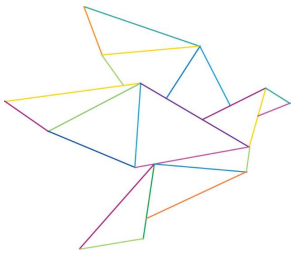


The State of the Union 2017: Catching the wind in our sails



European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker today delivered his 2017 State of the Union Address, before the Members of the European Parliament in Strasbourg, presenting his priorities for the year ahead and outlining his vision for how the European Union could evolve by 2025 (see [full speech](#)). He presented a Roadmap for a More United, Stronger and More Democratic Union (see [Roadmap Factsheet](#)).

European Commission President **Jean-Claude Juncker** said today: *“The wind is back in Europe’s sails. But we will go nowhere unless we catch that wind. (...) We should chart the direction for the future. As Mark Twain wrote, years from now we will be more disappointed by the things we did not do, than by the ones we did. Now is the time to build a more united, stronger and more democratic Europe for 2025.”*

President Juncker’s speech in the European Parliament was accompanied by the adoption of **concrete initiatives** by the European Commission on trade, investment screening, cybersecurity, industry, data and democracy, putting words immediately into action.

A **series of [factsheets](#)** published today also expand on some of the key elements touched upon in the President’s speech.

Key Messages of the 2017 State of the Union Address

Wind in Our Sails

“Ten years since crisis struck, Europe’s economy is finally bouncing back. And with it, our confidence. Our EU27 leaders, the Parliament and the Commission are putting the Europe back in our Union. Together, we are putting the Union back in our Union.”

Staying Course

“As we look to the future, we cannot let ourselves be blown off course. (...) We must finish what we started in Bratislava.”

Trade: *“Partners across the globe have started lining up at our door to conclude trade agreements with us. (...) Today, we are proposing to open trade negotiations with Australia and New Zealand.”*

"Let me say once and for all: we are not naïve free traders. Europe must always defend its strategic interests. This is why today we are proposing a new EU framework for investment screening."

Industry: *"I am proud of our car industry. But I am shocked when consumers are knowingly and deliberately misled. I call on the car industry to come clean and make it right."*

"The new Industrial Policy Strategy we are presenting today will help our industries stay or become the world leaders in innovation, digitisation and decarbonisation."

Fight against Climate Change: *"Set against the collapse of ambition in the United States, Europe will ensure we make our planet great again. It is the shared heritage of all of humanity."*

Cybersecurity: *"Cyber-attacks can be more dangerous to the stability of democracies and economies than guns and tanks. (...) Today, the Commission is proposing new tools, including a European Cybersecurity Agency, to help defend us."*

Migration: *"Europe is and must remain the continent of solidarity where those fleeing persecution can find refuge."*

"We have common borders but Member States that by geography are the first in line cannot be left alone to protect them. Common borders and common protection must go hand in hand."

"I cannot talk about migration without paying strong tribute to Italy for their tireless and noble work. (...) Italy is saving Europe's honour in the Mediterranean."

European Solidarity Corps (see [Factsheet](#)): *"I am particularly proud of the young Europeans (...) who are serving in our new European Solidarity Corps. They are bringing European solidarity to life."*

Africa (see [Factsheet](#)): *"We must also show solidarity with Africa. Africa is a noble and young continent, the cradle of humanity. Our €2.7 billion EU-Africa Trust Fund is creating employment opportunities across the continent."*

Setting Sail

"Now is the time to draw the first conclusions from the debate [on the future of Europe]. Time to move from reflection to action. From debate to decision. Today I would like to present you my view: my own 'scenario six', if you will."

"For me, Europe is more than just a single market. More than money, more than the euro. It was always about values."

East to West: *"Europe extends from Vigo to Varna. From Spain to Bulgaria. East to West: Europe must breathe with both lungs. Otherwise our continent will struggle for air."*

Posting of Workers (see [Factsheet](#)): *“In a Union of equals, there can be no second class workers. Workers should earn the same pay for the same work in the same place.”*

A European Labour Authority (see [Factsheet](#)): *“It seems absurd to have a Banking Authority to police banking standards, but no common Labour Authority for ensuring fairness in our single market. We will create one.”*

Dual Foods (see [Factsheet](#)): *“In a Union of equals, there can be no second class consumers. I will not accept that in some parts of Europe, consumers are sold food of lower quality than in other countries (...) Slovaks do not deserve less fish in their fish fingers. Hungarians less meat in their meals. Czechs less cacao in their chocolate.”*

Rule of Law: *“In Europe the strength of the law replaced the law of the strong. (...)The rule of law is not optional in the European Union. It is a must.”*

“The judgements of the Court have to be respected by all. To undermine them, or to undermine the independence of national courts, is to strip citizens of their fundamental rights.”

