economy, for the digital economy. [...] [But] we cannot build the future of SMEs on bad working conditions and very low salaries – that's not the future for the economic model in Europe."

April 2021: Proposal for a regulation on laying down rules on artificial intelligence (Artificial Intelligence Act).

May 2021: Guide to taking account of social considerations in public procurement.

February 2022: Just and sustainable economy package - Communication on Decent Work Worldwide and Proposal for a directive on Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence.

Report on implementation of the working time directive planned for 2022 (EPSR Action Plan).

Working conditions of platform workers

"Our labour markets will be changing due to automation, digitalisation and artificial intelligence. We have to engage decisively to mitigate the risks, shape the transitions and seize the opportunities. [...] We need to address the labour conditions of platform workers and actively address new forms of precariousness."

December 2021: Proposal for a directive on improving working conditions in platform work.

Health and safety issues

"One of the areas I personally care much about it is health and safety at work. It is not acceptable that in 2019 people in Europe are still at risk at their workplace. I will promote the adoption of further measures against carcinogens in the workplace. The changing world of work [also] requires new reflections on occupational health and safety."

September 2020: Commission proposed a fourth amendment of Directive 2004/37/EC on the protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to carcinogens or mutagens at work (CMD) (Adopted in March 2022).

April 2021: Proposal for a Regulation on Machinery Products.


Legislative proposal to update the existing binding occupational exposure limit value for asbestos planned for Q3 2022 (CWP 2022).

Revision of Chemical Agents Directive (Council Directive 98/24/EC) planned for Q4 2022: limit values of lead should be reviewed or, in case of cobalt, established (CWP 2022).

Before the end of 2022, the Commission will present an Action plan to achieve new or revised occupational exposure limits for at least 25 additional substances to the CMD.

No later than 31 December 2022, the Commission will prepare Union guidelines for hazardous medicinal products at the workplace, which will be published on the EU-OSHA website and disseminated in all Member States.
"[...] The renewal of the EU compass for action on mental health is an issue which we have to follow up. [...] So I would certainly have a look at that, and together with the Commissioner in charge of health, we will do so [...]".

Non-legislative initiative on mental health planned before the end of 2022 (EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2021-27).

Cooperating with the European Parliament

"I will work closely and regularly with the European Parliament, the Member States, social partners and all stakeholders to pursue a fairer, more social and inclusive Europe."

Commissioner Schmit frequently comes to plenary sessions and to the EMPL committee to present Commission plans and proposals and regularly participates in exchanges of views and hearings in the EMPL committee.
This briefing follows up the commitments made by the commissioner since 2019.

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<tr>
<td>Stability and Growth Pact: implementation</td>
<td>As one of the reactions to the pandemic and its economic and social consequence, the “General Escape Clause” of the Stability and Growth Pact was activated. It is set to remain active until the end of 2023 and be deactivated beginning of 2024. NGEU is providing impetus to the economy. In the 2022 European Semester communication, the Commission outlined that “compliance with the debt reduction benchmark would imply a too demanding frontloaded fiscal effort that risks to jeopardise growth” for Member States with debt levels above 60% and that “compliance with the debt reduction benchmark is not warranted under the current exceptional economic conditions.”</td>
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| Stability and Growth Pact: revision | In February 2020, the Commission published a Communication on “Economic governance review”, aimed at starting a public debate on the extent to which the different surveillance elements of the Economic Governance framework have been effective in achieving their key objectives. Owing to the COVID-19 crisis, that reflection was put on hold and resumed in October 2021. In accordance with the 2022 European Semester package communication, the Commission intends to provide orientations on possible changes to the economic governance framework after the summer break and well in time for 2023. |
December, of the Two-pack and Six-pack, is the way forward. I personally, I have to say, appreciated the European Fiscal Board’s philosophy: simple, enforceable and anti-cyclical. This philosophy is also considering many objections that were made also this morning, towards some too complicated and too discretionary elements of the SGP rules until now.”

“But we have to know that the decision on how to go forward after the review will be taken by the College and by the European institutions and it will not be an easy decision. Personally, I always stress the word ‘ambition’. I would like very much to change our rules in a more anti-cyclical, more simple and more enforceable way, but I respect the opinion that says, okay, be cautious, because we can solve the same problem with some interpretation tools and without opening the box of legislative changes. We will decide before the end of this year.”

EMU deepening/BICC

“I think that the proposal for this new instrument – the budget instrument from competitiveness and convergence – which was confirmed at the Euro Summit in June is relevant, needs to be seriously funded and should also be considered as a tool for stabilisation. We know that the discussion on the stabilisation tool has always been difficult in the European Council, but this proposal, I think, is very targeted. The target is to strengthen structural reforms and convergence, and this should be seriously funded and have a serious follow-up. This is the commitment that I personally take with your committee ... we will discuss together these criteria of governance and the priorities of this instrument, and the climate priority will certainly be seriously taken into account.”

The Budgetary Instrument for Convergence and Competitiveness (BICC) was withdrawn in the context of the EU Recovery Instrument (EURI) that allows the Commission to borrow up to €750 billion (in 2018 prices), and the Recovery and Resilience Facility, which will provide Member States with grants and loans to be used to fund investments and reforms. The Commission proposal for the BICC governance was withdrawn as part of the RRF package.
The adopted EURI and RRF regulations are being implemented.
No other instrument for economic stabilisation, convergence and reforms has been proposed.

Macroeconomic Imbalance Procedure (MIP)

“The analysis of macro imbalances: I think it was very helpful because it was useful to give both the Commission and Member States guidelines, ideas, suggestions – not only on the traditional financial issues, but on other issues such as private debt, the housing market, as we were saying, and the health situation. These conditions are fundamental and I think that we

The strengthening the MIP is part of the review of the overall reform of economic governance framework. The application of the MIP in 2020 and 2021 was heavily affected by the pandemic, as was the whole Semester. The impact was on both the content and the timeline of the procedure.
Starting the 2022 Semester cycle, the Commission published in November 2021 the Alert Mechanism
should work on strengthening them in the near future.”

**Invest EU and Sustainable EU Investment Plan**

“I will launch InvestEU and the Sustainable Europe Investment Plan as a matter of priority.”

“The one trillion figure is very impressive, I agree with you. I think we will work very strongly, personally, with Vice-President Timmermans and with Vice-President Dombrovskis because we need to create a good environment to mobilise private capital, obviously. But I think that to reach such a commitment, we need to join to capital, to private investment, also public grants and mobilising public investments around Europe. This plan, the Sustainable Europe Investment Plan, is starting in parallel with the InvestEU plan (...) We should also continue in the ongoing work on defining a standard for green bonds (...)”

“(...) InvestEU (...) is targeted to different priorities and will have, I think, a technical, strong capacity in its InvestEU ‘hub’ that will also be very useful to promote the investment of the Sustainable Europe Investment Plan. So, we will work hand in hand, with Commissioner-designate Dombrovskis specialising more on raising private capital in the project of the Sustainable Europe Investment Plan. (...) I, myself, will be concentrating more in the definition of the plan and the promotion of the InvestEU Programme.”

“We can’t accept the idea that such a relevant plan for us, InvestEU – supposed to raise something like EUR 650 billion – is limited to areas or single countries. So the commitment that I make is to have an equal distribution of this plan across the entire Union.”

**Unemployment Reinsurance Scheme**

“One of the key actions will be the delivery of the European Unemployment Reinsurance Scheme. (...) Politically, it will not be easy but together we can deliver a scheme that will offer protection for citizens during difficult times in their lives. I think that this proposal has, in fact, a

The **InvestEU programme** is part of the Multi-annual Financial Framework 2021-2027 and its funding has been supplemented by Next Generation EU. The programme has been adopted and the implementing guidelines finalised. The EU guarantee, set at €26.2 billion, is expected to mobilise at least €370 billion of investment across the EU.

In December 2019, the Commission adopted the **European Green Deal**, which underlined the need to better direct financial and capital flows to green investments. In the **European green deal investment plan** of January 2020, the Commission announced the upcoming establishment of an **EU green bond standard**; and submitted a proposal to the co-legislators in **July 2021**. The legislative procedure is ongoing.

The **European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan** presented in March 2021 does not refer to an unemployment reinsurance scheme; a Commission proposal to that effect is pending.

On 2 April 2020, the Commission presented a proposal for a regulation on the establishment of a
dual goal. We have not to underestimate one goal, perhaps the first one, at least towards our citizens, which is the social goal of having an instrument to strengthen national instruments against unemployment. (…) But it is not only a stabilisation tool, this is what I wanted to stress. What the reinsurance scheme should not be – you have already said it – is a tool for permanent transfers from country to country. (…) It should be concentrated on external relevant shocks and be very quick, having automatic dispersion mechanism. Then we have the big theme and I am tasked to define the mechanism and this will be one of the main issues, technically and politically. Will this scheme be concentrated on loans or on direct support to national budgets? (…) It is not sure that these two scenarios should be in complete contradiction one to another. (…) I mean that, if confirmed, I will work on this immediately with my colleague Schmit and with the College.”

**European Semester and social partners**

“(…) it is clear that I received the mandate to integrate the sustainable development goals of the United Nations into the process of the European Semester. As we all know, the chief goals have a strong social dimension, not only a strong environmental dimension (…). I think that we need – and it is also a problem of public awareness – to involve social partners, also in the Member States, in the dialogue that we will have with Member States’ governments (…)”

The involvement of social partners and other stakeholders in the European Semester remains limited. In the 2022 European Semester Spring package the Commission recognises the guiding role played by the United Nations sustainable development goals as regards its 2022 country specific recommendations and the national Recovery and Resilience plans.

**Eurostat**

“I attach great importance to defending the professional independence of Eurostat and the national authorities. I will make sure that Eurostat remains the trustworthy point of reference for statistics and data on Europe.”

No specific follow up until now.

**Fair and effective taxation**

“I am determined to work towards fair and effective taxation in the EU.” “[…] to keep fighting against tax fraud and evasion […]. I want to benefit taxpayers who play according to the rules and focus punitive action on those that do not.”

On 15 July 2020, the Commission adopted a new Tax Package for fair and simple taxation consisting of three separate but complementary initiatives: (1) An Action Plan for fair and simple taxation supporting the recovery, (2) The Revision of the Directive on administrative cooperation (DAC7), which was formally adopted by Council on 22 March 2021 (a further proposal to revise the directive (DAC8)
addressing exchange of information on crypto-assets and e-money was postponed for Q3 2022; it is currently foreseen for 16 November 2022 - OJ 2425 (1) and (3) A communication on Tax Good Governance in the EU and beyond.

On 18 May 2021, the Commission presented its Communication “Business Taxation for the 21st Century” which requests to embed EU action on business taxation in a comprehensive EU tax agenda. It presents actions to ensure fair and effective taxation:

*Action: Table a legislative proposal for the publication of effective tax rates paid by large companies, based on the methodology under discussion in Pillar 2 of the OECD negotiations (by 2022).* It has been announced as part of the Commission 2022 work programme.

*Action: Table a legislative proposal setting out union rules to neutralise the misuse of shell entities for tax purposes (by Q4 2021).* This action has been delivered on 22 December 2021 (through a proposal for a Directive laying down rules to prevent the misuse of shell entities for tax purposes).

The Communication also presents an action for tabling a proposal for a longer-term business taxation framework (BEFIT - Business in Europe: Framework for Income Taxation), moving towards a common tax rulebook and providing for fairer allocation of taxing rights between Member States (2023).


**Environment taxation**

“My first priority will be to make sure that taxation fully contributes to the European Green Deal. For my part, I will work for a new environment taxation framework to steer the behaviour of users, consumers and producers towards a climate neutral economy. I will assess a range of measures, including updating the Energy Tax Directive to align it with environmental objectives and working on a carbon border tax at the EU level compatible with WTO [World Trade Organisation] rules. In so doing, I will be vigilant that this framework is just and socially balanced. I also want to assess the use of [...] other legal instruments in the Treaties that allow tax proposals to be adopted with qualified majority votes and by co-decision.”

The Commission’s climate policy package of July 2021 (‘Fit for 55’) aims to make the EU the world’s first climate-neutral continent by 2050. The Commission’s package includes a broad variety of proposals, notably a revision of the Energy Taxation Directive, and the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM). The proposals also foster an increased use of renewable energy, greater energy efficiency, a more rapid roll-out of low emission transport modes, the infrastructure and fuels to support them, and diversified tools to preserve and expand the EU’s natural carbon sinks.

Part of the ambitions of the Commission with its ‘Fit for 55’ package is to encourage Member States to undertake commitments that are more ambitious in terms of emissions reductions.
Reform of the international corporate tax system and digital taxation

“My second objective is the European contribution to the reform of the international corporate tax system to make it fit for the 21st century. It is clear to everyone that the current system is out of date. The transition to a digital economy has led to a growing disconnection between where value is created and where tax is paid. Discussions on modernising international corporate taxation are now underway in the G20, supported by the OECD. By the end of next year, we will need to take stock of the international discussions. If no consensus emerges, I am tasked to lead efforts for a fair European digital tax and for a common corporate tax base.”

“If there is no consensus emerging next year we will have a European proposal [on digital tax]. This means that in the third quarter of next year we will work on the European proposal.”

Regarding Pillar 1 of the G20 agreement (place of taxation where value is created, regardless of a physical presence in the country):

- The OECD/G20 Inclusive Framework on BEPS is still working on specific aspects of Pillar 1 (on the so-called Amount A rules), with a view to preparing a Multilateral Convention to implement Pillar One originally planned to be signed at the meeting of G20 Finance Ministers in July 2022. The July 2022 OECD Tax Report to G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors14 however stated that “the work on the detailed provisions of the Multilateral Convention (MLC) and its Explanatory Statement are expected to be completed so that a signing ceremony of the MLC can be held in the first half of 2023 with the objective of enabling it to enter into force in 2024 once a critical mass of jurisdictions as defined by the MLC have ratified it.” The plans of the Commission have not yet been updated but one can assume that the draft EU directive planned for 2022 to implement these specific aspects will be postponed.

- The Commission proposed on 22 December 2021 “the next generation of EU own resources”, which includes an own resource equivalent to 15% of the share of the residual profits of in-scope companies that are reallocated to EU Member States. The proposals are limited in detail, not least because the OECD inclusive framework is still working on the Pillar One Amount A rules. Regarding Pillar 2 of the G20 agreement (minimum taxation): On 22 December 2021, the European Commission issued a proposal for a Council Directive concerning a global minimum level of taxation for multinational groups. The proposal states that it follows the global minimum tax model rules published by the G20/OECD inclusive framework on BEPS on 20 December 2021.

Customs Union

“Many take the Customs Union for granted but tensions around the globe on trade security, changing business models and the rise of e-commerce reinforce the need for a strong Customs Union.”

On 28 September 2020, the Commission launched a new Customs Union Action Plan, which includes 17 actions up to 2025 in a number of fields, also beyond customs policies, such as risk management,

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“Customs Union. I will strive to bring the Customs Union to the next level of effectiveness.”

managing e-commerce, promotion of compliance, and customs authorities acting as one.

The Action Plan was accompanied by a second Biennial Report describing EU customs developments in the following areas: managing the withdrawal of the UK from the Customs Union; strengthening controls and tackling fraud; greater use of monitoring of EU customs law; improving efficiency of customs administrations; harnessing innovation; optimising customs electronic systems and their use; dealing with the challenges of e-commerce; capitalising on the Customs Union to improve EU security; continuing to work on international relations.

On 28 October 2020, the Commission proposed a Regulation establishing the European Union Single Window Environment for Customs, on which a political provisional agreement was reached by the co-legislators on 19 May 2022.

In its work programme for 2022 the Commission announced that it would put forward in Q4 2022 an initiative for Revision of the Union customs legislation, aimed at improving the controls of e-commerce to the benefit of taxpayers and citizens, facilitating the enforcement tasks of national authorities and improving the level playing field for economic operators.
This briefing follows up on the commitments made by the commissioner in 2019.

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<td><strong>Conclude negotiations on a simplified post-2020 common agricultural policy (CAP)</strong></td>
<td>Following the political agreement reached by the Council and Parliament on 25 June 2021, the three basic acts for the CAP, which were published on 6 December 2021, will apply as of 1 January 2023.</td>
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<td>Adoption of the CAP reform legislative package.</td>
<td>Regulation (EU) 2020/2220 laying down certain transitional provisions for support from the EAFRD and EAGF in the years 2021 and 2022 was adopted on 23 December 2020.</td>
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<td>Transitional measures: “Transition regulation is necessary, because what else can we do? The common agricultural policy should not be interrupted.”</td>
<td>While the report on the state of play of EU agriculture has not yet been drawn up and the Commission has not further elaborated on a long-term vision for agriculture, it has published its communication on a long-term vision for rural areas (COM(2021)0345).</td>
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<td>Create a long-term vision for agriculture and “prepare a special report about the current situation in European agriculture”.</td>
<td>Commissioner Wojciechowski attends AGRI Committee meetings on a regular basis. DG AGRI’s Deputy Director General in charge of markets and Directors in charge of international affairs and strategy and policy analysis regularly update the AGRI Committee on latest developments.</td>
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<td>Cooperation with Parliament : “I will engage in dialogue with you, honourable Members, as individuals and in this Committee […]”; “I will actively inform the European Parliament and its relevant committees on all agriculture trade-related issues according to the inter-institutional rules.”</td>
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Contribute to the EU farm to fork strategy and improve the sustainability of food production across the food chain

Food chain: “My obligation as a Commissioner will be to ensure implementation of (unfair) practices regulation. This is the way to provide better protection for our farmers in their relation with retailers.”


