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*Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety*

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**2016/2306(INI)**

25.1.2017

## **OPINION**

of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

for the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs

on the European Semester for economic policy coordination: Annual Growth  
Survey 2017  
(2016/2306(INI))

Rapporteur: Nuno Melo

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## SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety calls on the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Stresses that the European Semester debate is of particular importance in view of the need to find a new development model for structural reforms and selective investments in strategic areas, moving towards an economic model combining industrial development with environmental sustainability; reiterates, therefore, that the environmental dimension should play a full role, together with the economic and social dimensions, in the European Semester process;
2. Regrets that the recovery in the EU remains slow and fragile, which highlights the need to step up structural reforms, encourage investment and build a more competitive economy;
3. Welcomes the fact that the Annual Growth Survey 2017 clearly mentions the circular economy among the general economic priorities for the EU;
4. Points out that climate change is undoubtedly a very serious global challenge and that swift action should remain a priority for the EU; underlines, in this connection, the importance of the Paris Agreement adopted in December 2015 at the COP 21, a global milestone in furthering the global collective transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient society; notes that the agreement sets out a qualitative long-term emissions-reduction goal in line with the objective of keeping the global temperature increase well below 2 °C and pursuing efforts to keep it to 1.5 °C; calls for the Commission therefore to take into consideration in its country-specific recommendations the need for Member States to invest in low-carbon-emission energy projects to match the objectives of the Paris Agreement; points out that an effective transition to a low-carbon society requires large investments in strategic areas such as energy, waste management, transport and buildings; calls, in this context, for sustainable investments to be earmarked under the forthcoming 'EFSI 2' regulation;
5. Calls on the Commission to use the European Semester as an instrument for fulfilling EU commitments emanating from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and in particular to include in the process policies and effective measures addressing climate change, sustainable production and consumption, food security and biodiversity;
6. Recalls that ensuring sustainable growth, climate protection and job creation in the EU means using our resources in a smarter and more sustainable way, shifting taxation from labour to environmental pollution, phasing out subsidies for fossil fuels, and reducing dependence on imports of raw materials; considers that the focus should be on the application of the waste hierarchy primarily to support the implementation of prevention measures, greater recycling and re-use of products; notes that it is estimated that the circular economy could provide EU companies with savings of about EUR 600 billion per year; reiterates, therefore, in order to accelerate the EU transition towards a circular economy, its call for the principles of the circular economy to be incorporated into the European Semester and for a lead indicator on resource efficiency, and security of supply for key raw materials; underlines the need for stronger investment in proven green technologies in order to achieve the Europe 2020 targets for sustainable growth and the

2030 targets for climate and energy;

7. Stresses the importance of the ongoing waste legislation reform in order to advance the transition of the European economy to a circular model;
8. Stresses that an improved and more efficient use of resources, reducing foreign energy dependence and introducing sustainable production, based on better design requirements for products and more sustainable consumption patterns, involves promoting entrepreneurship and job creation, implementing international targets and the Union's environmental objectives effectively and diversifying revenue sources, in a context of fiscal responsibility and economic competitiveness; considers that the European Semester should also incorporate reporting on energy efficiency and interconnectivity on the basis of targets set at EU level;
9. Points out that, according to a 2012 Commission study, if all EU waste legislation were fully implemented, Europe would save EUR 72 billion a year, the turnover of the waste management and recycling sector would rise by EUR 42 billion, and 400 000 jobs would be created by 2020; recalls that reducing the amount of waste and ensuring compliance with the legislation on this matter should be considered to be of the highest priority;
10. Highlights that Member States need to reform their tax systems in order to support growth and fair rules between businesses; emphasises, in this respect, the role of environmental taxation, environmental tax reform and tax-shifting programmes as key enabling factors in the transition to a green economy, as they can trigger eco-innovations that generate wealth and jobs and contribute to environmental improvement and reduced energy and resource consumption;
11. Calls on the Commission to mainstream the Sustainable Development Goals into the European Semester process;
12. Points out the need for a more comprehensive set of indicators in order to assess the measures put in place by Member States in terms of their contribution towards the achievement of the objectives taken up by the European Union in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and in particular the target of halving food waste by 2030; stresses that Sustainable Development Goal targets need to be properly mainstreamed in the Union's internal as well as external policies;
13. Recalls that a trend of growth in jobs in the eco-industry can be observed throughout the EU; highlights that further reductions in energy and resource use could lead to additional job creation, particularly in the sectors of insulation, heat-pump technologies, electrically propelled vehicles and water-efficient agricultural irrigation technologies, but also in the recycling and resource-dependent sectors;
14. Welcomes the Commission's decision to establish a High-Level Expert Group (HLEG) on sustainable finance; underlines that reforms for sustainable finance are necessary to support investment in clean technologies and their deployment, to ensure that the financial system can finance growth in a sustainable manner over the long term and to contribute to the creation of a low-carbon, climate-resilient circular economy, as set out in the Commission communication of 14 September 2016 entitled 'Capital Markets Union – Accelerating Reform';

