

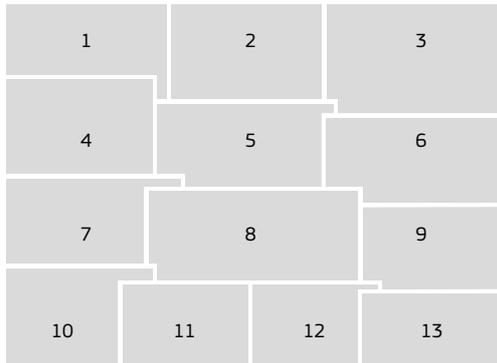


The EU in 2016



HIGHLIGHTS

On the cover



1. EU, French, UN, and Slovak representatives at the signing ceremony for the EU's ratification of the Paris Climate Change Agreement. (© European Union)
2. Young people wearing European Solidarity Corps t-shirts. (© European Union)
3. The Commission President at the EU–Turkey meeting. (© European Union)
4. Rescuers help the survivors after a powerful earthquake hit the town of Amatrice, Italy. (© Associated Press)
5. The President of the United States and the Commission President give a joint press conference. (© European Union)
6. Mourners place flowers and candles in memory of the victims of the terror attacks in Brussels. (© Associated Press)
7. The Commission President meets with dairy producers. (© European Union)
8. EU, Canadian and Slovak representatives at the signing ceremony of the Strategic Partnership Agreement and the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement between the EU and Canada. (© European Union)
9. Pro-EU demonstrators outside the UK parliament. (© Associated Press)
10. The Slovak Prime Minister, the European Council President and the Commission President give a joint press conference. (© European Union)
11. The Competition Commissioner announces the EU's decision that Ireland must recover illegal State aid provided to Apple. (© European Union)
12. The military conflict in Syria continues. (© Associated Press)
13. The High Representative/Commission Vice-President and the NATO Secretary General give a joint press conference. (© NATO/OTAN)

The EU in 2016

HIGHLIGHTS

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Foreword

Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, gives his State of the Union address for 2016 in the European Parliament, Strasbourg, France, 14 September 2016.

Throughout a year in which the European and global political landscape shifted further than many imagined, the EU remained a source of resilience, stability and forward momentum for its citizens. By focusing on the areas that matter and make most sense for Europeans, no time was lost in delivering on the EU's most pressing challenges.

That progress was facilitated by a renewed sense of unity and commitment within the EU. September's Bratislava Declaration and Roadmap saw all 27 Member States present agree on the positive agenda for collective action that I presented in my State of the Union address. Coming just 3 months after the United Kingdom's referendum on EU membership, this was a crucial moment for the EU's members to come together and look forward. Building on that momentum, the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission agreed the first ever [Joint Declaration on the EU's legislative priorities for 2017](#), signed by the three EU institutions in December.

Only by working together can we tackle our common challenges and build a European Union that protects, that preserves the European way of life, that empowers its citizens, that defends at home and abroad and that takes responsibility.

Over the last year we have made progress towards that, but we have a lot more to do. Unemployment is now at its lowest in the EU since 2009. Youth unemployment has dropped by 10 % in the last year alone but remains too high, especially in the parts of the EU where the recovery has taken more time.

That is why in 2016 the Commission committed itself to reinforcing the Youth Guarantee, which has already helped 9 million young people take up an offer of work, education or training. To back that up, the Commission proposed to increase funding for the Youth Employment Initiative by €2 billion. This will help support 1 million more young people by 2020.

But when it comes to the young people of the EU — our future — we need to invest more than money. There is one 2016 initiative that is particularly close to my heart: the launch of the European Solidarity Corps. The Corps will enable young people to volunteer for solidarity activities across the EU to help the most vulnerable, develop new skills and forge new bonds. That is an investment in our future. It was only launched in early December but by the end of the month more than 18 000 young Europeans had registered. We are in safe hands!

We need to support those young people by getting our economy working for them. That is why in September I announced a large-scale expansion of the European Fund for Strategic Investments, which was endorsed by the European Council in December.