“I will come up with an action plan to develop organic farming within the European Union.”

The EU code of conduct on responsible food business and marketing practices (June 2021) is one of the first deliverables of the farm to fork strategy and an integral part of its action plan.

This workshop on retail alliances in the agricultural and food supply chain was held in Brussels on 4-5 November 2019.

The Commission has set out a comprehensive action plan for the development of organic production (COM(2021)0141), published on 25 March 2021. Through it, the Commission aims to achieve the European Green Deal target of 25% of agricultural land under organic farming by 2030.

Markets

“I will go to Ireland to see the situation and to ask Irish farmers what they need, what is necessary to help them.”

The Commissioner has not yet carried out a mission to Ireland (see official information on missions of Commissioner Janusz Wojciechowski).

Develop a long-term vision for rural areas

“I will develop a new long-term vision for rural areas, [...] ensuring that the needs of rural areas are specifically catered for in national strategic plans [...]”

The Commission published its communication on a long-term vision for the EU’s rural areas on 30 June 2021 (COM(2021)0345).

Agriculture and trade agreements

“Next year, in 2020, the Commission will prepare an impact assessment, an evaluation of all the potential consequences for European farming of trade agreements like Mercosur or other agreements.”

The Commission published its final sustainability impact assessment and position paper on the EU-Mercosur trade agreement on 29 March 2021. This forms part of a series of sustainability impact assessments prepared by DG Trade for the EU’s free trade agreements.

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This document is available on the internet at: www.europarl.europa.eu/supporting-analyses

This briefing follows up the commitments made by the commissioner since 2019.

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<td><strong>Enhancing Europe’s technological sovereignty</strong></td>
<td>“There is an urgent need to prepare tomorrow's growth by investing today in the critical technologies of the future. I'm thinking of 5G, of course, but you also have to start preparing for 6G, artificial intelligence, the cloud and already the post-cloud, edge computing, the internet of things, cybersecurity of course, the blockchain [...]. And then, it will not surprise those who know me, for quantum technologies.”</td>
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<td>On 11 May 2021, the Digital Europe Programme with a budget of €7.5 billion over 7 years entered into force.</td>
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<td>On 10 November 2021, the Commission adopted three Digital Europe Work Programmes with a budget of €2 billion on digital investments (cloud, edge and quantum computing, high technology, AI), cybersecurity and digital hubs.</td>
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<td>On 16 December 2021, the Commission adopted the Connecting Europe Facility – Digital Work Programme, with a budget of €1 billion for 3 years to improve Europe’s digital connectivity.</td>
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<td>“We will have to reinvest massively in key technologies. They will concern, obviously, all that pertains to industrial property, but also cybersecurity because, in this subject, cybersecurity will become an essential issue.”</td>
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<td>On 3 September 2020, the Commission presented an Action Plan on Critical Raw Materials, the 2020 List of Critical Raw Materials and a foresight study on critical raw materials for strategic technologies and sectors from the 2030 and 2050 perspectives.</td>
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<td>“First, it is absolutely essential to diversify the sources of supply. I would remind you that in 2017, 27 critical substances were published. A new publication is expected in 2020, I will really look at it because it is a subject I know well. I'm going to look at it very quickly.”</td>
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<td>On 16 December 2020, the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy presented a new EU Cybersecurity Strategy and a proposal for a directive on measures for a high common level of cybersecurity across the Union (NIS 2).</td>
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Artificial intelligence and the new Digital Services Act

"We will thus present in the hundred days, with Margrethe Vestager, a European framework of artificial intelligence. I want to accompany it with a European strategy towards the establishment of a common data market."

"Data are my life, so you can be convinced that I want a Europe that masters its data, that can also share it, according to clear criteria, especially now in an industrial aspect, it will be essential for the Internet of Things and industry 4.0."

"We have not lost the artificial intelligence war against the Americans and the Chinese at all, I tell you. I will be there, I hope, with all those in the four corners of the continent who will accompany me in this fight. This is my deep conviction."

"[Looking into the future] involves as well an evolution of rules of the Internal Market which need to be completed in the light of the real needs of our enterprises. This will be done by means of the Digital Services Act with aim to regulate, in particular, big, digital platforms."

"[...] with reference to the Digital Services Act and a potential modification of E-commerce directive [...] obviously there will be no introduction of general surveillance, no review of the origin principle nor modification of responsibility. Clearly, obligations and responsibilities of platforms will be addressed."

"I will introduce a media and audiovisual action plan."

On 19 February 2020, the Commission presented its White Paper on Artificial Intelligence: a European approach to excellence and trust and a European data strategy.

On 25 November 2020, the Commission proposed a Regulation on data governance (DGA) to boost data sharing across sectors and Member States. A key pillar of the Data Strategy, it introduces a new data governance to increase trust in data sharing and strengthen mechanisms to increase data availability and overcome technical obstacles to the reuse of data.

On 21 April 2021, the Commission presented its AI Act, the first legal framework on trustworthy AI.

On 8 February 2022, the Commission proposed the Chips Act on semiconductor shortages and strengthening Europe's technological leadership.

On 9 March 2021, the commission launched the Communication "2030 Digital Compass: the European Way for the Digital Decade".

On 23 February 2022, the Commission presented the Data Act, a proposal for a Regulation on harmonised rules on fair access to and use of data.

On 15 December 2020, the Commission proposed a reform of the digital space: the Digital Services Act and the Digital Markets Act. On 5 July 2022, it welcomed the adoption of the DMA/DSA package.

On 26 January 2022, the Commission proposed a Declaration on digital rights and principles for a human-centred digital transformation.

On 3 December 2020, the Commission adopted a Media and Audiovisual Action Plan to support the recovery and transformation of the media and audiovisual sector.

On 13 January 2022, the Commission adopted the Creative Europe Work Programme for 2022.

Single market for cybersecurity and joint Cyber Unit

"The cybersecurity dimension is naturally essential to prevent our information space from being torn up one day. This is a subject that is close to my heart, as you all know, for a long time."

On 16 December 2020, the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy presented a new EU Cybersecurity Strategy. As a key component of Shaping Europe's...
time, and on which I intend to get personally involved in all the components of the portfolio. It concerns all activities of the internal market, end to end. It is therefore clearly structuring."

"We will have to ask ourselves the problem of cybersecurity, including when we manufacture objects [...]. So cybersecurity by design is something I really want to work on with you on, because it's something I think we need to go further."

Digital Future, the Recovery Plan for Europe and the EU Security Union Strategy, the Strategy will bolster Europe's collective resilience against cyber threats and help to ensure that all citizens and businesses can fully benefit from trustworthy and reliable services and digital tools.

On 16 December 2020, the Commission presented a new cybersecurity strategy, a proposal for a directive on measures for a high common level of cybersecurity across the Union (NIS 2) and a proposal for a Directive on the resilience of critical entities. A proposal for a Cyber Resilience Act is expected in Q3 2022.

On 23 June 2021, the Commission proposed a a Joint Cyber Unit to step up response to large-scale security incidents.

On 22 March 2022, the Commission proposed two new regulations to establish common cybersecurity and information security measures across the EU institutions, bodies, offices and agencies.

Circular Economy

"Together with all my colleagues at the college, I will contribute to an ambitious Green Deal to make Europe the first carbon-neutral continent by 2050. And with Frans Timmermans, I will bring together the industrial pillar of the "Green Deal", a new strategy for the circular economy, a reorientation towards public procurement policy, or still a transition to zero emission vehicles because we have to learn the lessons and get out of the dieselgate."

On 11 March 2020, the Commission adopted a new Circular Economy Action Plan - one of the main building blocks of the European Green Deal

On 10 December 2020, as part of the Circular Economy Action Plan, the Commission adopted a proposal for a Regulation on batteries and waste batteries.

SME strategy and SME Envoy

"My role will also be to protect SMEs, start-ups, and support new forms of employment by ensuring fair competition with giants from other continents, and in particular by ensuring that everyone enjoys social rights."

"We must help SME to adapt, but also simplify their lives, by all means, so that they can grow in and through the internal market, for example by facilitating access to dedicated funding, public procurement or helping them protect their knowledge."

On 10 March 2020, the Commission published the Communication An SME Strategy for a sustainable and digital Europe and A New Industrial Strategy for Europe, which was updated on 5 March 2021 to take full account of consequences of the COVID-19 crisis

On 10 January 2022, the Commission and the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) launched the new EU SME Fund, which offers vouchers for EU-based SMEs to help them protect their intellectual property (IP) rights.
"And then I say it again, but it's an important topic, the SME Envoy I have not named yet, of course, I have not seen anyone yet, it's very premature - will play a role very important to be the relay of the Commission on the ground."

On 5 May 2021, the Commission nominated Mr Vazil Hudák as the SME Envoy. After some criticism, on 17 August 2021 it decided to take some extra time to find the right match. The Deputy Director-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs chairs the network of national SME envoys in the interim.

Day-to-day functioning of the single market

"I will work on [...] modernisation of the Internal Market. There is still a lot to be done. We need to achieve the critical mass. Obviously, we need to lower barriers [...]."

"[...] all sectors of our economy [...] are affected by the digital. Therefore, my role will be to help entire industry in its transformation."

In February 2020, the Commission launched the Shaping Europe's Digital Future communication.

On 5 May 2021, the Commission nominated Mr Vazil Hudák as the SME Envoy. After some criticism, on 17 August 2021 it decided to take some extra time to find the right match. The Deputy Director-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs chairs the network of national SME envoys in the interim.

"For the single market within this portfolio, I would say that what I want is a three stroke engine it is about protection, transformation, and then looking to the future."

In November 2020, the Commission adopted a New Consumer Agenda Strengthening consumer resilience for sustainable recovery.


"First of all protection, so for the Internal Market and the rules that pertain, allow millions of products to be sold and bought every day, whilst bringing about consumer protection. This Internal Market protection is also for European workers who may freely provide their services in all Member States of the Union through the recognition of their professional qualifications."

In March 2020, a Long-term Action plan for better implementation and enforcement of single market rules was presented, announcing the creation of a joint Single Market Enforcement Task-Force (SMET).

"We also have to ensure that rules of the Internal Market are properly applied so that they can continue to promote convergence and growth for all the countries of the Union. I stress all countries, without bringing prejudice to the protection of workers and their work conditions."

In June 2020, the Commission released a White Paper dealing with the distortive effects of foreign subsidies in the Single Market. As follow-up the Commission presented in May 2021 a proposal for a Regulation on foreign subsidies distorting the internal market.

"I will also ensure that the single market protects from the competition from outside when it is unfair."

In June 2020, the Commission released a White Paper dealing with the distortive effects of foreign subsidies in the Single Market. As follow-up the Commission presented in May 2021 a proposal for a Regulation on foreign subsidies distorting the internal market.
"It is a question of anticipating and accompanying this transformation, which is also an opportunity to help all those who need to qualify themselves or requalify or reskill for new jobs. The third challenge, the social challenge, will be just as important to my portfolio as the other two, the environmental and the digital challenges."

In July 2020, the Commission presented the European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience.

On 30 March 2022, the Commission presented a package of proposals to make sustainable products the norm in the EU and empower consumers for the green transition, as announced in the Circular Economy Action Plan. The package includes a Regulation on Ecodesign for Sustainable Products, an Ecodesign and Energy Labelling Working Plan 2022-2024, a proposal on the revision of the Construction Product Regulation, and the EU Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles.

Commission initiatives on green claims and on the right to repair are expected in Q4 2022.

"I would like to indicate very clearly that I am against any new barriers. It is a sensitive topic. We sometimes saw barriers being raised and some states did not play according to the rules. Therefore, I will support the Parliament in the effort to make sure that the rules are respected."

On 10 March 2020, the Commission published a Communication on Identifying and addressing barriers to the Single Market, accompanied by a staff working document Business Journey on the single market: Practical Obstacles and Barriers.

"I would like to indicate very clearly that I am not going to reopen the Services Directive. [...] However, I plan to improve its implementation because it is there and should be applied according to the rules."

"I gladly accept the obligation [to remove obstacles to cross-border service provision]."

An update of the Handbook on the implementation of the Services Directive was announced in March 2020 in the long-term action plan for better implementation and enforcement of single market rules. In April 2021, the Commission published a summary report 'Mapping and assessment of legal and administrative barriers in the services sector'.

Oversight of the European Defence Fund

"Obviously, the subject of defence will be an absolutely major point, thanks to the European Defence Fund which will benefit, I will be particularly careful, to all SMEs."

On 30 June 2021, the Commission adopted of the first European Defence Fund (EDF) annual work programme paving the way to the immediate launch of 23 calls for proposals for a total of €1.2 billion of EU funding in support of collaborative defence research and development projects, and awarded 26 new industrial cooperation projects for more than €158 million under the EDF's precursor programme, the European Defence Industry Development Programme (EDIDP).

On 15 February 2022, the Commission proposed a roadmap on critical technologies for security and defence and a communication on initiatives in areas critical to defence. After an analysis of the EU defence investment gaps, on 25 May 2022 it adopted the second EDF annual work programme.
Strong and innovative space industry

"Let me be clear: the space industry is absolutely essential. Europe is the second largest continent in the world in terms of space, and it will remain so. This is essential for our autonomy, for our independence."

"To project oneself, it is finally to show ambition in defence industry, in the field of space. Europe must of course have autonomous access to space, but also continue to invest in world-class systems such as Copernicus or Galileo. Obviously, I’m going to work on it."

On 22 February 2021, the Commission presented an Action Plan to enhance synergies and cross-fertilisation between civil, defence and space industries.

On 15 February 2022, the Commission proposed a Regulation on a space-based secure connectivity, a Joint Communication on an EU approach on Space Traffic Management (STM) a Roadmap on critical technologies for security and defence and a contribution to European Defence in the context of the Strategic Compass.
This briefing follows up on the commitments made by the commissioner in 2019.

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<td><strong>2021-2027 budget for cohesion policy</strong></td>
<td>In 2021-2027, EU funds allocated to cohesion policy (including the Just Transition Fund) amount to EUR 337.5 billion (in 2018 prices). In addition, the newly created Just Transition Fund provides ‘new funding’ amounting to EUR 17.5 billion. The REACT-EU package provided an additional EUR 57.5 billion of funding for 2021 and 2022 as part of the European Recovery Instrument (Next Generation EU). Thus, the total cohesion budget for 2021 - 2027 — covering the ERDF, Cohesion Fund, ESF+, the Just Transition Fund and REACT-EU — totals EUR 395.2 billion. Conclusion: the initially proposed budget was modest, but the European Commission showed reflexes with its response to crises.</td>
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<td>No region, no person left behind</td>
<td>From the Arctic to the Mediterranean, from urban areas to former industrial regions, from coal dependent regions to the outermost regions of the EU. From mountain regions to rural areas, from border regions to peripheral coastal areas, Europe must act, and been seen by citizens to act. An economy that works for the people, with intervention tools tailored to the needs of each territory, helping the transition to a digital, green and gender-balanced economy. No region, no person left behind. The new framework for cohesion policy for the period 2021-2027 covers every region in the EU independently of their level of development or location. However, most of the funds are targeted where they are most needed: at regions with a GDP per capita below 75 % of the EU average.</td>
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**Just Transition Fund**

“A new Just Transition Fund will also be an immediate task, inspired by a Parliament proposal to support regions where the transition to a climate neutral economy is more challenging, namely, industrial, coal and energy intensive regions. You will be hearing from us very soon, with a Commission proposal in the first 100 days.”

“I will take the lead on this proposal, working closely with the Executive Vice-President for the European Green Deal and the Commissioner for Budget and Administration. I will build on cohesion policy’s vast experience of managing transition programmes, in collaboration with the regional and local level.”

As part of the European Green Deal, on 14 January 2020, the Commission adopted a proposal for a regulation to create the Just Transition Fund (COM(2020)0022), aimed at supporting the EU regions most affected by the transition to a low-carbon economy. In the context of the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, an amended proposal on the Just Transition Fund was published on 28 May 2020. It is set to have a budget of EUR 17.5 billion. The Fund is part of a Just Transition Mechanism, which also includes resources under the InvestEU programme and a public-sector loan facility.