15. Notes that several of the projects approved for financing by the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) are oriented towards infrastructure and innovation in the environment and health sectors; underlines, however, the need to increase the availability of green funds through the EFSI;
16. Stresses that effective investment in health and education, including health promotion and disease prevention, is essential for providing citizens with equal access to healthcare services, as well as for stability, sustainability, economic prosperity and growth promotion, producing results in terms of productivity, labour supply, human capital and public spending; recalls that expenditure on health services constitutes investment towards healthier, safer, more productive and competitive societies; underlines the importance of the sustainability of the healthcare sector, which plays an important role in the overall economy, as it accounts for 8 % of the total European workforce and 10 % of GDP in the EU;
17. Stresses the need to create a sustainable knowledge-sharing system in the field of health technology assessment and that the aim of health technology assessment is to address issues related to the properties of health technologies, including their safety, effectiveness, efficiency, applicability, indications, costs, cost-effectiveness and social, ethical and economic consequences of their use;
18. Recommends once again that the principles of the circular economy be integrated into country-specific recommendations;
19. Underlines the importance of structured systematic dialogue at national level with a view to increasing ownership of the country-specific recommendations by all stakeholders in the health system; points out the need therefore for a more comprehensive assessment of health-system performance at EU level; encourages the Member States to use the evidence gathered in their policy-making and share best practices with a view to reducing divergences and health inequalities between and within Member States;
20. Points out the need for a more comprehensive assessment of health systems in the framework of the European Semester, not only considering the fiscal dimension but also addressing access, effectiveness and quality within the European health sector;
21. Stresses that appropriate consideration should be given to healthcare-related costs incurred by Member States as a result of emergencies putting additional strain on healthcare systems, such as immigrants and refugees arriving in the EU in conditions requiring immediate medical attention, that necessary medical assistance is essential for both the protection of human rights and risk reduction aimed at protecting EU citizens from possible exposure to diseases endemic in migration countries of origin, and that the related cost burden should therefore be properly considered when evaluating Member States' budgets.

## RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

<b>Date adopted</b>	24.1.2017
<b>Result of final vote</b>	+: 52 -: 5 0: 8
<b>Members present for the final vote</b>	Marco Affronte, Margrete Auken, Pilar Ayuso, Zoltán Balczó, Catherine Bearder, Ivo Belet, Simona Bonafè, Biljana Borzan, Paul Brannen, Nessa Childers, Birgit Collin-Langen, Mireille D'Ornano, Miriam Dalli, Seb Dance, Angélique Delahaye, Mark Demesmaeker, Stefan Eck, José Inácio Faria, Francesc Gambús, Elisabetta Gardini, Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy, Jens Gieseke, Julie Girling, Sylvie Goddyn, Françoise Grossetête, Andrzej Grzyb, Jytte Guteland, Anneli Jäätteenmäki, Jean-François Jalkh, Benedek Jávor, Josu Juaristi Abaunz, Karin Kadenbach, Kateřina Konečná, Urszula Krupa, Giovanni La Via, Peter Liese, Norbert Lins, Valentinas Mazuronis, Susanne Melior, Massimo Paolucci, Piernicola Pedicini, Julia Reid, Frédérique Ries, Michèle Rivasi, Daciana Octavia Sârbu, Annie Schreijer-Pierik, Davor Škrlec, Claudiu Ciprian Tănăsescu, Ivica Tolić, Estefanía Torres Martínez, Nils Torvalds, Adina-Ioana Vălean, Jadwiga Wiśniewska, Damiano Zoffoli
<b>Substitutes present for the final vote</b>	Renata Briano, Herbert Dorfmann, James Nicholson, Stanislav Polčák, Gabriele Preuß, Tiemo Wölken
<b>Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote</b>	Xabier Benito Ziluaga, Richard Corbett, Sander Loones, Kosma Złotowski