Schengen area: *“If we want to strengthen the protection of our external borders, then we need to open the Schengen area to Bulgaria and Romania immediately. We should also allow Croatia to become a full Schengen member once it meets all the criteria. “*

Euro area (see [Factsheet](#)): *“If we want the euro to unite rather than divide our continent, then it should be more than the currency of a select group of countries. The euro is meant to be the single currency of the European Union as a whole.”*

Enlargement: *“We must maintain a credible enlargement perspective for the Western Balkans (...) It is clear that there will be no further enlargement during [this] mandate. (...) But thereafter the European Union will be greater than 27 in number.”*

Turkey: *“Turkey has been taking giant strides away from the European Union for some time.”*

“Journalists belong in newsrooms not in prisons. They belong where freedom of expression reigns.”

“The call I make to those in power in Turkey is this: Let our journalists go.”

Qualified Majority Voting for Tax: *“I am strongly in favour of moving to qualified majority voting for decisions on the common consolidated corporate tax base, on fair taxes for the digital industry and on the financial transaction tax.”*

European Minister of Economy and Finance (see [Factsheet](#)): *“We need a European Minister of Economy and Finance: a European Minister that promotes and*

supports structural reforms in our Member States.”

“We do not need parallel structures (...) The Parliament of the euro area is the European Parliament.”

The fight against terrorism: *“I call for a European intelligence unit that ensures data concerning terrorists and foreign fighters are automatically shared among intelligence services and with the police.”*

A stronger global actor: *“I want Member States to look at which foreign policy decisions could be moved from unanimity to qualified majority voting. The Treaty already provides for this.”*

Better Regulation (see [Factsheet](#)): *“We should not meddle in the everyday lives of European citizens (...) We should not march in with a stream of new initiatives or seek ever growing competences. We should give back competences to Member States where it makes sense.”*

“I will be setting up a Subsidiarity and Proportionality Task Force as of this month to take a very critical look at all policy areas to make sure we are only acting where the EU adds value.”

Institutional Reform: *“Europe would function better if we were to merge the Presidents of the European Commission and the European Council (...) Europe would be easier to understand if one captain was steering the ship (...) Having a single President would better reflect the true nature of our European Union as both a Union of States and a Union of citizens.”*

“If you want to strengthen European democracy, then you cannot reverse the democratic progress seen with the creation of lead candidates – ‘Spitzenkandidaten’.”

Roadmap

“Our future cannot remain a scenario (...) We have to prepare the Union of tomorrow, today.”

“On 30 March 2019, we will be a Union of 27. I suggest that we prepare for this moment well, amongst the 27 and within the EU institutions.”

“My hope is that on 30 March 2019, Europeans will wake up to a Union where we all stand by our values. Where all Member States firmly respect the rule of law. (...) Where we have shored up the foundations of our Economic and Monetary Union so that we can defend our single currency in good times and bad, without having to call on external help. (...) Where a single President leads the work of the Commission and the European Council, having been elected after a democratic Europe-wide election campaign.”

“We started to fix the roof. But we must now complete the job now that the sun is shining and whilst it still is. (...) So let’s throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the harbour. And catch the trade winds in our sails.”

Background

Every year in September, the President of the European Commission delivers his State of the Union Address before the European Parliament, taking stock of achievements of the past year and presenting priorities for the year ahead. The President also sets out how the Commission will address the most pressing challenges the European Union is facing. The speech is followed by a plenary debate. This kick-starts the dialogue with the European Parliament and Council to prepare the Commission Work Programme for the following year.

In addition, President Juncker and First Vice-President Timmermans sent today a Letter of Intent to the President of the European Parliament and the Presidency of the Council that sets out in detail the actions the Commission intends to take by means of legislation and other initiatives until the end of the following year (2018 in this case). This is specifically foreseen in the 2010 Framework Agreement on relations between the European Parliament and the European Commission.

For More Information

[2017 State of the Union brochure](#) including:

- The authorised State of the Union Address
- The Letter of Intent
- Progress on the Commission's ten priorities
- Roadmap for a More United, Stronger and More Democratic European Union

[State of the Union 2017 web page](#)

[The 10 political priorities of the European Commission](#)