**Simplification**

“The Commission proposals are ambitious, for example, simplified cost options, freeing small beneficiaries from keeping mountains of invoices for years; saving up to 25% in administrative costs. We will be checking if these measures deliver as promised [...].”

“[…] Probably we will need to consult the beneficiaries, we will need to ask them what do we need to improve, what do we need to simplify, how could we make the rules comparatively easy to fulfil, without the necessary bureaucracy. We need to look on the customer side. We have to keep what’s necessary, but we have to clear out all of the bureaucratic requirements which are not necessary.”

The final version of regulations for the 2021-2027 cohesion policy maintained the major proposed simplification rules. However, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), although under shared management, is not covered by the CPR. Neither had it been in the Commission’s original proposal. This is a gap in the single rulebook approach.

The recently adopted CARE and CARE+ regulations as well as the recently proposed FAST-CARE regulation provide additional flexibility to the cohesion policy for the periods 2014-2020 and 2021-2027.

**Structural reforms**

“Reforms and cohesion must work together. They must reinforce each other, not come at each other’s expense. Taxpayers should not fund policies which contradict or ignore each other.”

**Reform Support Programme / Budgetary Instrument for Convergence and Competitiveness**

“I am committed to work closely with the Parliament […]. We must work together to make visible progress within the first 100 days and to adopt the programme on time.”

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Commission proposed a new Recovery and Resilience Facility, which builds on progress on the Reform Delivery Tool included in the Commission’s 2018 proposal for a Reform Support Programme (RSP). The RSP was thus withdrawn, and its content replaced by this new facility and a Technical Support Instrument, in two standalone regulations.
**Outermost regions**

“I recognise the specific needs of these regions. [...] So I welcome the present inclusion of a specific outermost region dimension in no less than 21 different post-2020 legislative proposals: from fisheries to research, from transport to climate change. Some of these points have already passed trilogue, others we must fight to maintain [...].”

In its report of 23 March 2020 ([COM(2020)0104](#)), the Commission enshrined the specificities of the outermost regions in 21 proposals for future EU programmes across a wide range of policies, including cohesion, research, agriculture and fisheries policies. The Commission further proposed a specific outermost regions component under the European Territorial Cooperation goal to support outermost regions in their integration in the parts of the world where they are situated (Interreg - Strand D). The final act was published in the [official journal of 30 June 2021](#).

**Cofinancing rates**

“We shouldn’t change the co-financing rates without being aware of the impact that this will have.”

The European Commission has shown the necessary flexibility on this topic. In response to the COVID-19 crisis, on 23 April 2020, the amended proposal for the CPR introduced increased maximum co-financing rates. On 8 March 2022, under the CARE initiative, the Commission proposed to extend the possibility to use the increased co-financing rates for the 2021-2022 accounting year. The proposed FAST-CARE regulation also extended this possibility.

**Communication with the European Parliament**

“My goal is to visit the regions to understand local concerns - and local aspirations [...]. I intend to always inform you when I go to your region. In fact, I will regularly update you on all my initiatives. I will ensure a special relationship with the European Parliament, particularly with the committees here today.”

Commissioner Elisa Ferreira reports diligently to the European Parliament and attends committee meetings on a regular basis.

**Climate change**

“This is a crucial question because the fight against climate change cannot be allocated here or there. It has got to be horizontal. It has to be embodied in all the policies. And I think this Commission, and in particular the compromise that has been taken by the President-elect, is very clear on those grounds. Of course for these we have got to be very specific and to be able to organise the different instruments that we have at our disposal in a very careful way.”

On 11 December 2019, the Commission presented [the European Green Deal](#) – a roadmap for making the EU’s economy sustainable by turning climate and environmental challenges into opportunities across all policy areas and making the transition just and inclusive for all.

Cohesion policy has a strong impact in many fields. Its investments help to deliver many EU policy objectives, in particular those concerning climate change.
Partnership principle

“I think partnership is absolutely essential. Involving local stakeholders is absolutely essential. I will investigate the situation, I will see what is happening. In my experience the involvement of local stakeholders is the prerequisite for allowing the projects that are implemented to be good for the all concerned and to ensure that there is full participation of local communities in every project. [...] The principle is an accepted principle, it is an established principle within the Commission and the services.”

The new framework for cohesion policy for the period 2021-2027 guarantees the partnership principle through adequate involvement of local, regional and civil society partners in the preparation of Partnership Agreements, and throughout the preparation, implementation, and evaluation of programmes, including through participation in monitoring committees.

However, the Recovery and Resilience Facility lacks a territorial dimension and deployment consultation with regions and municipalities. Also, the recent CARE, CARE+ and FAST-CARE regulations (proposed by the Commission on 29 June), although providing additional flexibility, weaken the partnership principle of the cohesion policy.

Rule of law conditionality

“It’s important that there should not be any automatic use of rule of law conditionality. We have to remember the importance of the proportionality principle. So an automatic application would not be desirable at all. It’s a very sensitive issue.”

“The Parliament will be closely associated all along the process.”

Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2020/2092 of 16 December 2020 on a general regime of conditionality for the protection of the Union budget entered into force on 1 January 2021. This regulation does not introduce automatic use of the rule of law conditionality mechanism. The regulation involves Parliament throughout the procedure.

Interreg

“I don’t think that the Commission would really like to reduce or reduce the impact of Interreg. We’ll be doing everything possible rather to try to ensure that Interreg keeps running.”

The new framework for cohesion policy in the period 2021-2027, in particular Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 on specific provisions for the European territorial cooperation goal (Interreg) supported by the European Regional Development Fund and external financing instruments ensures that Interreg will keep running.

However, the budget agreed in the Common Provisions Regulation adopted on 24 June 2021 has slightly decreased compared to the Commission’s initial proposal.
This briefing follows up the commitments made by the commissioner since 2019.

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<td><strong>Protecting and promoting public health</strong></td>
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| Supply of affordable medicines                  | “[...] a steady stream of affordable medicines is vital. The EU pharmaceutical system has given citizens access to high-quality and affordable medicines for decades.” “There is a legal obligation on the pharmaceutical industry to ensure that patients have access to and supply of medicines. We need to work closely and try to have a holistic pharmaceutical strategy, so as to be able to deliver what we need for patients.” “We need to ensure access to innovation and to medicines for people with TB, HIV/AIDS and hepatitis. [...] These diseases have an impact on a very large number of European citizens. That would be my first priority to take up in the new Commission.”

The Commission published its ‘Pharmaceutical Strategy for Europe’ on 25.11.2020. It aims at creating a future proof regulatory framework and at supporting industry in promoting research and technologies that actually reach patients in order to fulfil their therapeutic needs while addressing market failures. On 30.3.2021, the Commission published its Roadmap on the revision of the general pharmaceutical legislation. The Commission announced a proposal for revision of pharmaceutical legislation for end 2022. The EU4Health programme, adopted on 24.3.2021, aims to make affordable medicines and medical devices more readily available and promote health and disease prevention, while increasing preparedness and resilience of national health systems during health crises.

This issue seems to have been overtaken by a focus on COVID.
Medical devices

“I will focus on implementing a modernised and more robust legislative framework for medical devices. This needs to be done in order to improve patient safety and consolidate the EU’s role as a global leader in this field.”

The new Medical Devices Regulation was adopted on 23.4.2020 and entered into force on 26.5.2021. The In-Vitro Medical Devices Regulation of 2017 entered into force on 26.5.2022.

Health Data Space and e-health

“Digital technologies and artificial intelligence need to be leveraged in this effort, as they can bring concrete benefits to patients and to healthcare professionals. I want to maximise this potential and I see the creation of a European Health Data Space as an important step in the right direction.”

“Digitalisation is a very important part of any health agenda and it is extremely significant for citizens. [...] We are committed to digitalisation as a Commission. It’s something that would promote research and innovation, we already have the European reference networks and these are allowing people with rare diseases and paediatrics, to be able to have this access and I believe that it can radically change patient care and treatment.”

“Unfortunately, one of the drawbacks of what we see in today’s digital age is how easy it is to spread misinformation through so many media. [...] So we need to work together through education and through health in order to fight and challenge the misinformation [...]”

“ [...] we need to be careful as well with data protection for patients. So this is something that we should always have in mind when we’re talking about e-health.”

Fighting disinformation is also a major part of the EC’s coronavirus response.

Anti-microbial resistance

“ [...] I will advocate for an international agreement on the use and access to anti-microbials. For that main reason I will also prioritise the implementation of the European one-health action plan against anti-microbial resistance.”

“I believe that the European Union must lead by example in this, in moving forward so that we have new anti-microbials available for patients.”

The Commission’s Pharmaceutical Strategy for Europe of 25.11.2020 includes as one of four main objectives ensuring access to affordable medicines for patients, and addressing unmet medical needs (e.g. in the areas of antimicrobial resistance, cancer, rare diseases). The EU AMR One-Health Network, chaired by the European Commission, includes government experts from the human health, animal health and environmental sector, the EU scientific agencies (ECDC, EMA, and EFSA) and holds bi-annual meetings.
Tracking commitments of Stella Kyriakides

Vaccination

“We have the science which shows us that it is important that we use vaccines and yet we have in the last few years seen a number of diseases breaking out in Europe: we have measles because of vaccine hesitancy. And I will not say that that is only due to misinformation, because it is also related to the programmes that Member States have for vaccination – there seems to be no uniformity. [...] we need to fight any source of misinformation which in fact impacts negatively on where we know that there is a solid science.”

COVID created an unforeseen situation and priorities have shifted completely. The original commitment was meant to address vaccine hesitancy related to long-known (childhood) diseases. On 17.6.2020, the Commission presented a European strategy for COVID-19 vaccines to accelerate the development, manufacturing, and deployment of vaccines. Most of the actions in the field of vaccines have focussed on Covid in the past two years.

Beating Cancer Plan

“I see our Beating Cancer Plan touching upon all the actions in my mission letter, farm to fork, the Green Deal, anti-microbial resistance, innovation, affordability of medicines. It needs to address prevention, diagnosis, treatment, research, survivorship and palliative care. It needs to involve sectors and industries beyond the health sector, including education and environment.”

“Making a difference in the life of cancer patients has always been my guiding principle. And speaking from personal experiences, I can assure you that it will continue to be my guiding principle in my current mission [...].”

On 3.2.2021, the Commission delivered the Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan. It is structured around four key action areas with 10 flagship initiatives and multiple supporting actions. The fight against cancer is furthermore addressed in the Commission’s 2020 Farm to Fork Strategy and Pharmaceutical Strategy.

Organ donation

“ [...] whether we put forward an umbrella strategy for Europe on organ donation, I would like to see the evaluation which is expected at the end of 2019, so as to be able to see where we are and how we move. [...]”


Health technology assessment (HTA)

“ [...] this, I believe, is something that I would work really very strongly towards, trying to build a consensus so that, finally, the Commission proposal of 2018 concerning health technology assessment moves forward, because I think it is an imperative part of any health system that we, as Europeans, want to promote.”

The new Regulation on HTA of 15.12.2021 will apply from 12.1.2025.
Mental health

“[...] I believe that mental health is an area that for many Member States does not receive the attention that it deserves, and it is important that we do something to reverse this trend. I’m not only speaking about depression in adults, but if we look at the problems that we’re seeing with adolescents in terms of behavioural problems, in terms of increases in self-destructive behaviour, we need to work preventively.”

The Working Group on Health of the Steering Group on Health Promotion, Disease Prevention and Management of Non-Communicable Diseases (SGPP) continued its work on mental health.

In the current context, particular attention is being devoted to the mental health aspects of the COVID crisis and the war in Ukraine.

Research and innovation

“We are committed to innovation. We are committed to moving ahead and investing in research, .... So, I would definitely consider this to be a priority because moving ahead with innovation and science can only be more effective for European health. Because this will affect industry, it will affect medicines, it will affect the Green Deal, and it will affect the food we are eating.”

“So what I would aim for is having a very responsible voice in the College, using science as a basis, but also taking into consideration and sharing other concerns, to be able to convince others that we need to move forward with many of the policies that we know are needed to protect human health.”

The EU4Health programme 2021-2027 was adopted on 14.12.2020. It aims to tackle cross-border health threats and create resilient European health systems with a budget of EUR 5.1 billion - the largest health programme ever. EU4Health will provide funding to EU Member States, health organisations and NGOs. Health research is also supported by the Horizon Europe programme (2021-2027) with its Health Cluster and Cancer Mission.

The College of Commissioners continues to draw upon the advice of its Group of Chief Scientific Advisors that was set up in 2015.

Food safety and animal and plant health

Pesticides

“[...] I can commit to decreasing the dependence that we have on pesticides and to trying to invest and encourage the finding of low risk alternatives. [...] I intend to follow this very closely so as to be able to deliver.”

“The general food law will, I hope, change the level of transparency that has been a big problem in creating citizen mistrust, but I can’t commit in a louder way to the lowering of the dependence of pesticides and to finding low-risk alternatives.”

“But what I would like to be absolutely clear on, is that this is not something that is in isolation to everything else. It’s part of the Green Deal that we’re all going to work towards and it’s part of farm to fork. And building this into it, we cannot have an effective farm to fork strategy or an

On 20.5.2020, the Commission presented its Farm to Fork Strategy setting as target a reduction by 50% in the use and risk of chemical pesticides and the use of more hazardous pesticides by 50% by 2030.
effective Green Deal if we are not facing and able to face and deal with issues such as pesticides.”

“What I can commit to [...] is that there will be no lowering of the bar on the protection of bees and other pollinators. [...] Bee protection needs to be a centre of our policies and this is also part of the policies of the Green Deal [...]. For myself, decreasing the use of neonicots and finding alternatives is a primary concern.”

Endocrine disruptors

“I know that they [endocrine disruptors] impact on human health and I know that we need to do something about it and this is going to be my commitment to taking this up. We’re waiting for the fitness check. I would look forward to working with you to seeing what we need to do to move forward, because it is definitely not an area that we can afford to leave behind and I’m clear on that.”

“So I think it is extremely important when we were talking about endocrine disruptors, about neonicots, about new breeding techniques, and about pesticides, that we do look at the science that is there.”

On 14.10.2020, the Commission adopted the EU Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability phasing out from consumer products the most harmful substances, including endocrine disruptors. It is part of the EU’s zero pollution ambition, a key commitment of the European Green Deal. In the Chemicals Strategy, the Commission announced that it would propose establishing legally binding hazard identification of endocrine disruptors.

Improving consumers information

“It [nutrition labelling] is in fact mandatory on pre-packed food. Citizens want this. They want nutrition profiles. It is obvious that when we are going to pick something off the shelf, we are more and more looking to see if what we are reading is something that we want to buy. [...] The nutrient profiles are important. They are important for citizens. There is a ‘front of pack’ report coming out at the end of this year. I would wait to see the results and move forward, and I would like to see a common approach across Member States [...].”

“We need to find common ways [for origin labelling] so that consumers have access to reliable information when they are purchasing or having access to food. This is something that is now being evaluated. I would look at all the information and then come forward with a proposal.”

On 20.5.2020, the Commission proposed the Farm to Fork Strategy (COM(2020)381) where it proposes the mandatory front-of-pack nutrition labelling and initiatives to stimulate product reformulation, including by setting up nutrient profiles to restrict the promotion (via nutrition or health claims) of foods high in fat, sugars and salt. It will also consider proposing the extension of mandatory origin or provenance indications to certain products, while fully taking into account impacts on the single market.

The evaluation report on origin labelling has been published on 10.8.2021.
Animal health and welfare

“First of all, I want to be absolutely clear that I consider animal welfare and animal health as part of my one-health [...]. [...] we cannot talk about one-health if we don’t look at the whole area, and this includes human, environment and animal and plant health.”

On 20.5.2020, the Commission proposed the Farm to Fork Strategy (COM(2020)381) including a Roadmap for the fitness check of animal welfare legislation. A proposal for a revised EU animal welfare legislation has been announced for 2023.

Food waste

“[...] I would like to be able to deliver a five-year action plan to deal with food waste because I think it’s a very important part of the sustainable food effort that we’re making.”

On 20.5.2020, Commission proposed the Farm to Fork Strategy (COM (2020)381) in which it announced to propose legally binding targets to reduce food waste across the EU by 2023.

Food contact materials

“This [food contact materials] is an extremely important subject, as it’s about substances entering into the food and potentially changing or affecting human health, but also changing the constituents of the food. [...] I would look at the science and I would move ahead with prioritisation, starting off with those that we know are potentially more harmful to human health.”

The safety of food contact materials is evaluated by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). In July 2020, the Commission asked EFSA to re-evaluate the risks to public health from the presence of plasticisers such as phthalates, structurally similar substances, and replacement substances in food contact materials.
This briefing follows up the commitments made by the commissioner in 2019.