The numbers speak for themselves: €164 billion of investment has already been triggered across all 28 Member States and €22.4 billion of financing has been secured for infrastructure projects.

It is also an investment in keeping pace with the digitisation of our economy and society. That is why in 2016 the Commission proposed a reform of the EU's telecommunications markets. If we invest in new networks and services we will create at least 1.3 million new jobs over the next decade.

2016 also saw us make good progress on migration. The EU now has a comprehensive strategy to save lives, secure our borders and enable us to deal with those seeking asylum on our shores. We set up a European Border and Coast Guard in record time. We worked together with Turkey to implement the EU–Turkey Statement to help destroy the business model of people smugglers and traffickers and offer safe and legal ways to the EU for those who need our protection. We are tackling the root causes of illegal migration by working with our African friends through new migration partnerships. And we are reforming our asylum policy to put in place a genuinely Common European Asylum System.

An EU that protects is an EU that defends and empowers, at home and abroad. In 2016 the Union continued to stand up for its values of openness, freedom, tolerance and solidarity. This is what the rest of the world expects from us as a positive global force. During the year we continued to forge links with our partners, and the new trade partnership with Canada shows our commitment to working with like-minded partners to create opportunities in the EU and beyond.

The barbaric terrorist acts on our soil in the past year have shown us again what we are fighting for — the European way of life. In the face of the worst of humanity we have to stay true to our values and to ourselves. It is about defending the beliefs that our society is built on: democracy, openness, tolerance and diversity. And it is about defending ourselves from those who wish us harm.

That is why we have prioritised security — criminalising terrorism and foreign fighters across the EU, cracking down on the use of firearms

and on terrorist financing, working with internet companies to get terrorist propaganda offline and fighting radicalisation in the EU's schools and prisons. We will also defend our borders: for every short-term visitor to the EU, the Commission proposed that there be a record of when and where he or she entered and exited.

But in order to do all this we need to keep the unity shown by the EU-27 and the EU institutions in 2016.

Our ambition now, as the European Union, must not simply be to adapt to a changing world, but to shape it. Our goal is not only to protect what we have today, but to build a better society for tomorrow.

Our children deserve a Europe that preserves their way of life. They deserve a Europe that empowers and defends them. They deserve a Europe that protects. It is time we — the institutions, the governments and the citizens — all took responsibility for building that Europe. Together.



Jean-Claude Juncker

THE EU IN 2016 PRIORITY 1

Commission Vice-President Jyrki Katainen answers questions from the press on the progress of the Investment Plan for Europe, Brussels, 1 June 2016.



'My first priority as Commission President will be to strengthen Europe's competitiveness and to stimulate investment for the purpose of job creation.'

Jean-Claude Juncker, political guidelines, 15 July 2014

A new boost for jobs, growth and investment

Since the global economic and financial crisis the European Union has been suffering from low levels of investment. Collective and coordinated efforts at Union level are needed to put the EU on the path towards economic recovery. Boosting jobs and growth was a top priority for the EU in 2016, building on what had been achieved the year before.

The Investment Plan for Europe mobilised over €163 billion of new investments across the EU in 2016. The success of the Plan led to the announcement in September by Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, of the extension of the Plan's initial target of €315 billion of new investments by 2020 to at least €500 billion, and beyond that to €630 billion by 2022. The proposal to

extend the duration of the European Fund for Strategic Investments was backed in December by the European Council. The Commission also proposed a new European External Investment Plan to encourage investment in Africa and the EU neighbourhood in order to strengthen the EU's partnerships and contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Commission simplified the procedure for detecting and assessing macroeconomic imbalances and put greater focus on employment and social considerations in the European Semester (the EU's economic policy coordination cycle). It also proposed a new set of recommendations for structural reforms, with a greater emphasis on growth-enhancing policies such as research and innovation.