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<td><strong>Upholding Rule of Law through the European Rule of Law Mechanism</strong></td>
<td>The Commission effectively implemented the <a href="https://www.agenda2020.europa.eu/">Rule of Law Mechanism</a> by publishing annual reports on Rule of Law (<a href="https://www.europa.europa.eu">2020</a> and <a href="https://www.europa.europa.eu">2021</a>) that cover four pillars (the justice system, the anti-corruption framework, media pluralism and other institutional issues related to checks and balances) and are subsequently debated by Parliament and Council, as well as by other institutions and bodies, including at national level. From 2022 on, the reports will also include recommendations, a long-standing EP request. Still, the EP expressed <a href="https://www.europa.europa.eu">criticism</a> on some aspects of the report, notably on the limited follow up actions and on the scope that does not cover all Article 2 TUE values.</td>
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<td><strong>Monitoring Rule of Law in the Member States, dialogue and cooperation with Member States and other institution</strong></td>
<td>The annual reports include a Communication on the rule of law situation in the European Union and Country chapters on the rule of law situation in each Member State. Member States are <a href="https://www.europa.europa.eu">involved in different ways and stages</a> during the drafting process, and country visits are organised with meetings with national institutions and stakeholders. <a href="https://www.europa.europa.eu">Parliament</a>, <a href="https://www.europa.europa.eu">civil society</a> and <a href="https://www.europa.europa.eu">academics</a> have expressed criticism - among other aspects - of the cautiousness and the</td>
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"The monitoring will cover all Member States, but will go into more depth in Member States where particular risks have been identified. I will pay particular attention to ensure the objectivity and fairness of this monitoring how we build dialogue and ensure that we share best practice to help Member States."
Recommendations

“[I]t’s also very important to send recommendations to all the Member States and to make remarks to all the Member States without any discrimination ... I was surprised that for so many years it has been possible to make remarks on the budgetary situation – it’s a necessity to do that–but not so evident to make remarks about the values that we share.”

Commission President von der Leyen announced and Commissioner Reynders confirmed that the annual Commission report on Rule of Law that will be published in 2022 will include recommendations to Member States, as repeatedly requested by the EP since 2015.

Article 7 procedures

The Commissioner committed to push forward the Article 7 procedures, “not only in the actual cases that we have but, if it’s needed, in other cases”. He also supported the right of the European Parliament to intervene in the Art. 7 TEU procedure it started on Hungary.

The Commission has participated in the hearings in the General Affairs Council on Poland and Hungary by providing updated information on the situation in these two Member States subjected to the Article 7 TEU procedure launched respectively by the Commission and by Parliament. The Commission did not launch the procedure for any other Member State - not even the Rule of Law Framework.

Rule of Law conditionality

“I believe that we will get an agreement rapidly between the co-legislators on that subject, because this will then mean that it is possible to take the right budget action with suspension, or losing money all together in the event of a generalized failure to uphold rule of law obligations.”

Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2020/2092 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2020 on a general regime of conditionality for the protection of the Union budget was effectively adopted, but its concrete activation was delayed to wait for the judgments of the CJEU on the cases brought by Poland and Hungary and the adoption of guidelines for the application of the Regulation, leading the EP to launch an infringement procedure against the Commission. Following the judgment by the CJEU, the Commission launched the application of the Regulation to Hungary.

Interinstitutional working group and agreement

“[I]t’s possible to discuss an interinstitutional arrangement. I don’t know if it will be a formal one because it will be long – maybe for the medium term – but to start immediately.”

“I will propose organising a working group with the three institutions ...”

The request by the EP to enter into interinstitutional negotiations on an agreement on Rule of Law Mechanism was rejected by the Commission, while no specific working group involving the Commission, Parliament and Council has been proposed or set up.
European Public Prosecutor’s Office (EPPO)

The Commissioner committed to ensure that the European Public Prosecutor’s Office regulation is implemented and EPPO is operational.

The European Public Prosecutor’s Office is in place and active (although 5 Member States do not take part): in July 2020, the Council appointed 22 European Prosecutors and in June 2021 EPPO started its operations swiftly and efficaciously.

Developing the Justice area through judicial cooperation

“We need to strengthen judicial cooperation in civil and political matters. European citizens have the right to live and work in the EU with the full respect of the freedom of movement.”

European Commission presented on 1 December 2021 a proposal for a regulation on the digitalisation of judicial cooperation and access to justice in cross-border civil, commercial and criminal matters. The provisions set out in the proposal aim at improving access to justice and the efficiency and resilience of the communication flows involved in the cooperation between judicial and other competent authorities in EU cross-border cases. The Commission is also currently working on a new legislative proposal on insolvency laws: increasing convergence of national laws to encourage cross-border investment, which is planned to be published by the end of 2022.

The European Arrest Warrant

“Concerning the European Arrest Warrant, I will continue to monitor its application and work closely with you and with the Member States to continue to improve it ... We will consider whether infringement proceedings are necessary in light of the compliance assessment. I will also seriously consider whether to bring forward a proposal to revise the European Arrest Warrant.”

In March 2020, European Commission set up a European arrest warrant coordination group to enhance the swift exchange of information and cooperation of different actors. European Commission’s report from 2 July 2020 on the European arrest warrant and the surrender procedures between Member States demonstrates a rather satisfactory level of implementation of the Framework Decision in a significant number of Member States and a determination of the Commission to take every appropriate measure to ensure conformity with the Framework Decision.

Prisons conditions and pre-trial detention

“I will also look into how prison conditions in the Union could be improved, and I will explore the idea of establishing minimum standards for pre-trial detention in order to strengthen trust.”

European Commission issued on 24 September 2021 a non-paper on detention conditions and procedural rights in pre-trial detention. It served as a basis for a discussion among the Justice Ministers of the EU Member States on 7 October 2021 on the need for action on pre-trial detention and detention conditions in the EU. The Commissioner Didier Reynders announced a follow up with recommendations on best practices in 2022.
General Data Protection Regulation, promoting the European approach as a global model

“One of my priorities will be to ensure that fundamental rights are fully protected in the digital age ... We need to make sure that the new legal framework is fully implemented and at the same time continue to promote our values and standards on the world stage ... I often hear criticism of the general regulation on data protection, which nevertheless contains simplified mechanisms for small and medium-sized enterprises. It is therefore in this spirit that I will try to work, in order to remove, if possible, a number of unnecessary constraints on small and medium-sized enterprises or start-ups.”

European Commission’s President Ursula von der Leyen and U.S. President Joe Biden declared on 25 March 2022 that they have found an agreement in principle on a new framework for transatlantic data flows, which will enable predictable and trustworthy data flows between the EU and U.S., safeguarding privacy and civil liberties. Ursula von der Leyen thanked Commissioner Reynders for his tireless efforts to find a balanced and effective solution.

Fundamental rights, human and ethical implications of artificial intelligence

“[I]n the first 100 days we will try to work on new horizontal legislation, about the human and ethical aspects of the artificial intelligence ... We need to ask for more and more information about the algorithms and the logical working of the algorithms ... So with the Commission, we need not only to put into place new legislation, we need also to help national authorities to organise tests and controls to receive information ... We will work in sectorial situations, because the difficulties are more detailed in the transportation sector or in healthcare and other kinds of activity.”

Following resolutions of the European Parliament, the White Paper on AI - A European approach to excellence and trust and public consultations, European Commission presented on 21 April 2021, a proposal for a regulation laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence (Artificial Intelligence Act) with aim of aligning rules for the placing of AI systems on market and addressing risks associated with certain uses of such technology.

Golden Visas

“[T]here are some rights to freedom of movement, the capacity to vote for the European Parliament, so we need to be strict... Because there are risks, you have said: corruption, money laundering, but many other risks due to that. So I’m committed to fight against that, because we need to protect the European citizenship. It’s a real important element of our values.”

The Commission launched infringement proceedings against Cyprus and Malta with respect to their investor citizenship schemes, but Parliament adopted on 9 March 2022 a resolution on citizenship and residence by investment schemes calling on the Commission to submit a proposal for a regulation, that would comprehensively regulate various aspects of residence by investment schemes with the aim of harmonising standards and procedures and strengthening the fight against organised crime, money laundering, corruption and tax evasion.

Whistleblowers

“[I] believe that not only must we move towards the application of the Directive by all the...”

The European Parliament and the Council adopted on 23 October 2019 a directive on the protection of
Member States, but it is quite possible, and I wish to debate with the Member States, that we adopt additional measures, as I said, of assistance and of support. This can go through legal assistance, financial, as I mentioned, psychological assistance too. And so, on these different points, I am quite ready to see whether the Member States want to go further and if it is necessary to go further also at European level.”

Company law

“I am very committed to work with you and with the Council, about the way to install new requirements into company law. You also spoke about human rights ...There are some voluntary commitments for the moment at the level of many companies, but it is not enough. I am sure that we need to go through a real change in company law to ask more obligations about the social interest of the companies, and I’m also sure that it is quite important to discuss about the supply chain.”

On 24 April 2021, European Commission presented a proposal for a directive regarding corporate sustainability reporting to improve sustainability reporting in order to better harness the potential of the European single market to contribute to the transition towards a fully sustainable and inclusive economic and financial system in accordance with the European Green Deal and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, on 23 February 2022, the Commission published a proposal for a Directive on corporate sustainability due diligence.

Representative action

“I will ... push for swift adoption of the proposal on representative actions. Collective redress possibilities are very much needed by European consumers.” “...we need first to adopt the new directive, the Representative Actions Directive, to organise a collective redress, because you know that we need to get to a Council position if it’s possible in November, so we are at the first step and I fully share the view that we need to do that and we need to organise the process.”

The directive 2020/1828 of the European Parliament and the Council on representative actions for the protection of the collective interests of consumers has been adopted on 25 November 2020. Member States shall adopt and publish, by 25 December 2022, the laws, regulations, and administrative provisions necessary to comply with this Directive.

Product safety

“I will look into updating the General Product Safety Directive so that all players in the online supply chain reduce the number of unsafe products. I also want clear rules in terms of liability for all providers involved in the online consumer journey.”

European Commission presented on 30 June 2021 a proposal for a regulation on general product safety aiming to: (i) update and modernise the general framework for the safety of non-food consumer products; (ii) preserve its role as a safety net for consumers; (iii) adapt the provisions to challenges posed by new technologies and online selling; and (iv) ensure a level playing field for businesses.
Liability in AI

“[A]bout the human and ethical aspects of artificial intelligence and we need to see how it’s possible to go further with liability ... Safety is a very important aspect, human and ethical aspect and liability, but in the first 100 days, I don’t want to assure you that we will have a new regulation on liability. It may be longer than that.”

On 19 February 2020 European Commission published a report on the safety and liability implications of Artificial Intelligence, the Internet of Things and robotics, followed by an inception impact assessment and public consultations on civil liability – adapting liability rules to the digital age and artificial intelligence opened from 18 October 2021 till 10 January 2022. The adoption of a proposal for a directive is planned for the third quarter of 2022.

Strengthening consumers’ capacity

“In the Green Deal strategies, in the first 100 days, we will try to see how it’s possible to work more with the supply side and see how it would be possible for the consumer to take part in a more rapid transition to the green economy. I’m sure that we need to give more information to consumers, as a first element of course, to have the capacity to decide to make another choice and to go another product.”

On 27 November 2019 European Parliament and the Council adopted directive (EU) 2019/2161 on the better enforcement and modernisation of Union consumer protection rules. The European Commission updated overall strategic framework of the EU consumer policy on 13 November 2020 adopting the New Consumer Agenda, aimed to empower consumers facing green and digital transitions. The Commission updated its guidance on consumer protection directives 17 December 2021 to explain the application of EU consumer law to new developments in key areas, in particular concerning the digital and green transitions. Regarding the green transition, the Commission updated existing sections on environmental claims and planned obsolescence in the guidance on the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive.

Sustainability, durability, repairability

“First of all, we are all committed as European Union Member States to fulfil our engagement about the SDGs, the Sustainable Development Goals, on the UN level.” “I want to repeat that, as I’ve said in my introductory remarks, it’s very important to use the demand side – so consumer capacity – to organise a real process to a sustainable economy, and I’m sure that if we want to fully respect our commitment on SDGs at the UN level, we need to do that and to be very active on that.” “I said very clearly that I believe that, on a number of issues concerning sustainability and sustainable development, we need to effectively inform consumers. And so, it is up to companies to provide correct information, for example on ... the durability, the repairability of a number of products but also the availability of spare parts. And with respect to reparability, I would add ... reparability by third

Following the New Consumer Agenda, the Circular Economy Action Plan and the European Green Deal, the Commission tabled on 30 March 2022 a proposal for a directive on empowering consumers for the green transition through better protection against unfair practices and better information, which amends two existing directives: the unfair commercial practices directive (UCPD) and the consumer rights directive (CRD). The amendment to the EU’s consumer rights directive aims to oblige traders to provide consumers with more detailed information on products’ durability and repairability.
parties and not necessarily by the company that sold the product ... So on all these points, I think that it will probably be necessary to legislate... We will examine all situations to see if we move towards a sustainability obligation.”

Programmed obsolescence

“And when you talk about planned obsolescence, I think that if it is actually planned, it must become an offense and allow the authorities to punish. We can not imagine introducing this logic of obsolescence into products on a voluntary basis, without any consequence.”

On 17 December 2021, the European Commission adopted a new Commission Notice on the interpretation and application of the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive, where it clarified complex legal framework through which the EU addressed the problem of planned obsolescence. The proposal of 30 March 2022 for a directive on empowering consumers for the green transition through better protection against unfair practices and better information, aims to ban certain practices related to the early obsolescence of goods.
HELENA DALLI
Commissioner
Equality

This briefing follows up the commitments made by the commissioner since 2019.

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<td><strong>Equality for all</strong></td>
<td>“[…] I want to focus my work in particular on three strands: the fight against discrimination in all of its senses; the inclusion and empowerment of women; the promotion of equality and full participation. All these for women and men, racial and ethnic minorities, religious and non-religious minorities, persons with disabilities, older and younger persons, and LGBTI persons.”</td>
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<td>Delivering on the commitment made before the European Parliament in the area of equality, a number of initiatives were issued by the Commission. Listed in the chronological order are those that were presented by June 2022.</td>
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<td>In June 2020 the Commission adopted the EU Strategy on victims’ rights (2020-2025). In the Strategy the EU committed itself to do all it can to prevent and combat hate crime, in all its forms, including racial, anti-Semitic, homophobic, or transphobic hate crime.</td>
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<td>In September 2020 the EU Commission presented “EU anti-racism action plan 2020-2025”. By this strategy the Commission complements already existing instruments by putting forward an overarching tool to make sure that the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights is applied effectively in Member States.</td>
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<td>In October 2020 it presented the Strategic EU Framework for Roma equality inclusion and participation which is the first direct contribution to implementing the EU Action Plan against racism 2020-2025.</td>
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<td>In November 2020 the Commission presented the first EU Strategy for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, non-binary, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) equality. There the Commission recognised that whilst the EU has very high standards in the area of fundamental rights, they are not always equally applied. This strategy</td>
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Equality legislation

“[...] As a Minister, I participated in endless debates in Council on proposals that have remained blocked for too long. The Horizontal Anti-Discrimination Directive was proposed more than 11 years ago. The Women on Boards Directive dates back to 2012. The proposal for the EU’s accession to the Council of Europe Istanbul Convention dates from 2016. How can I explain that to our citizens? In this framework, should I not be able to remove the outstanding stumbling blocks and convince the remaining sceptical Member States in Council, I will not hold back from finding new remedies and proposing new legislation.”

In December 2020 the Commission published its proposal for a directive on Digital Services Act in order to clarify online platforms’ responsibilities with regard to user-disseminated content. The Digital Services Act will clarify what measures are expected from platforms in addressing illegal activities online, while protecting fundamental rights. Online violence targeting women has become pervasive with specific, vicious consequences. It is a barrier to women’s participation in public life. Bullying, harassment and abuse on social media have far-reaching effects on women’s and girls’ daily lives. On 14 December 2021 Parliament asked for an EU directive to eliminate gender-based cyber-violence and ensure convergence at the EU and national levels. In March 2021 the Commission proposed a Directive for binding pay transparency measures. The
Tracking commitments of Helena Dalli

The proposal is based on Article 157(3) of the TFEU which provides for the European Union to adopt measures to ensure the application of the principle of ‘equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation, including the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value’.

Whilst the EU’s accession to the Istanbul Convention remains blocked, the Commission has proposed measures, within the limits of EU competence, to achieve the same objectives as with the Istanbul Convention. As mentioned above, the Commission presented an initiative with a view to extending the areas of crime where harmonisation is possible to specific forms of gender-based violence in accordance with Article 83(1) TFEU.

In March 2022, in the absence of EU’s accession to the Istanbul Convention and in order to fill in the existing gap, the Commission adopted a proposal for a Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence.

In June 2022, after nearly a decade of being blocked, some progress in the Proposal for a Directive on improving the gender balance among non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges and related measures can be reported. Following a Council’s general approach on the file adopted in March 2022, interinstitutional negotiations on this directive between the Council and the EP were concluded on 7 June 2022. The file is being finalised in view of its adoption in second reading in the EP.


“[…] I shall first wait for the outcome of the EPSCO meeting on 24 October, which should be discussing this anti-discrimination directive, and then I shall proceed from there. It is my will to unblock this directive.”

The Equal treatment Directive has been discussed in the Council since the Commission proposed it fourteen years ago, in 2008. It remains blocked due to the unanimity requirement.

Promoting equality horizontally

“[…] Equality mainstreaming is the way forward.”

Various strategies in the framework of the Union of Equality contribute to promote horizontally and mainstream equality, also by adopting an intersectional approach to detect and address multiple discrimination.

For example, on 29 of April 2022, the Commission has launched the EU Diversity Month 2022. As part of the event, on 28 April 2022, the Commission announced the winners of the first Capitals of Inclusion and Diversity awards. Launched within the EU’s Anti-Racism Action Plan 2020-2025, the annual European
Capitals of Inclusion and Diversity Awards are part of the Commission’s work towards a Union of Equality.

### Task Force on Equality

“[…] I will establish, within the first three months of this Commission mandate, the Task Force on Equality operated by high-level officers in all the DGs. It will be mandated with the complicated mission of swiftly building an intersectional approach for equality in all the policies of the EU.”

In November 2019 Commissioner Dalli announced on social media the first meeting of the task force. In December 2020 The Commission published on its website a statement about the task force. The information available remains, however, scarce.

### Roma Framework Strategy

“[…] This framework is coming to an end, and we will be reviewing this strategy. That is why I want to visit a Roma settlement so that I know more about what I am reviewing and we will evaluate how best to proceed in terms of follow-up. The post-2020 framework will also have a stronger focus on anti-Gypsyism. I can assure you that a lot of work will be done in that area.”

In September 2020 the Commission published its EU anti-racism action plan 2020-2025. In October 2020 the EU Commission published the EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation for 2020-2030. In October 2020, together with the strategy, the Commission also adopted a proposal for a Council Recommendation on Roma equality, inclusion and participation.

### Implementation of UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

“[…] I commit to do everything in my power to ensure that the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is implemented fully and without exceptions. I will also make sure that disability is mainstreamed, including by means of the task force and I will also extend the principle of equality vetting. Additionally, as I had the opportunity to tell you, I will work very closely with the Disability Intergroup and with the European Disability Forum.”

In December 2019 the Commissioner met with representatives of the European Disability Forum, where the importance to achieve equal rights for persons with disabilities across the world, including over 100 million persons with disabilities living in the EU, was stressed.

In April 2020 the Commissioner participated at a Disability Intergroup online meeting.

In July 2020 Ms Helena Dalli held a videoconference meeting with EU stakeholders concerned by EU disability policy to discuss the future of the European Disability Strategy (EDS).

### Mainstreaming disability

“[…] I will prioritise the inclusion of persons with disabilities. I will make sure that all EU sector legislation pays attention to the issue of disability. “

“[…] Yes, disability will be in the gender strategy, because again we are speaking about mainstreaming.”

In the newly adopted Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 in March 2020, the EU Commission included the rights of women and girls with disabilities in action on combating violence against women.

By the same token, in October 2021, the Commission published a decision on setting up the group of experts ‘Disability Platform’.
European Gender Strategy

“[...] I will put forward a new European Gender Strategy, which will include new legislative proposals, as well as inclusive policy measures.”

“[...] this Gender Strategy will contain pay transparency, gender participation, the pay and pension gap and violence against women. It will address gender stereotypes because, as you know, it is pointless legislating unless we change attitudes and unless we change cultures, so there will be a specific section on how to address gender stereotypes. There will also be a chapter on work-life balance.”

In March 2020 the Commission presented the new Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025.

In November 2020 the Commission published the EU’s new Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in External Action 2021-2025 (GAP III).

In December 2021: Extension of the list of EU crimes to hate speech and hate crime. The inclusion in the list of EU crimes of hate speech and hate crime on grounds of sex and sexual orientation.

In March 2022 the Commission adopted a proposal for a Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence.

Gender pay gap

“[...] During the first 100 days of this Commission, the Political Guidelines will set out that we will table actions to introduce binding pay transparency measures.”

“I will insist we continue working on the gender pay gap and the pension’s gap. Also in the Gender Equality Strategy, there will be a section on pay transparency, as well as measures to ensure equal work pay for work of equal value. We know that this gender pay gap is resulting in the pension pay gap, which can be up to 36%.”

In March 2020 the Commission undertook an evaluation of the existing framework on equal work or work of equal value.

Between March – May 2020 the Commission organized a public consultation on gender-based pay discrimination and pay transparency measures.

In March 2021 the Commission published a proposal for a Directive to strengthen the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work. On the basis of the mandate adopted by the EMPL-FEMM committees, Parliament decided on 5 April 2022 to enter into trialogue negotiations with the Council.

Women on Boards Directive

“Yes, certainly I will be working to unblock the women on boards directive. [...] I will engage with the Member States and convince them of the added value to unblock this file in the Council.”

“I think it is a balanced proposal and I will meet with all Ministers who have a reservation on this proposal and push for a general approach in the Council”

On 7 June 2022, after nearly a decade of being blocked, agreement, on a Directive on improving the gender balance among non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges and related measures, was reached in interinstitutional negotiations. The file is being finalised in view of its adoption in second reading in the EP.

Exploitation of domestic workers

In her reply to the question whether she intends to take measures to improve the working conditions of domestic workers, including those of migrant women, she replied:

“Yes, of course, this is an area which should be addressed and will be addressed [...] the taskforce is where we can work together.”

“[...] there is the Race Equality Directive [...] the protection is there, but we will have to see how

In March 2021 – the Commission adopted its third report on the application of the Racial Equality Directive (Directive 2000/43/EC) and the Employment Equality Directive (Directive 2000/78/EC). The report highlights good practices in the implementation of the Directives and draws attention to important developments in the case law of the CJEU. It also shows particular challenges, such as a fear of reporting incidents of discrimination, low and diverging levels of compensation issued at national
to check on the implementation of this directive. Therefore, I should be working with other Commissioners also on this issue.”

level, difficulties in proving a case of discrimination and little awareness of rights and support mechanisms.

Gender stereotypes

“[..] Stereotyping is a very important issue and, in fact, it will be addressed in our gender strategy.”

“I will continue to work throughout my mandate on women’s empowerment and see – together with Member States – that gender stereotypes are tackled.”

The Gender Equality Strategy addresses the gender stereotypes which, according to the Commission, are a root cause of gender inequality and affect all areas of society. Stereotypical expectations based on fixed norms for women and men, girls and boys, limit their aspirations, choices and freedom.

Barcelona objectives: childcare

In her reply to a question on the Commission strategy to achieve the Barcelona objectives, Helena Dalli said:

“Yes, we must work on this. We must find ways to have, at the least, affordable childcare.”

“I shall certainly be pushing [...] for funds, in order to come out with measures to help people to have affordable childcare.”

A Proposal for a Council Recommendation for the revision of the Barcelona targets is expected to be published in September 2022.

Work–Life Balance Directive Implementation

“As Commissioner for Equality, I will closely monitor that the work-life balance directive is fully and properly implemented in all Member States.”

“I will monitor Member States – to see how they are implementing this directive, and maybe even hold workshops and presentations – in order to raise awareness of this issue to make them aware that this is added value to the place of work. I intend to target EU funding for such awareness-raising.”

“Obviously, we want to do more and, as I mentioned, in three years, [the Directive] will be reviewed.”

From the public information available, there seem to be no evaluation activities undertaken by the Commission regarding the implementation of the work-life balance directive.
This briefing follows up the commitments made by the commissioner in 2019.

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<td><strong>New Pact on Migration and Asylum</strong></td>
<td>On 23 September 2020, the Commission published the New Pact on Migration and Asylum. It includes, inter alia, proposals for a Screening Regulation, an Asylum and Migration Management Regulation, a Crisis and Force Majeure Regulation and amended proposals revising the Asylum Procedures Regulation and the Eurodac Regulation.</td>
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<td><strong>Close loopholes between asylum and return rules</strong></td>
<td>On 10 February 2021, the Commission issued a Communication on Enhancing cooperation on return and readmission as part of a fair, effective and comprehensive EU migration policy. On 27 April 2021, the Commission published the EU strategy on voluntary return and reintegration.</td>
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<td><strong>Search and rescue</strong></td>
<td>On 23 September 2020, the Commission presented a recommendation on cooperation among Member States concerning search and rescue activities and guidance on the implementation of EU rules on definition and prevention of the facilitation of unauthorised entry, transit and residence. In March 2021, the Commission set up the European Contact Group on Search and Rescue.</td>
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“**My top priority is to develop the new pact on migration and asylum. We must have a common European pact on migration and asylum.”**

“**While we must honour our values and legal responsibilities towards those in need of international protection, we also have to ensure that those not eligible to stay are returned. I do think that we should develop more readmission agreements with third countries.”**

“A crucial element of the new pact on migration and asylum will be a more sustainable, reliable and permanent approach to search and rescue. I have a clear mission to replace ad hoc solutions.”
Legal pathways to the European Union

“I will work with Member States to step up resettlement and to look at developing humanitarian corridors for urgent needs. [...] I think that we should continue having agreements with third countries, and I think that an important part of that kind of agreement must be to develop legal pathways to the European Union.”

“I agree that it’s important for economic migrants that we should find better ways for our legal pathways to Europe, both for resettlement and for legal migrants that come to work in Europe.”

On 23 September 2020, the Commission issued a Recommendation on legal pathways to protection in the EU and launched a public consultation on legal migration to the EU.

In June 2021, the Commission launched Talent Partnerships.


Fight against human traffickers and smugglers

“I think it’s extremely important that we step up the fight towards trafficking and I must say I am ready to consider new legislative proposals in this area[...]”

“We need to do more to break up the cruel business model of smugglers and the criminal networks behind.”

On 14 April 2021, the Commission adopted a new EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings (2021-2025). On 14 December 2021, the Commission launched a public consultation to evaluate the implementation of the Directive.

On 29 September 2021, the Commission published A renewed EU action plan against migrant smuggling (2021-2025), as well as a communication on the application of the Employers Sanctions Directive.

Schengen Area

“ [...] swift return to a fully functioning Schengen area without internal border controls will be a key objective for me.”

On 2 June 2021, the Commission adopted a Schengen Strategy and a proposal to revise the Schengen evaluation and monitoring mechanism. The first-ever Schengen Forum was held on 30 November 2020. The second Forum took place on 17 May 2021. The third Forum was convened on 2 June 2022. The proposal to amend the Schengen Borders Code was submitted on 14 December 2021.

Developing an EU Security Union and fighting organised crime

“ [...] I will focus on filling the gaps in our approach to EU internal security... My aim is to build an effective security union.”

In July 2020, the Commission set out a new EU Security Union Strategy for the period 2020 to 2025, focusing on priority areas where the EU can bring added value to support Member States in fostering
Tracking commitments of Ylva Johansson

Security for all those living in Europe. In December 2020, the Commission adopted a new EU Cybersecurity Strategy, proposing new rules to make critical entities more resilient.

In May 2022, the Commission adopted the fourth progress report on the Security Union Strategy.

In April 2021, the Commission presented a new EU Strategy to tackle Organised Crime, focusing on boosting law enforcement and ensuring a modern response to technological developments.

“[…] We can see that organised criminals are being more and more professional and developing their business model, and we have to step up...to be able to fight them.”

Preventing and fighting radicalisation and terrorism

“[…] The fight against terrorism and violent extremism... will remain key areas. I will in particular be looking at stepping up our efforts to deny terrorists the means and space to plan, finance and carry out attacks.”

“[…] An important part of this will be setting out a balanced legal framework in the proposal on preventing the dissemination of terrorist content online.”

In December 2020, the Commission presented a new Counter-Terrorism Agenda for the EU (Anticipate, Prevent, Protect, Respond) to step up the fight against terrorism and violent extremism and boost the EU’s resilience to terrorist threats.

In October 2021, the Commission organised the High-Level Conference of the Radicalisation Awareness Network, marking 10 years since the creation of the EU-funded network.

In November 2021, the Commission published a report on the impact of the Counter-Terrorism Directive, including on fundamental rights.

A Regulation on addressing the dissemination of terrorist content online applies from 7 June 2022.

Improving exchange of information and police cooperation, and reforming Europol’s mandate

“[…] I will aim to further improve cooperation and exchange of information between law enforcement authorities.”

“[…] Europol plays a vital role in the fight against serious cross-border crime and terrorism. During my mandate, the Europol regulation will be evaluated. Depending on the outcome of the evaluation, updates to the Regulation may be necessary.”

In December 2021, the Commission proposed an EU Police Cooperation Code to enhance law enforcement cooperation across Member States and give EU police officers more modern tools for information exchange. The Police Cooperation Code includes a Recommendation on operational police cooperation and new rules on information sharing, as well as revised rules on automated exchange of certain categories of data (“Prüm II”).

In December 2020, the Commission presented a proposal for a Regulation to strengthen the mandate of Europol, the EU Agency for law enforcement cooperation. The revised mandate will allow Europol to step up its support to Member States in fighting serious crime and terrorism and tackling emerging security threats, and to cooperate more effectively with private parties, with clear rules on processing large datasets, and new technologies matching law
Defending victims of crime

“[…] We already have a set of binding rules providing for basic rights of protection, support, and in certain cases, compensation for victims of crime...”

“...the Commission and the European Parliament have worked closely together on rules for specific categories of victims...”

“...I will work... to identify whether there are any gaps in the current legislation and whether we need any additional rules for victims.”

In July 2020, the Commission published the EU strategy for a more effective fight against child sexual abuse.

In March 2022, the Commission launched a consultation to gather the views of the public on possible policy options for the impact assessment for the revision of the Victims’ Rights Directive, which is part of the EU Strategy on Victims’ Rights (2020-2025). On 28 June 2022, the Commission adopted an evaluation report on the Victims’ Rights Directive, announcing its intention to propose its revision in 2023.

The position of the Commission Coordinator for victims’ rights was set up in 2020.

The European Commission set up the EU Centre of expertise for victims of terrorism (the EU Centre) in January 2020 to offer expertise, guidance and support to national authorities and victim support organisations.
This briefing follows up the commitments made by the commissioner since 2019.

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<td>In June 2020 the Commissioner proposed allocating EUR 2 billion to reinforce rescEU direct crisis response tools.</td>
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<td>An <a href="https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec/2021/766/oj">implementation follow-up report</a> was delivered in March 2022.</td>
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<td>The first <a href="https://ec.europa.eu/hr/en/news/2022/03/02/258047">European Humanitarian Forum</a>, co-hosted by the Commission and the French Council presidency on 21-23 March 2022, produced policy deliverables on climate and environment and other topics raised by the</td>
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communication, such as humanitarian access, capacities, and efficient use of resources. In response to the situation in conflict countries, the EU continued to deliver humanitarian aid as well as development assistance. In Afghanistan, the Commission has spoken of ‘humanitarian plus’ aid. In general, the resources do not match the global needs, as the situation in Ukraine has made evident.

“Humanitarian aid should bear in mind this specific situation of women and girls [...] special needs also include sexual and reproductive health services.”

On 25/11/2020, the Commission and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Commission Vice President (HR/VP) issued a joint communication on the Gender Action Plan III, including a section on ‘Promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights’.

Disaster prevention and preparedness

“I intend to intensify the EU’s efforts to prevent disasters from occurring in the first place, while also strengthening our capacity to adapt to a changing environment.”