Throughout the year, boosting the EU economy was supported by policies in areas such as research and innovation, regional policy, transport, employment, the environment, agriculture and fisheries. Particular emphasis was placed on providing small businesses with greater access to finance and technical support, with the launch of the new [European Investment Advisory Hub](#), the continued success of the EU's [programme for small and medium-sized enterprises](#) and the increase in funding under the Investment Plan.

THE EU IN 2016 PRIORITY 2

The Digital Single Market Strategy aims to remove online barriers that lead to people in the EU missing out on goods and services. These barriers also mean that internet companies and start-ups cannot take full advantage of digital growth. In 2016 the European Commission presented almost all of its proposals on completing the Digital Single Market, with the adoption of the remaining proposals expected in early 2017. The Commission presented new rules to help people and companies buy and sell products and services online more easily and outlined plans to ensure a fairer and more transparent online

market place. It also outlined a strategy to help industry, companies, researchers and public authorities to make the most of new technologies.

To increase trust in the digital world the Commission launched a major partnership with industry on cybersecurity in July. EU artists, creators and cultural diversity were in the spotlight during year-long celebrations of 25 years of the EU MEDIA Programme. In addition, modernisation of the EU's copyright and broadcasting rules created more opportunities for innovation and creative content online and across borders.

In September's State of the Union speech President Juncker announced [WiFi4EU](#), a €120 million plan to bring free Wi-Fi to parks, squares, libraries and public buildings in towns and villages across the EU. In addition, the Commission wants all households in the EU to have access to an internet connection of at least 100 megabits per second, which can be upgraded to gigabit speed.



Commission Vice-President Andrus Ansip (centre) tries out next-generation wireless technology at the Mobile World Congress 2016, Barcelona, Spain, 22 February 2016.

A connected Digital Single Market

'We must make much better use of the great opportunities offered by digital technologies, which know no borders. To do so, we will need to have the courage to break down national silos in telecoms regulation, in copyright and data protection legislation, in the management of radio waves and in the application of competition law.'

Jean-Claude Juncker, political guidelines, 15 July 2014

THE EU IN 2016 PRIORITY 3

The EU headed into 2016 with a commitment to deliver secure and affordable energy to its citizens and businesses and to fight the causes of climate change through its Energy Union and forward-looking climate change policies.

Throughout the year the EU focused on maintaining the political momentum of the Paris Agreement, which legally **entered into force** in November, 30 days after the EU's ratification pushed it past the threshold it had to reach to take effect. In July the Commission presented binding greenhouse gas emission targets for the period from 2021 to 2030 for each

Member State in the transport, buildings, agriculture, waste and land-use, and forestry sectors. The Commission also presented a European Strategy for Low-Emission Mobility and continued work to address international aviation emissions.

In November the Commission presented its Clean Energy for All Europeans package, which includes legislative proposals in the areas of energy efficiency, renewables, the internal market and governance to help the transition to clean energy and maximise investment, jobs and growth in the EU.



Commission Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič, Giovanni La Via, Member of the European Parliament, Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, Ségolène Royal, French Minister for the Environment, Energy and Marine Affairs, Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament, Commissioner Miguel Arias Cañete and Ivan Korčok, Secretary of State at the Slovak Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, at the signing ceremony for the EU's ratification of the Paris Climate Change Agreement, Strasbourg, France, 4 October 2016.

A resilient Energy Union with a forward-looking climate change policy

'Current geopolitical events have forcefully reminded us that Europe relies too heavily on fuel and gas imports. I therefore want to reform and reorganise Europe's energy policy into a new European Energy Union.'

Jean-Claude Juncker, political guidelines, 15 July 2014

THE EU IN 2016
PRIORITY 4

State aid: Ireland - Apple



Commissioner Margrethe Vestager addresses members of the press following the Commission's decision that Ireland must recover illegal State aid paid to Apple of up to €13 billion, Brussels, 29 August 2016.

A deeper and fairer internal market with a strengthened industrial base

'Our internal market is Europe's best asset in times of increasing globalisation. I therefore want the next Commission to build on the strength of our Single Market and to fully exploit its potential in all its dimensions.'