The EU’s latest ‘Overview of Natural and Man-made Disaster Risks the European Union May Face’ was published in 2021, drawing on risk assessments developed by EU Member States and the European Commission’s cross-sectoral policy and scientific work. The 2021 Communication on the EU’s humanitarian action foresees increasing the share of climate funds dedicated to enhancing resilience and adaptation in the most disaster-prone countries and regions, and offers new guidance on disaster preparedness among the EU’s humanitarian partners.
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<td><strong>Strategy for sustainable and smart transport mobility / extension of Emissions Trading Systems / sustainable and alternative transport fuels</strong></td>
<td>On 9 December 2020, the Commission adopted a Communication entitled ‘Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy – putting European transport on track for the future’ together with an action plan listing 82 initiatives for the next four years. On 22 September 2020, the Commission proposed an upgrade of the Single European Sky (SES) regulatory framework with a view to providing more sustainable and resilient air traffic management in line with the European Green Deal. The upgrade consists in an amended proposal for a regulation on the implementation of the SES and a proposal to amend Regulation (EU) 2018/1139 as regards the capacity of the European Union Aviation Safety Agency to act as Performance Review Body of the SES.</td>
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<td>“I will work hard to reduce the environmental footprint of mobility and transport activities, and make sure our actions further contribute to the reduction of carbon emissions and improved air quality.”</td>
<td>“Reducing the allowances to airlines, with the aim of eliminating them over time, is part of my mission, […], and extending the emissions trading scheme to the maritime sector is something which will bring a valuable change.” “I will work with Member States and private investors towards deploying a significant increase in publicly accessible recharging or refuelling points. I want to promote the uptake</td>
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| “I will push to make a fully-developed Single European Sky finally happen.” | On 14 July 2021, the Commission adopted the Fit for 55 package. Some of the proposals fully or partly cover air and maritime transport:  
  - A proposal to phase out free emission allowances for aviation and align with the global Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation. |
of sustainable fuels across road, maritime and air transport.”

• A proposal for a regulation on ensuring a level playing field for sustainable air transport (ReFuelEU aviation).
• A proposal to include shipping emissions for the first time in the EU Emissions Trading System.
• A proposal on the use of renewable and low-carbon fuels in maritime transport (FuelEU Maritime).
• A proposal for a revised Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Regulation, which aims to ensure that drivers are able to charge or fuel their vehicles at a reliable network across Europe and would require Member States to expand charging capacity and to install charging and fuelling points at regular intervals on major highways and notably stipulates that ships have access to clean electricity in major ports and aircraft have access to a supply of clean electricity in major airports.

“I would prefer to have a European approach to that [sustainable urban mobile planning strategies].”

“I want to promote mobility as a service, make alternatives to conventional private cars affordable, adjust infrastructure and embrace smart and collaborative solutions.”

On 14 December 2021, the Commission adopted a Communication on the New EU Urban Mobility Framework, setting out European guidance on how cities can cut emissions and improve mobility, including via sustainable urban mobility plans. The main focus will be on public transport, walking and cycling.

Internalisation of externalities / energy taxation

“By 2050, we want to be carbon neutral and that needs additional policies and efforts.”

“So, we need to internalise part of these externalities [...] the user has to contribute more in what is polluting.”

On 14 July 2021, the Commission adopted a package of proposals to make the EU’s climate, energy, land use, transport and taxation policies fit for reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels (also known as the Fit for 55 package).

The 14 July 2021 package includes a proposal for restructuring the Union framework for the taxation of energy products and electricity (recast) as well as a proposal amending Directive 2003/87/EC establishing a system for greenhouse gas emission allowance trading within the Union, Decision (EU) 2015/1814 and Regulation (EU) 2015/757 in order to notably extend emissions trading to the transport sector including road transport.

“[...] I will push Member States to ensure that the negotiations on the so-called Eurovignette Directive dealing with road charging, can be completed quickly, with an ambitious outcome that is in line with our climate ambitions[...].”

The European Parliament approved a reform of road haulage charging (Eurovignette).
Digital innovation and continued modernisation of key transport systems

“We need to take full advantage of digitalisation to make transport safer, cleaner, more efficient and more accessible.”

On 14 December 2021, the Commission adopted a proposal to adapt the 2010 ITS Directive (2010/40/EU) to the emergence of new road mobility options, mobility apps and connected and automated mobility. The proposal will stimulate the faster deployment of new, intelligent services, by proposing that certain crucial road, travel and traffic data is made available in digital format, such as speed limits, traffic circulation plans or roadworks, along the TEN-T network and ultimately covering the entire road network.

“We need to integrate rail with logistic changes through new technologies, we need to open data [...] and we absolutely need a new signalling system.”

Together with the TEN-T proposal, the Commission adopted an action plan on long-distance and cross-border rail which lays out a roadmap with further actions to help the EU meet its target of doubling high-speed rail traffic by 2030 and tripling it by 2050.

Social dimension

“I want to take the ‘Women in transport’ platform initiative further [...]”

The 9 December 2020 sustainable and smart mobility strategy mentions that the Commission will duly apply equality mainstreaming to its transport related policy initiatives and continue to support stakeholder cooperation and exchange of good practices on the ‘More Women in Transport – Platform for Change’, to increase the number of women in transport professions. It will also set up and support a network of diversity ambassadors.

“I [want] [...] to take good action in various areas, so that the workers, or the working environment in transport is protected against fraud and abuse, against bad working conditions.”

In July 2020, Parliament adopted the mobility package, embracing revised rules to improve drivers’ working conditions and stop distortion of competition in road transport. On 9 December 2021, the Commission adopted a proposal on improving working conditions in platform work.

CEF, Trans-European Transport Networks

“Transport infrastructure is vital for enabling a European defence strategy. Improved mobility for our troops and equipment should not be overlooked when we invest in infrastructure [...].”


“We are also going to revise the guidelines for 20 networks in 2021, [...] we have to contribute better to the projects emerging in this network, in rail in particular.”

On 14 December 2021, the Commission adopted a proposal for the revision of the regulation on Union guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network.
“I favour the night trains as long as they have a competitive case and a PSO can be used for night trains.”

Together with the TEN-T proposal, the Commission adopted an action plan on long-distance and cross-border rail that lays out a roadmap with further actions to help the EU meet its target of doubling high-speed rail traffic by 2030, and tripling it by 2050.

Safety standards and passenger rights

“[…] we are committed to a zero vision, meaning zero deaths by 2050. There is a strategy we will put in place and I’m planning to promote it strongly.”

“Travellers with restricted mobility need to be able to move around with the same ease as everyone else. Those in remote areas need to be better connected to our transport network […] Europe has today a very comprehensive passenger rights framework but we need to take this further.”

The Commission proposal of 14 December 2021 to adapt the 2010 ITS Directive contains provisions on road safety and contributes to the vision of zero deaths.

On 18 February 2022, the Commission adopted new rules on ferry safety. The proposal will help protect passengers from flooding on board after a collision and align the EU with international requirements set by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO).
This briefing follows up the commitments made by the commissioner since 2019.

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“When it comes to the rule of law in the Western Balkans, we have very clear criteria that they have to meet [...] we need to intensify work with our Western Balkan neighbours to achieve more.”

In February 2020, the Commission introduced a new accession methodology. Negotiations on ‘the fundamentals’ – the rule of law, economic criteria and public administration reform – are now the first negotiation chapters to be opened and the last to be closed.

The Commission adopted an ‘Economic and investment plan for the Western Balkans’ in October 2020.

The programming framework under the Instrument for pre-accession assistance (IPA) III Regulation adopted in 2021 includes a section on the rule of law. Budgetary flexibility allows the Commission to link disbursements to the annual assessment of pre-accession countries’ performance; the countries are expected to deliver in priority areas, including the rule of law.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, where political stalemate has threatened stability and rule of law, the Commissioner said that investment agreements worth EUR 600 million would be signed ‘only after the return to the full functioning of State institutions’.

Despite the new emphasis on ‘the fundamentals’ and the specific case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Commission’s ‘Economic and investment plan for the Western Balkans’ mentions conditionality only once. In general, it remains unclear how the Commission will apply conditionality for the rule of law.
The European Court of Auditors’ Special Report of 10 January 2022, titled ‘EU support for the rule of law in the Western Balkans: despite efforts, fundamental problems persist’, notes that the EU’s support has had little overall impact on fundamental rule of law reforms in the region. The European Parliament’s enlargement resolutions call on the Commission to implement the recommendations of the ECA report and link EU funding more closely to progress on the rule of law.

**Eastern Partnership**

“I will work on proposals for the Eastern Partnership’s long-term policy objectives, to be presented [...] ahead of the Eastern Partnership Summit in Brussels in June 2020.”

In March 2020, the Commission and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Commission Vice President (HR/VP) issued a joint communication on the ‘Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020’. This was followed up by an ‘Economic and investment plan’ for the region adopted in July 2021.

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, and the subsequent requests for EU accession by Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, the Commission stepped up its political dialogue with those countries and revised funding for Ukraine.

**Southern neighbourhood**

“We will renew our partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood based on the ‘more for more’ principle while focusing on the economic development of our partners.”

The ‘A new Agenda for the Mediterranean’, a joint communication of the Commission and HR/VP, was adopted in February 2021 as a follow-up to Commission President Ursula von der Leyen’s 2020 Letter of Intent.

The communication was accompanied by an ‘Economic and Investment Plan for the Southern Neighbours’.

**Turkey**

“Turkey is an important partner for the EU and we have a strong interest in cooperating effectively with Turkey. However, this will not prevent me from giving unambiguous messages on issues such as the serious backsliding on rule of law and fundamental freedoms, the illegal drilling in the Mediterranean or the military incursion in Syria. I will also continue our strong support to civil society”.

Commissioner Várhelyi and HR/VP Josep Borrell contributed to a reflection about Turkey by publishing a joint communication on the ‘State of play of EU-Turkey political, economic and trade relations’ on 22 March 2021. The document was acknowledged by the European Parliament in its resolution of 19 May 2021.
External financing instruments

“...allow for proper parliamentary scrutiny in the governance of IPA III and of the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI). I would insist in particular on the need for proper and regular strategic discussions with the European Parliament on the situation of and EU support to all partners within my portfolio and will always stand ready to actively participate in any such discussions”.

“I am committed to ensuring appropriate parliamentary scrutiny and keeping you informed of my work in a timely and comprehensive manner. For example, we will have to work closely to finalise the future financing instruments (Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument and Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance III)”.

The Commission facilitated agreements on the Neighbourhood, development and international cooperation instrument (NDICI)-Global Europe and IPA III regulations; adopted the related NDICI-GE and IPA III delegated acts; and began to program the disbursements.

The 2021 Commission declarations attached to the NDICI-Global Europe and IPA III regulations, established regular high-level geopolitical dialogues with the European Parliament. Commissioner Várhelyi appeared in both dialogues – to discuss NDICI-Global Europe with Parliament’s Foreign Affairs (AFET) and Development (DEVE) committees in June and October 2021, and IPA III with AFET in October 2021.

While Parliament welcomed the geopolitical dialogues in a resolution from February 2022, it also pointed to the need to ‘receive relevant preparatory documents sufficiently on time and with an adequate level of detail in order to carry out a meaningful scrutiny’.

Although the timing, structure and comprehensiveness of preparatory documents provided to the European Parliament ahead of the second Geopolitical Dialogue improved, the AFET committee recalled its request to receive detailed indicative annual and multiannual budget breakdowns within each thematic priority and the implied total regional and country allocation estimates. Several requests for more details on modulation and suspension mechanism, as well as detailed indicative annual and multiannual budget breakdowns, have remained unanswered.

It remains to be seen to what extent the Commission takes into account Parliament’s positions, expressed during and following the dialogues.

Gender equality

“I am strongly committed to strengthening gender equality and women’s and girl’s empowerment in the Neighbourhood and Enlargement regions’ ... and to ‘supporting gender equality through our financial assistance”.

On 25/11/2020, the Commission and the HR/VP issued a joint communication on the Gender Action Plan III, which promised that 85 % of all new external actions would contribute to gender equality and women’s empowerment by 2025.

Thematic priorities for assistance under IPA III funding include promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls. Gender equality is to be mainstreamed throughout the implementation of the IPA III Regulation.
AFET has requested putting greater emphasis on addressing challenges in the area of gender equality (among others) under the IPA III funding.
This briefing follows up the commitments made by the commissioner since 2019.

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| Africa                                                                    | “It is my intention to build on the EU-Africa Alliance for Sustainable Investments and Jobs, towards a comprehensive European strategy for Africa”.

On 9/3/2020, the Commission and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Commission Vice President (HR/VP) issued a joint communication titled ‘Towards a comprehensive strategy with Africa’.

The long awaited 6th EU-African Union Summit was held on 17 and 18 February 2022 in Brussels. The Summit led to the adoption of a Joint Vision for 2030.

Neighbourhood, development and international cooperation instrument (NDICI)

“I intend to work with you and others to facilitate an agreement on the neighbourhood development and international cooperation instrument”.

The NDICI – Global Europe Regulation entered into force on 14 June 2021 (and applies retroactively from 1 Jan 2021).

Under NDICI-GLOBAL Europe, Parliament engages twice per year in a geopolitical dialogue with the Commission. Two such high-level geopolitical dialogues have taken place, in June and Oct 2021, with the participation of Commissioner Urpilainen.

Post-Cotonou Agreement

“I will also make it my priority to conclude negotiations on the post-Cotonou Agreement”.

The chief negotiators of the EU and the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) reached an agreement in December 2020. The new agreement was initialled in April 2021, and the Commission submitted the proposal on the signing.
and provisional application of the agreement to the Council in June 2021. The signature of the new agreement has since been delayed, and the current Cotonou agreement has been extended until June 2023. The European Parliament will have to give its consent to the new agreement.

Gender in international partnership

“We are going to make a Gender Action Plan III”.

On 25/11/2020, the Commission and the HR/VP issued a joint communication to the European Parliament and the Council on the Gender Action Plan III, in which 85% of all new external actions will contribute to gender equality and women’s empowerment by 2025. This aim is also specified in the NDICI-Global Europe regulation.

Education

“Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls will continue to be a top priority and will be mainstreamed in all our actions”. “I want in particular to step up our efforts in ... Sub-Saharan African countries”.

In 2020, Commissioner Urpilainen said that she would increase EU education funding to 10% of spending for the countries in her portfolio.

In November 2021, Commissioner Urpilainen announced that the EU will allocate EUR 6 billion during 2021-27 to improve education worldwide. This amount represents around 13% of spending within her portfolio. This amount also represents EUR 2 billion more than what was spent during 2014-2020.

Forests and climate change

“I will work on partnerships to promote forest protection, restoration, and afforestation”.

“Supporting partner countries to mitigate and adapt to climate change and reduce biodiversity loss will be among my priorities and the focus of our investment”.

In 2020, the Commission began developing ‘forest partnerships’ to support sustainable forest management in partner countries worldwide.

The NDICI-Global Europe programme aims to spend 30% of its funds on climate objectives, and 7.5% of its funds to biodiversity goals in 2024 – increasing to 10% in 2026 and 2027. The Commission has supported developing countries in cutting emissions and adapting to the impact of climate change under the Paris Agreement. The Commission launched new biodiversity projects, including ‘SWITCH to circular economy value chains’.
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<td><strong>Energy-efficiency and renewables</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>“Energy efficiency remains a priority. The principle ‘energy efficiency first’ should be taken seriously across the board.”</td>
<td>On 14 July 2021, the Commission proposed to increase the 2030 energy efficiency target to a 9% reduction in energy consumption, aligning it to the new -55% GHG emission reduction target by 2030. On 28 September 2021, the Commission published recommendations and guidelines on the energy efficiency first principle. On 18 May 2022, in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Commission published the in its REPowerEU plan proposing enhanced energy efficiency measures and an increase from 9% to 13% of the 2030 energy efficiency target.</td>
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<td>“[...] Improving the energy performance of buildings and speeding up renovation rates can be a game changer.”</td>
<td>On 15 December 2021, after the publication of the new Renovation Wave strategy, the Commission published a revision of the EPBD. On 18 May 2022, in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Commission amended the revised Energy Performance of Building Directive (EPBD).</td>
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<td>“[...] The obstacles are well known, but we can explore new solutions, especially in financing.”</td>
<td>On 14 October 2020, the Commission included green mortgages in the new Renovation Wave strategy.</td>
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<td>“I am convinced that a genuine Internal Market brings significant benefits and is essential in promoting renewable deployment.”</td>
<td>On 14 October 2020, the Commission published the Internal Energy Union report, with an Annex on the Internal Energy Market assessing the 27 National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs). On 14 July 2021, the Commission proposed to increase the 2030 renewable energy target to at least</td>
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40% of renewable energy, aligning it to the new -55% GHG emission reduction target by 2030. On 15 December 2020, the Commission revised the **TEN-E regulation**, contributing to the internal energy market integration.

On 18 May 2022, in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Commission published the **REPowerEU plan** proposing enhanced long-term renewable energy measures in solar, heat pumps, green hydrogen and biomethane, shortened and simplified permitting processes in renewables, and an increased 2030 target for renewables from 40% to 45%. In particular, a dedicated **EU Solar Strategy** proposed to double solar photovoltaic capacity by 2025, install 600GW by 2030 and a legal obligation to install solar panels on new public, commercial and residential buildings.

“In the electricity market we need a power system largely based on renewables’. “(...) we also have to do more to accommodate renewables: we have to invest into research and innovation for providing storage for renewables.”

On 17 September 2020, the Commission published the **Impact Assessment** and the **2030 Climate Target Plan**, foreseeing an estimated capacity of 300 GW of offshore energy and around 40 GW of ocean energy by 2050.