Jean-Claude Juncker, political guidelines, 15 July 2014

The Single Market is one of the EU's major achievements and its best asset in times of increasing globalisation. By allowing people, goods, services and capital to move more freely it opens up new opportunities for citizens, workers, businesses and consumers, creating the jobs and growth the EU so urgently needs. Work continued in 2016 in line with the 2015 [Single Market Strategy](#).

In March the Commission presented a [targeted revision of the Posting of Workers Directive](#), covering workers sent by their employer to work temporarily in another Member State. In June the Commission expressed its opinion on how existing EU legislation should apply to the [collaborative economy](#). Other initiatives included the Start-Up and Scale-Up Initiative and

the [European Professional Card](#).

In April new EU rules came into force that changed the way Member States and public authorities spend a large part of the €1.9 trillion spent on public procurement annually.

Strengthening the EU's industrial base remained a priority. The Commission tabled legislative proposals to ensure that car manufacturers comply strictly with all EU safety, environmental and production requirements. A new automotive industry high-level group, [GEAR 2030](#), was created to reinforce the car industry's competitiveness and technological leadership.

A [Communication](#) set out how the European steel sector can overcome its challenges with the help of the EU.

The Commission continued to put in place the building blocks of the Capital Markets Union, based on the 2015 Action Plan.

The fight against tax avoidance remained an important priority in 2016. In January the Commission put forward an Anti-Tax Avoidance Package, including two legislative proposals that were adopted by the Council. In April it presented a proposal on public country-by-country reporting by multinational companies, which was followed in October by a major Corporate Tax Reform Package.

THE EU IN 2016 PRIORITY 5

Economic integration through a completed Economic and Monetary Union brings the benefits of greater size, internal efficiency and robustness to the EU economy as a whole and to the economies of the individual Member States. This in turn offers opportunities for economic stability, higher growth and more employment — outcomes of direct benefit to EU citizens. While there is still much progress to be made, work towards completing the Economic and Monetary Union moved ahead apace through many European Commission initiatives in 2016.

The major challenges continued to be further reducing the number of people exposed to the risk of social exclusion

and supporting the trend of falling unemployment. Though still too high, unemployment reached a 7-year low of 9.8 % in November in the euro area.

Moreover, the EU continued working towards the completion of the Banking Union as a key building block of Economic and Monetary Union.

Progress was made throughout 2016 on streamlining the procedures of the **European Semester**, the EU's cycle of economic and fiscal policy coordination. Recommendations adopted during the 2016 Semester process provide guidance for all Member States and the euro area as a whole, and aim to promote policies

and reforms that create more jobs, increase social fairness and convergence and inspire growth by supporting investment strategies.

The 2017 cycle of the European Semester was launched in mid November. The Commission reiterated its call to Member States to redouble their efforts in line with the principles of the 'virtuous triangle' of boosting investment, pursuing structural reforms and ensuring responsible fiscal policies, and, in doing so, to put the focus on a fair and just relationship between the individual and society and delivering more inclusive growth.

Commission Vice-President Valdis Dombrovskis is interviewed at the New York Stock Exchange, United States, 5 October 2016.



'Over the next 5 years, I want to continue with the reform of our Economic and Monetary Union to preserve the stability of our single currency and to enhance the convergence of economic, fiscal and labour market policies between the Member States that share the single currency.'

Jean-Claude Juncker, political guidelines, 15 July 2014

A deeper and fairer Economic and Monetary Union

THE EU IN 2016 PRIORITY 6

Barack Obama, President of the United States, and Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, give a joint press conference at the NATO Summit, Warsaw, Poland, 8 July 2016.

'Under my presidency, the Commission will negotiate a reasonable and balanced trade agreement with the United States of America, in a spirit of mutual and reciprocal benefits and transparency ... I will also be very clear that I will not sacrifice Europe's safety, health, social and data protection standards or our cultural diversity on the altar of free trade.'

Jean-Claude Juncker, political guidelines, 15 July 2014



A reasonable and balanced free trade agreement with the United States

Open trade strengthens the EU's economy and creates jobs. It also provides consumers in the EU with more choice and buying power and helps firms compete abroad.

In 2016 over 31 million jobs in the EU were supported by exports to non-EU countries.

The EU–United States economic relationship is the world's biggest. Every day the two trade goods and services worth €2 billion, so every trade and investment barrier that is removed could bring significant economic gains.

Agreeing on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership — one of the European Commission's 10 priorities — will not be a deal at any price, however. The EU will safeguard regulators' independence, the

precautionary principle and governments' right to regulate to protect their people and the environment.

The EU is ready to engage with the new administration in the United States following the natural pause in negotiations after the presidential elections held in November.

Throughout 2016 the EU sought to maintain the **global trading system** and to ensure it continued to adapt to a fast-changing world. It played an active role in the World Trade Organisation to keep the global economy open for trade in a way that reflects and respects the needs and concerns of developing countries. EU trade policy also sought to ensure that others respected international trade rules and that trade was a force for sustainable development.

For the EU, free trade must be fair. That is why significant steps were taken in the course of the year to have robust trade-defence instruments in place.



An area of justice and fundamental rights based on mutual trust

In 2016 the Security Union gave an urgent and firm response to terrorism, while progress was also made on the rights of citizens and internal market issues in the field of civil justice.

The EU is currently facing a very serious terrorist threat. Attacks on European soil, returning foreign terrorist fighters and the evolving nature of terrorism have presented EU Member States with new and unprecedented challenges.

The European Commission therefore insisted on developing a genuine and effective Security Union. A series of measures were taken in 2016 to address all dimensions of the terrorist threat: the prevention of radicalisation, including online; the criminalisation

and detection of travel for terrorist activities and support for terrorists; the exchange of information; tackling terrorism financing; cutting access to firearms and explosives; and supporting partner countries, particularly around the Mediterranean.

Elsewhere, the EU agreed on new Directives to improve the procedural rights of citizens involved in criminal proceedings. In the area of civil justice, legislation was introduced to help families and couples by simplifying family and civil law.

As regards corporate governance, rules were agreed to improve shareholders' rights. The Commission also proposed more proportionate remuneration rules for credit institutions and investment firms.

'I intend to make use of the prerogatives of the Commission to uphold, within our field of competence, our shared values, the rule of law and fundamental rights, while taking due account of the diversity of constitutional and cultural traditions of the 28 Member States.'

Jean-Claude Juncker, political guidelines, 15 July 2014

The Commission took action to improve the protection of fundamental rights in the areas of data protection, the sharing of personal information and consumers' rights, and stepped up efforts to boost gender equality, fight discrimination and eradicate human trafficking.

THE EU IN 2016 PRIORITY 8

In 2015 and 2016 the EU experienced an unprecedented influx of refugees and migrants. According to Eurostat more than 1 million people applied for international protection in the European Union in 2015, and the final figure for 2016 is also expected to exceed 1 million. Most of them were fleeing from war and terror in Syria and other countries.

Numerous new measures were introduced in 2016 in order to deal with the situation. These included focusing on rescue operations while carrying out border surveillance with the support of EU agencies and saving more lives at sea; securing the EU's external

borders, notably through the 'hotspot' approach; stepping up efforts in the relocation and resettlement of people in need of protection; and developing new measures in the fight against migrant smuggling. In addition, the Commission proposed revised EU asylum legislation and increased its efforts to ensure the full and correct implementation of the existing EU legislative framework.

The EU also focused on opening new channels for legal migration. The aim was to improve the EU's ability to attract and retain highly skilled workers and better integrate non-EU nationals, to enhance the competitiveness of the

EU's economy and to cope with demographic challenges.

2016 also saw increasing cooperation with countries of origin and transit to help them effectively address the root causes of irregular migration.

Finally, through the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and the Internal Security Fund, the EU increased the amount of financial support it provides to Member States for the development of a common approach to migration and the efficient management of migration flows.



Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos at the launch of the European Border and Coast Guard, Kapitan Andreevo, Bulgaria, 6 October 2016.

Towards a new policy on migration

'The recent terrible events in the Mediterranean have shown us that Europe needs to manage migration better, in all aspects. This is first of all a humanitarian imperative. I am convinced that we must work closely together in a spirit of solidarity.'

Jean-Claude Juncker, political guidelines, 15 July 2014

THE EU IN 2016 PRIORITY 9

High Representative/Commission Vice-President Federica Mogherini and Jens Stoltenberg, Secretary General of NATO, give a joint press conference following the meeting of NATO Ministers for Foreign Affairs, Brussels, 6 December 2016.



A stronger global actor

'We need a stronger Europe when it comes to foreign policy. The Ukraine crisis and the worrying situation in the Middle East show how important it is that Europe is united externally.'

Jean-Claude Juncker, political guidelines, 15 July 2014

The EU needs a strong common foreign policy to respond efficiently to global challenges, including the crises in its neighbourhood, project its values and contribute to peace and prosperity in the world.

With that in mind the EU put promoting international peace and security, development cooperation, human rights and responding to humanitarian crises at the heart of its foreign and security policies throughout 2016.

Internationally, the EU used its diplomatic and economic influence to press for political solutions to conflicts in Syria, Libya and Ukraine. It continued to work intensively to foster the normalisation of relations between Kosovo and Serbia.

In spring 2016 High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security

Policy/Commission Vice-President Federica Mogherini and several other European Commissioners visited Iran to launch discussions on cooperation on trade, investment, energy and climate change, and human rights.

A [Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy](#) was presented in June by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini. The strategy outlines priorities and objectives to maximise the EU's ability to tackle international challenges. The follow-up on security and defence has been particularly swift, leading to the adoption of substantial conclusions by the Council of the European Union in November and proposals for EU-NATO cooperation in December. The European Commission also proposed a European Defence Action Plan in November with the aim of

setting up a European Defence Fund. This comprehensive defence package was endorsed by the European Council in December, with concrete follow-up tasks for 2017.

During the year the EU began implementing the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa was set up and closer cooperation on migration was agreed with five African countries.

Humanitarian crises continued to take a heavy toll, and in 2016 the EU allocated relief assistance of over €2.1 billion for food, shelter, protection and healthcare to 120 million people in over 80 countries.

THE EU IN 2016 PRIORITY 10

In September 2016 President Juncker's State of the Union address took stock of the achievements of the past year and presented his priorities for the year ahead. He outlined how the Commission will address the most pressing challenges, such as migration, terrorism, economic growth and employment. The doubling of the duration and value of the Investment Plan was at the forefront of the Commission's proposed actions and was widely supported by the Parliament and the Council.

Two days after the speech, all EU Member States except the

United Kingdom gathered in Bratislava, Slovakia, to begin a political reflection on the further development of an EU of 27 Member States. It followed a national referendum on the United Kingdom's EU membership, held in June, which resulted in a vote to leave the EU.

The [Bratislava Declaration and Roadmap](#), agreed by EU leaders, set out the objectives until March 2017. It included restoring full control of external borders, ensuring internal security and fighting terrorism, strengthening EU cooperation on external

security and defence, boosting the Single Market and offering better opportunities for young people.

Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament (right), awards the 2016 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought to Nadia Murad Basee Taha and Lamiya Aji Bashar, Strasbourg, France, 13 December 2016.



'The proposal and election of the President of the European Commission in the light of the outcome of the European Parliament elections is certainly important, but only a first step in making the European Union as a whole more democratic. A European Commission under my leadership will be committed to filling the special partnership with the European Parliament ... I am also committed to enhanced transparency when it comes to contact with stakeholders and lobbyists.'

Jean-Claude Juncker, political guidelines, 15 July 2014

A Union of democratic change

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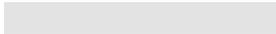
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The European Union



 Member States of the European Union (2017)
 Candidate countries and potential candidates