In October 2020, the EU Member States agreed on a Commission proposal to invest €998 million in 10 key **European energy infrastructure projects** under the **Connecting Europe Facility** (CEF) while the Commission adopted the **Methane Strategy** to reduce methane emissions and published the **Renovation Wave strategy**, supporting renewables in heating and cooling.

On 19 November 2020, the Commission presented the **EU Offshore Renewable Energy Strategy** to increase Europe’s offshore wind capacity to at least 60 GW by 2030 and to 300 GW by 2050.

On 15 December 2020, the Commission revised the **TEN-E regulation**, with the aim of doubling the share of renewable electricity production.

On 15 December 2021, the Commission published a framework to decarbonise gas markets, promote hydrogen, reduce methane emissions.

On 18 May 2022, in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Commission published the **REPowerEU plan** proposing a target of 10 million tonnes (Mt) of domestic renewable hydrogen production and 10 Mt of imports by 2030.
To speed up the deployment of clean energy

“I embrace the mission of making Europe a climate neutral continent by 2050.”

On 11 December 2019, the Commission published the European Green Deal, proposing Europe as the first climate neutral continent by 2050. On 17 September 2020, the Commission raised the EU climate ambitions proposing a -55% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) by 2030.

“I can confirm to you that this Commission will be very committed to our climate targets, not only at my level [...]. This will be the main responsibility for Vice-President Frans Timmermans, who is responsible for the Green Deal.”

On 15 December 2021, 19 November 2020 and 8 July 2020, the Commissioners Simson and the Executive Vice-President Timmermans presented respectively the proposals on energy efficiency in buildings, carbon removals and decarbonisation of the gas market, the EU Strategy on Offshore Renewable Energy and the press remarks of the energy sector integration and hydrogen strategies, reaffirming that “the Green Deal, as a growth strategy, remains our compass.”

“There will be a climate law and there will be a clear action plan, but my responsibility as the Commissioner responsible for energy is also to ensure that, in fulfilling all those targets, we still stay in the position where our energy security is good, our customers will have affordable prices and our industry will remain competitive compared to other regions in the world.”

On 23 March 2022, to prevent gas supply disruptions from Russia, the Commission proposed an amendment of the Security of Gas Supply Regulation, including measures to deal with the market imbalances for energy and to ensure well-filled gas storage in the EU. The rules were adopted in record time on 27 June by the two co-legislators.

In March and September 2020, the Commission presented respectively the European Climate Law and the 2030 Climate Target Plan.

Regional cooperation

“If appointed Commissioner, I intend to mobilise energy policy in the service of the climate neutral objective by further developing an integrated, interconnected and properly functioning Single Market.”

On 19 November 2020, the Commission presented the EU Strategy on Offshore Renewable Energy, increasing regional cooperation in the EU sea basins.

On 15 December 2020, the Commission revised the TEN-E regulation, strengthening existing cross-border interconnections and connecting regions currently isolated from European energy markets.

On 5 May 2022, the Commission and Bulgaria, in coordination with neighbours in the South East of Europe, established the first Regional Energy Platform for South East Europe to support gas diversification in a region traditionally dependent on Russian supplies.

“We must make sure that interconnectivity targets are reached and that 70% of interconnector capacity is available to the market.”

On 2 October 2020, EU Member States agreed on a Commission’s proposal to invest €998 million in key European energy infrastructure projects under the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF).
On 18 December 2020, the EU Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators (ACER) published its first report on the minimum 70% target for electricity interconnector capacity for cross-zonal trading.

On 12 March 2021, the Commission welcomed the EP/Council agreement on the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), worth €33.7 billion.

On 18 May 2022, in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Commission launched the CEF Energy call for proposals for projects in the current 5th PCI list with a budget of €800 million. The list was adopted in November 2021.

“I will endeavour to strengthen regional cooperation, in particular the existing four high-level groups and make them work in greater synergy.”

On 15 December 2020, the Commission revised the TEN-E regulation identifying four offshore priority corridors around Europe’s sea basins.

Liquefied natural gas

“I want to examine how we can best make the gas regulatory framework and infrastructure fit for the future, contributing to decarbonisation through the use of low-carbon gases, such as hydrogen and renewables.”

On 15 December 2021, the Commission published a new framework to decarbonise the gas markets, promote hydrogen and reduce methane emissions, after a revision of the TEN-E regulation proposing to exclude natural gas infrastructure from future TEN-E policies.

On 2 February 2022, the Commission explored possible expansion of gas supply, in particular LNG and proposed a draft Delegated Act on gas and nuclear approved by the Parliament on 6 July 2022.

On 18 May 2022, in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Commission published the REPowerEU plan proposing a target of 10 million tonnes (Mt) of domestic renewable hydrogen production and 10 Mt of imports by 2030.

“There is indeed a paragraph in my mission letter about promoting liquefied natural gas (LNG) and I do see it as a way of securing our energy security that our gas supplies will come from diversified sources and to different parts of the European Union”.

On 15 December 2020, the Commission revised the TEN-E regulation to give access to the global liquefied natural gas (LNG) market.

On 8 March 2022, the Commission proposed in its REPowerEU communication to remove at least 155 bcm of EU fossil gas use, equivalent to its Russian imports in 2021, including via higher LNG imports.

On 23 March 2022, the Commission proposed mandatory minimum gas storage level obligations for next winter to ensure security of energy supply.

On 25 March 2022, the EU and the US committed to reduce Europe’s dependency on Russian energy. The US committed to strive to ensure additional liquified natural gas volumes for the EU market of at
least 15 bcm in 2022 and established a joint Task Force on Energy Security.

On 18 May 2022, the Commission proposed in its REPowerEU plan a EU Energy Platform to pool demand, coordinate use of infrastructure, negotiate with international partners (Egypt, Israel, Norway, Azerbaijan) and prepare joint purchases of gas, LNG and hydrogen.

On 16 March 2022, the electricity grids of Ukraine and Moldova were synchronised with the Continental European Grid. EU-Ukraine electricity trade started on 30 June 2022.

“Energy can contribute to stabilisation in our neighbourhood, for instance in Ukraine”.

Energy Taxation Directive

“About energy taxation […], I will closely cooperate with Commissioner-designate Gentiloni. It is true that the Energy Taxation Directive, that is already 15 years old, doesn’t help us in the way it could to reach our energy and climate targets.” “I do especially believe the difficulty is that it still allows tax exemptions in some ways for fossil fuels, and that makes competition between fossil fuels and renewables difficult. We should address this issue.”

On 14 July 2021, the Commission published the revision of the Energy Taxation Directive (ETD) removing outdated exemptions and incentives for the use of fossil fuels and proposal on the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM).

Enhancing nuclear safety and safeguards

“So it is a decision for every individual Member State as to how will they use their energy mix and what will be the sources. At EU level we have to secure that nuclear power plants are safe, that the waste management is safe for our environment –and not only inside [the] European Union, but also in our close neighbourhood.”

So what can we do about new nuclear power plant sites that are built in third countries? We can provide assistance so that the building and maintenance will take place under the highest security standards. We can provide also financial assistance to the sites in third countries so that these procedures are made, and of course we can insist that all their test results will be taken very seriously.”

On 2 February 2022, the Commission approved in principle a Delegated Act on nuclear and gas energy activities in the list of economic activities covered by the EU green taxonomy. The delegated act was approved by the Parliament on 6 July 2022.

On 1 January 2020, the EU-UK Agreement for cooperation on the safe and peaceful uses of nuclear energy entered into force. The agreement provides for wide-ranging cooperation on nuclear safety and peaceful uses of nuclear energy, underpinned by assurances that both parties will comply with international non-proliferation obligations and will not lower their current level of nuclear safety standards.

On 11 February 2021, Commissioner Simson reported on the safety of the Ostrovets nuclear power plant in Belarus at the Parliament Plenary. On 15 March 2022, the EU mobilised the European Instrument for International Nuclear Safety
Cooperation to support Ukraine in restoring its nuclear safety capacity.

Consumers at the heart of our energy system

“We can do more for the open and competitive market: if there are many providers, then the prices should be more affordable for consumers and enterprises. And if our markets are interconnected – and they are not yet; there are missing links and bottlenecks – but if they are interconnected then this helps to provide renewable energy for larger markets.”

On 29 April 2022, after a plenary debate on post-pandemic high-energy prices and the adoption on 13 October 2021 of a toolbox on energy prices, the EU Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators (ACER) published its Final Assessment of the EU Wholesale Electricity Market Design, finding that, whilst the current electricity market design is worth keeping, certain improvements will improve the effectiveness of short-term electricity markets.

On 18 May 2022, in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Commission published the REPowereU plan and a EU External Energy Strategy to facilitate energy diversification. After having provided additional guidance on 8 March 2022 and options to address high energy prices on 23 March 2022, on 18 May 2022 the Commission presented short-term emergency measures and options to mitigate high energy prices to provide long-term improvements of gas end electricity markets.

“I will be attentive to energy prices and costs on consumers and businesses, and, in particular, to the impact that climate transition has on energy-intensive industries.”

On 18 May 2022, in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine and to the extremely high energy prices and costs, the Commission proposed in its REPowereU plan a combination of energy savings, efficiency, fuel substitution and electrification measures, together with an enhanced uptake of renewable hydrogen, biogas and biomethane allowing energy-intensive industries to save 35 bcm of natural gas by 2030.

“Well, energy consumers will be at the heart of our energy policy. My task is to provide affordable energy by diversifying our sources, by making policies that all energy grids, DSOs and providers will be very transparent, by making investments that will help to upgrade our grids, and by building the missing links and interconnections.”

On 8 July 2020, the Commission published the EU Strategy for Energy System Integration with 38 actions to create a more integrated energy system, resulting in lower prices for the consumers and including market governance reforms and improved information to consumers.

On 14 October 2020, the Commission published a Recommendation for Member States on tackling energy poverty and on 15 December 2020, revised the TEN-E regulation, aiming to connect regions currently isolated from European energy markets.
**Tracking commitments of Kadri Simson**

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**Just Transition Fund**

“The Just Transition Fund will indeed be very close to my heart.”

“The President-elect has committed to establish a Just Transition Fund to support coal and carbon-intensive regions and islands affected by the transition. […] I see this Fund as a way to enable regions to develop and finance concrete projects, which can transform economies and create jobs.”

“We can build on the existing Coal Regions in Transition Initiative to make the Fund a success. To me, fairness also means a renewed fight against energy poverty.”

“[…] I see that the Just Transition Fund will build on the project for coal regions in transition, and it will also help small islands which do not have connections with the mainland. This should help each region to be better prepared for the transition from fossil fuels towards renewables.”

On 14 January 2020, the Commission proposed the [Just Transition Fund](#).

On 19 November 2020, the Commission presented the [EU Offshore Renewable Energy strategy](#) offering new opportunities for regions that are most affected by the transition to a climate-neutral economy, including EU islands that have large potential in marine energies and offshore energy development.

On 15 February 2021, the Commission launched the secretariat of a new initiative for coal regions in transition in the Western Balkans and Ukraine built on the [EU Initiative for coal regions in transition](#).

On 24 June 2021, the European Parliament and the Council signed the [Just Transition Fund](#), with particular attention to islands, insular areas and outermost regions.

**Energy Poverty Observatory**

“I want to use the Energy Poverty Observatory and rapidly implement the legislative provisions on energy poverty. I intend to engage more with the Member States and the Covenant of Mayors. The report by Theresa Griffin presented last year[13] has laid the groundwork for this.”

On 7 August 2020, the EU [Energy Poverty Observatory (EPOV)](#) was asked to help improving knowledge and driving action to tackle energy poverty across EU Member States and beyond. The Energy Poverty Advisory Hub (EPAH) call for technical assistance opened on 1 February 2022.

On 14 October 2020, the Commission published the [Renovation Wave strategy](#) and a [recommendation](#) on tackling energy poverty.

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“In my mission letter it’s clearly stated: deliver the EU biodiversity strategy. It is important that, working together with Frans Timmermans, we will make sure that it’s actually included in other legislation: agriculture, energy, transport and so on, basically everything that is causing trouble today and leading to the sixth mass extinction.”

“[…] we will definitely have targets and they will be ambitious—because there is no other way—for 2030. […] They have to be measured and monitored. It is important to have a review mechanism.”

“[…] targets for protected areas can be increased. For the oceans and sea basins, they can be increased, for example, to 30%. But I think I’ll definitely be flexible here regarding biodiversity 2030 targets, and I’ll be open to discuss these also with the committee.”

On 20 May 2020: presentation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy which, among others,

- sets out to restore degraded ecosystems at land and sea across the whole of Europe by increasing organic farming and biodiversity-rich landscape features on agricultural land;
- announces that, in 2021, the Commission will also develop operational guidance on the new sustainability criteria on forest biomass for energy.

On 2 May 2022 the 8th Environment Action Programme entered into force, which will guide EU environment policy until 2030. It addresses as one of its six priorities ‘protecting, preserving and restoring biodiversity, and enhancing natural capital’.

The strategy proposes new ways to implement existing legislation more effectively, new commitments, measures, targets and governance mechanisms. These include transforming at least 30% of Europe’s lands and seas into effectively managed protected areas.
“We’ll have to check and see whether Member States are using all of the means that are granted to them [for the implementation of the Habitats Directive].”

“[...] So we have to fight the causes and [...] that will need funding – especially recreation of species, Natura 2000 areas and proper protection, that will need funding.”

“I will definitely be vocal about the need for an increased budget [...] strategic goals have to be funded sufficiently.”

The EU biodiversity strategy admits that there is currently no comprehensive governance framework to steer the implementation of biodiversity commitments agreed at national, European or international level. To address the gap, the Commission promises to put in place a new European biodiversity governance framework, which will include a monitoring and review mechanism with a clear set of agreed indicators to enable regular progress assessment and set out corrective action if necessary. The Commission will assess the approach in 2023 and consider whether a legally binding governance set-up is needed.

The strategy promises to unlock €20 billion per year for biodiversity through various sources, including EU funds and national and private funding. For example: Under Invest EU, a dedicated natural-capital and circular-economy initiative will be established to mobilise at least €10 billion over the next 10 years, based on public/private blended finance. Nature and biodiversity is also a priority for the European Green Deal Investment Plan.

On 17.11.2021, the Commission put forward a legislative proposal to avoid or minimise the placing of products associated with deforestation or forest degradation on the EU market.

On 28 January 2022, the Commission published guidance on designating new protected areas towards reaching the target of protecting 30% of EU land and sea by 2030.

EU’s ambitions for the CoP 15 to the Convention on Biological Diversity

“[...] under the EU Green Deal, I will, under my mandate, develop an initiative for clean, healthy and of course sustainably managed seas and oceans. It is important for reaching the 30% goal of marine protected areas under Natura 2000, and not only that 30%, but, of course, it has to be very well maintained, very well implemented.”

On 20 May 2020, the Commission presented its new Biodiversity Strategy, outlining the commitments the Commission proposes to the Council that the EU could take at the Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity, including ambitious global 2030 targets. Overarching global goals for biodiversity for 2050, in line with the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the vision of ‘living in harmony with nature’ should be that, by 2050, all of the world’s ecosystems are restored, resilient, and adequately protected. The date of the CoP-15 conference has been pushed back repeatedly because of the Covid pandemic.
Deliver on the zero-pollution ambition

“I look forward actually to including REACH as one of the key pillars of the non-toxic strategy. On the basis of what we have in REACH in terms of data, we can build a very strong non-toxic environment strategy, especially with regard to chemicals, and then even go beyond, for example to endocrine disruptors. These are currently under review, but as soon as we finish we will definitely be working on them.”

“[...] pharmaceuticals are already included in the water legislation but also the directive for water is undergoing its check and we’ll see if there is a need. After the check we can then say, is there a need to include additional pharmaceuticals or not? As I said, I’m open for additional discussions with the Environment Committee on this issue after the check is done and then present it to you.”

“Specifically on endocrine-disruptors, of course, it is important to fully implement the new strategy, which would be a serious step forward. [...] And I think that endocrine-disruptors have to be standardised and perceived as the CMR in the same level. [...] It is important that endocrine-disruptors would be prohibited from toys, cosmetics which we apply directly on our skins, food-contact materials.”

“Regarding the Euro7 standard, I think, and there is a mandate for it, that in five years it will be possible to have Euro7, working together with the Commissioner-designate for the Internal Market.”

On 14.10.2020, the Commission adopted the EU Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability phasing out from consumer products the most harmful substances, including endocrine disruptors. It is part of the EU’s zero pollution ambition, a key commitment of the European Green Deal. In the Chemicals Strategy, the Commission announced that it would propose establishing legally binding hazard identification of endocrine disruptors.

The EU Water Framework Directive adopted on 23 October 2000 does not seem to address the possible need to include additional pharmaceuticals.

Based on a 2018 review of Regulation (EC) No 1223/2009 on cosmetic products containing endocrine-disrupting substances, the Commission committed to creating a priority list of potential endocrine disruptors not yet covered by the regulation bans. The Commission uses public calls for data to identify substances that merit a higher priority for assessment.

Based on a 2021 public consultation for the new Euro 7 standard, the Commission is planning to adopt new stricter emissions standards for all petrol and diesel cars, vans, lorries and buses in July 2022.

On the new Circular Economy Action Plan addressing construction waste and plastic waste

“It is important also to mention the construction sector, which is responsible for one third of waste, and it will be among the priorities in the action plan as well.”

“ [...] the circular economy will only be successful when we actually find a way to have a non-toxic cycle. So basically, with plastics that are made of friendly chemicals – let’s call them this–we know that we can reuse them in many, many other ways, and they can then be applied in different ways.


In 2018, the Commission had already adopted the European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy. There do not seem to be any further plans at the moment to address the reuse of plastics.

On 10 December 2020, the Commission proposed a new Batteries Regulation which has been drafted
sectors. This is the only way for a successful circular economy, and throughout my mandate I will be reaching for that.”

Addressing the issue of microplastics and aiming at plastic-free oceans

“I am going, of course, to seek the full implementation of the plastic strategy, but the next step has to be microplastics, especially in textiles, tyres and pellets, that’s where the main source is; biodegradable plastics, [...], we have to establish a clear regulatory framework and identify some applications for which biodegradable plastics are made of – chemicals, mainly – and then of course plastic packaging.”

No new proposal to date. In 2018, the Commission had already adopted the European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy. Member States had to implement the Directive (EU) 2019/904 on the reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment by July 2021. The Commission will review the requirements on packaging and packaging waste in the EU later in 2022.

Prosperous and sustainable fishing and a thriving blue economy (PECH)

Implementation of the reformed common fisheries policy

“I want to work with you to make sure that our fisheries control system is fit for purpose and ensures a level playing field.”

Parliament adopted its position on the legislative proposal for a new fisheries control mechanism (2018/0193(COD)) in plenary on 11 March 2021. The respective trilogue negotiations have been ongoing ever since. Unfortunately, so far the incumbent Commissioner’s initiatives as facilitator of protracted and difficult negotiations did not show positive results.

Evaluation of the common fisheries policy

“By 2022, I will evaluate the Common Fisheries Policy to identify how to address issues not sufficiently covered in the current policy, because we need policy that works for our fishermen and women, our coastal communities and our environment.”

“My greatest ambition, if confirmed, would be to make the Green Deal a reality on the ground. A deal that works for oceans, for the environment and for our citizens who should be front and centre throughout.”

On 17 December 2021, DG MARE announced the publication of its evaluation report on the implementation of the common fisheries policy (CPF) by the end of 2022, and opened a public stakeholder consultation that ran until 14 March 2022 (see press release).

On 11 December 2019, the Commission presented the ‘European Green Deal’ (COM(2019)0640), committing the Union to climate neutrality by 2050. This was complemented by the ‘EU biodiversity strategy for 2030’ (COM(2020)0380), proposing a new binding target of 30% marine protected areas in EU waters by 2030, of which at least a third under stricter protection.
Farm to fork strategy on sustainable food

“I want to invest in the potential of sustainable seafood to deliver farm to fork strategy on sustainable food. European seafood plays a major role in our diet. Our fishing fleet lands over 5 million tonnes, and aquaculture brings 1.4 million tonnes on to the market.”

On 12 May 2021, the Commission adopted a communication entitled ‘Strategic guidelines for a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture for the period 2021 to 2030’ (COM(2021)0236).

“One of the key things is [...] labelling, so that a consumer knows what he is buying and that the green label really means something.”

A legislative proposal for a sustainable food labelling framework to empower consumers to make sustainable food choices was announced for 2024, as part of the farm to fork strategy (see COM(2020)0381, p. 20).

International ocean governance

“On the high seas and pristine areas, like the Antarctic, we need new rules for conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity on the high seas.”

The Commission continued to engage in the Intergovernmental Conference on an international legally binding instrument under UNCLOS on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ), an important commitment under the external dimension of the EU biodiversity strategy for 2030. On 24 June 2022, the Commission published a Joint communication (JOIN(2022)28) on the “EU’s International Ocean Governance agenda” for setting the course for a sustainable blue planet.

Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing

“And I will continue our fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.”

“It is important to tackle illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. So, I think this is the best way to spend resources: helping our partners, as well, fight with the causes, help them by giving best advice, by showing our best practices and having them on board, that’s the only way. Of course, the EU has a unique position to lead this way.”

The European Green Deal (COM(2019)0640) states that: “The Commission will also take a zero-tolerance approach to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.”

The farm to fork strategy (COM(2020)0381) stresses that: “The EU will apply zero tolerance in the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and combat overfishing”; and that “The mandatory use of digitalised catch certificates shall strengthen measures to prevent illegal fish products from entering the EU market”.


WTO agreement on fisheries subsidies

“I will work with the Trade Commissioner-designate Phil Hogan to reach a global agreement on banning harmful fishery subsidies.”

On 17 June 2022, after more than two decades of WTO negotiations, a partial multilateral agreement on banning harmful fisheries subsidies, as aimed for under UN Sustainable Development Goal 14.6, could be reached.

New approach for a sustainable blue economy

“I will also lead to develop a new approach for a sustainable blue economy.”

On 17 May 2021, the Commission adopted a communication entitled ‘A new approach for a sustainable blue economy in the EU – Transforming the EU’s Blue Economy for a Sustainable Future’ (COM(2021)0240).
MAIREAD MCGUINNESS
Commissioner
Financial services, financial stability and the Capital Markets Union

This briefing follows up the commitments made by the commissioner since 2020.

### European Deposit Insurance Scheme (EDIS)

"Agreement on [...] a European deposit insurance scheme (EDIS) is essential. I will work with this Committee and Member States to find a way forward."

2021 and 2022 joint declaration by all three EU institutions noting EDIS as a legislative priority. Ongoing work at the technical level in the High-Level Working Group on EDIS and in the Council Ad Hoc Working Party on the Strengthening of the Banking Union (Slovenian Presidency report). The Eurogroup statement of 16 June represents a change in strategy, thus delaying once again the completion of EDIS.

Consultations and preparatory work ongoing. A public and a targeted consultation on the review of bank crisis management & deposit insurance framework (BRRD review). Consultation strategy, Eurogroup statement of 16 June 2022; the immediate priority is now put on the bank crisis management and national deposit guarantee schemes (CMDI). This seems to indicate that EDIS may not be pursued anymore. The Commission is invited to make proposals for a reformed CMDI framework.

"[...] as a priority during my tenure, [...] the work of the Commission will focus on bringing forward a review of the crisis management and deposit insurance framework [...]".

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European Stability Mechanism (ESM) reform

"[...] in the short term, my focus will be on finalising the ESM reform package [...] It is well advanced and it’s ready for closure and this includes the common backstop [...] to the Single Resolution Fund (SRF)."

Completed. Members States are finalising the internal ratification procedures. Ratification process in Germany and Italy still not completed.

Non-performing loans (NPLs)

"[...] non-performing loans [...] will receive my highest attention.”
"[...] we do need to find a mechanism [...] to unburden banks with non-performing loans, with sufficient consumer protection when we do that [...]”
"[...] if we turn a blind eye to the problems of non-performing loans, we then have problems in banks [...] but [...] people and their homes should be protected. [...] you’ll have a champion in me on that issue.”
"[...] we cannot allow the bundling of people’s homes to be sold in a very inappropriate way. That the connection between the borrower and the lender should not be broken when, and if, loans are sold on.”
"[...] I would be absolutely opposed to [...] the bundling of mortgages that have got into trouble, [...] because [of] the pandemic [...]”

"[...] we are working on an action plan on NPLs, which will be coming later in the year. It is being worked on to provide a collective response to what is happening in all our different Member States.”

What works, if it’s done correctly and which should help the workers and families [...] is that the secondary [NPLs'] markets operate and are regulated, so that we know what’s going on. So my commitment [...] is that I would be very mindful of how these secondary markets operate.”


From June to September 2021 the Commission undertook a targeted consultation on improving transparency and efficiency in secondary markets for NPLs. There seems to be no visible developments on this front.

Tackling the barriers of the flow of capital

"[...] we need to look very closely at where the blockages are when it comes to people borrowing across borders. [...] I can give you a commitment to look carefully at this issue [...]”

The 2021 Commission work programme foresaw a legislative initiative on investment protection and facilitation framework by Q2 2021. Public consultation was carried out in May-September 2020. No further references to such proposals in the 2022 Commission work programme.
Revision of prudential rules for insurance and reinsurance companies (Solvency II) proposal
“[...] we need to look at the impact of inducements. If we don’t have the trust of citizens that when they invest they’re doing so with full information, then we can’t make progress at all.”

Insolvency proceedings

“I think we can make very important progress towards greater convergence and to make insolvency processes more efficient. [...] But we need to be careful and consider whether we need a new law, or indeed some non-legislative initiatives in this area, [...] I don’t have a fixed mind about which is the best way - we need to look at the details. But we do want to avoid legal processes that just impede progress.”

Under the CMU Action Plan, proposals on measures addressing insolvency harmonisation are due in Q2 2022. A public consultation was launched end 2020. The 2022 Commission work programme postponed the initiative to Q3 2022. Eurogroup has been discussing the subject (see here, notably).

Withholding tax procedures

“I think it’s important to address the disadvantages of cross-border investors and find the proposals in the CMU action plan to address these burdensome tax refund procedures, a very good way forward. It won’t be very easy to do, but I think it’s absolutely essential.”

Under the CMU Action Plan, proposals for a common, standardised, EU-wide system for withholding tax relief at source are announced by the Commission for Q4 2022.

SMEs access to finance

“One of the initiatives [...] is to develop the SME IPO fund, and I think we need to do that.”

Although no specific fund called an SME IPO was created so far, these functions can be carried out through InvestEU in those cases where SMEs face liquidity issues due to the corona virus crisis. However, no specific proposal was made so far.

Sustainable Finance

“I will prioritise a new action plan on sustainable finance, accelerate work on an EU green bond standard, eco labels, green, sustainable investments, and improved disclosure of climate and environmental data by companies, helping investors and industry identify sustainable projects.”

“ [...] We have a lot of work to follow up in on the green-bonds standard and [on] biodiversity, [...] you can count on me [...] to work hard in that direction.”

“In relation to the Green Bond Standard, [...] there are three priorities [...] we need it strongly to follow and link with taxonomy, [...] we would want to be market leaders in this, [...] and we

The Strategy for financing the transition to a sustainable economy was adopted in July 2021.

Legislative proposal on the establishment of an EU green bond standard adopted in July 2021. Legislative procedure ongoing.
would also want to make sure that if you claim to be a Green Bond, that there is verification.”

**FinTech Strategy and cryptocurrencies**

"We need to tackle fragmentation in the single market for digital financial services and strive for a European financial data space to promote innovation.”

"[On] cryptocurrencies, we really need to work collectively – Commission, Parliament and Council – to do the right thing for a future which [...] will bring [...] opportunities but [...] risks as well”.

"Cryptocurrencies [...] can hide financial fraud. [...] these entities have to be subject to financial supervision.”

"We will look carefully at what comes out of [...] the investigations around Wirecard and act accordingly.”

**Digital Finance Package** of 24/09/2020, (including **Digital Finance Strategy** and several legislative proposals) foresaw legislative proposal for adaptations of the existing financial services legislative framework (with respect to consumer protection and prudential rules) by mid-2022. Legislative proposal on the **European Single Access Point** (ESAP) of 25/11/2021, in line with the third priority under the Digital Finance strategy (to promote data-driven innovation, building on the common financial data space).

**Public Consultation** closed in June 2021 on extending the scope of the Directive on Administrative Cooperation to crypto-assets and e-money in order to curb tax fraud and evasion. The Commission adoption planned for Q3 2021 is delayed (DAC8 is currently foreseen for 16 November 2022 - OJ 2425).


In his **statement at the Plenary** on 7/10/2020, VP Dombrovskis outlined three areas for further analysis in this context: corporate governance, external audit, and audit oversight at EU level. Nothing seems to have been proposed by the Commission in this regard.

**Comprehensive approach to fighting money laundering**

"[...] I [...] will continue to work towards a legislative package next year, taking into account this Parliament’s resolution in July. We need a single EU rulebook, one that’s not overseen just by national supervisors but by a very strong, independent EU anti-money-laundering supervisor. And we need enhanced cooperation between financial intelligence units.”

“What I will commit to you is a strong architecture with overall European-level supervision. We will have the national, but we will also have the European.”

“The fact that [...] money laundering persists [...] means that we do need to have sanctions. I will

Anti-money laundering legislative package adopted on **July 2021**. It encompasses:

- a new proposal on the prevention of the use of the financial system for the purposes of money laundering or terrorist financing, COM (2021)420 (covering also infringements);
- a proposal for establishing the Authority for Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism (AMLA), COM(2021)421;
- a proposal on information accompanying transfers of funds and certain crypto-assets, COM (2021)422.
look at this in more detail. [...] but the punishment needs to fit the crime”.

“So, what do we do about poor implementation [of anti-money laundering legislation]? [...] I think it’s really important that the Commission does work much tougher on this. [...] So I will look at where there are infringement proceedings, I will look at where I think there should be and I can give you that commitment because it is really, really, an area of huge concern [...]”.

Letters of formal notice to Germany, Portugal and Romania for incorrect transposition of the 4th AMLD (February 2021). According to the Commission, all Member States have now transposed AML IV. Infringement procedures are pending against 12 Member States (June 2022).

Extraterritorial sanctions

“ [...] I will look at ways to defend ourselves from unwarranted extraterritorial effects on our interests of sanctions adopted by others and will work on our ability to impose sanctions”.

The Commission’s new strategy to foster openness, strength and resilience of the European economic and financial system (January 2021). It envisages an analysis of financial-market infrastructure vulnerabilities to extraterritorial sanctions and an assessment of the need for issuing related recommendations. It also plans to explore ways to ensure the uninterrupted flow of essential financial services, including payments, with EU entities or persons targeted by the extra-territorial application of third-country unilateral sanctions. A public consultation was held from 30 July 2021 to 15 October 2021. An amendment of the blocking status regulation is foreseen for 2022.

Recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic

”[On Basel III implementation] there is a one-year delay – rightly so, because of countries dealing with COVID-19 [...]. I can give you assurances that there will also be an impact assessment, and it will take into account the impact of COVID-19 on banks’ financial situation. [...] I think that implementing Basel III in the way that I’ve mentioned respects our commitments to the process. We will also be very conscious of respecting the fact that the European banking system has a very different structure. So it will be done in a very appropriate way”.

“ [...] when it comes to shadow banking, we just have to be really mindful of these risks, as [...] that might shift from banks to non-banking sector and [...] review our regulations, our control mechanisms to make sure that they are fit for purpose [...]”.

Legislative proposals reviewing the regulatory framework on bank capital requirements, set out in the capital requirements directive (CRD) and regulation (CRR, including the so-called “daisy chain” proposal) were presented in October 2021. No specific actions yet.
**Brexit**

“[...] I want to make sure that we have a strong European financial system, and that the services that underpin our financial stability are under our rules and our supervision.”

“[...] we certainly will not take risks with financial stability. I think it’s also fair to say that we want a cooperative relationship with the United Kingdom, [...] but at the end of the day what I need to do, and the Commission collectively, is to make sure that we look after the interests of the European Union.”

Commission extended the temporary equivalence recognition for UK central counterparties. Temporary equivalence to lapse on 30 June 2025. Negotiations of a Memorandum of Understanding concluded by end of March 2021, signature pending.

**Taxation**

“[...] I would support the work on the financial transaction tax [FTT]. [...] we work and will continue to work on the FTT, see if we can do it in a way that brings in the revenue and also that works not against the financial interests of the European Union in terms of the global financial situation.”

“On tax generally [...] work is going on at OECD level. I [...] would like that we do this globally, so that there is a move around [...] taxation of companies in a way that they pay their fair share of tax – and it is transparent. If it doesn’t deliver, if the OECD process becomes bogged down in politics, then the European Commission will come forward with taxation proposals, and I support that.”

“[...] my commitment to you is that I would strongly support the College’s efforts to promote fair, simple and sustainable taxation in line with the Commission’s package of July”.

No significant progress on the pending Commission proposal on FTT yet, although there have been some efforts by the PT Presidency to revive discussions. As part of the MFF agreement, the Roadmap on own resources envisages that FTT might be an additional revenue source. The Commission is to endeavour to make a proposal by mid-2024.

See Commissioner Gentiloni specific note.