



# FUTURE OF EUROPE OBSERVER

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This issue of the Future of Europe Observer monitors and assesses the on-going work of the EU Commission on the basis of its ten priorities included in the 2015 work programme.



**No progress**



**Progress being made**



**Achievement of objective**

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## Future of Europe Observer

accompanies the debate on governance and regulation in the European Union. Authors are ZEI Scholars, Master of European Studies Fellows and Alumni.

## The Juncker Commission: First Year Review

2015 ends for the European Union amidst the biggest crisis since the beginning of European integration. The external migration pressure on Europe has caused shock waves across the EU. Key parameters of EU law have been suspended. Blame games have replaced the search for decent, pragmatic and speedy solutions. The loss of control of national politics and the blockage of a stronger EU approach by many of their actions and non-actions has intensified frustration among citizens about the EU and politics in general. Populism is on the rise, most notably on the right spectrum under the heading of xenophobia, but likewise on the left spectrum under the heading of anti-capitalism. The huge wave of refugees has met the EU unprepared although the root causes and many parameters – including the death of people in the Mediterranean and in the Atlantic Ocean off the coasts of the Canary Islands - have been known since more than twenty years. The Nobel Peace Prize winner of 2012 has failed its own values, principles and legal norms because national resistance to common policies or unilateral national decisions undermining commonly agreed norms have failed the eternal promise of European cooperation and integration. 2015 was an *annus horribilis* for Europe, ending with 11/13, the first coordinated suicide terror attack on all of Europe. The only reasonable answer: solidarity, coordination, integration, EU.

And yet, 2015 was also the first full year in office of the current leadership of the EU. The EU Commission under Jean-Claude Juncker has persistently continued its work programme, jointly agreed upon with the European Parliament and the European

Council. The work programme of the most political EU Commission ever and the readiness to constructively cooperate with the other key organs of the EU has met public resistance by Euro-skeptics of all sorts across the EU. And yet, achievements took place and right directions for the implementation of joint policy decisions have occurred. In all fairness: the European Commission, the European Parliament and the European Council have mastered a successful year 2015 - if there had not been the refugee crisis. Former crises in integration had their origin in internal failures, blockages or clashing interests. The migration crisis originates in external constellations in many ways beyond the control of any institution or actor in the EU. But all the more, the EU and ALL its member states must deliver where they are in charge. Only a working interplay between member states and EU institutions can generate the security which is necessary across the EU to fight an escalation of citizen's fear and loss of political control. Otherwise, for the first time in history, a crisis *in* integration could become a crisis *of* integration. The price for all EU citizens to pay would be extraordinarily high. Efforts to avoid this escalation of failure and to overcome the burdening myopia and helplessness of today will dominate 2016. For each EU member state and for all EU institutions, 2016 will be a year of hard choices: returning to EU common goods or sinking further into an abyss of failure and paralysis.

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# Commission Priority 1: Boosting Jobs, Growth and Investment

## Goals and Key Players

Announced as its number one priority, the European Commission seeks to foster economic growth and increase employment by a diverse range of policy initiatives. A crucial building block consists of a significant increase in investments by means of an European investment plan, which is expected to generate economic activity resulting in new jobs. Key players in this field are: the European Commission (Vice-President Jyrki Katainen), the European Council, the European Parliament, the European Investment Bank as well as member states and private companies.

## Progress in 2015

In January 2015, the Commission put forward the plan's first legislative proposal - a draft regulation on a new European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), which was adopted by the Council on the 25th of June 2015, following approval by the European Parliament.

The core of the Commission's economic strategy encompasses three key elements: As the first one, EFSI is supposed to lower default risks for private investors, which have been identified as the main reason for consistently low investment rates. The fund will use public money to give credit protection to the financing provided by the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European investment fund (EIF). A leveraged amount of 315 billion euro is expected to be invested in strategic long term projects in fields such as energy, transport, broadband, education, R&D as well as in financing of SMEs during the next three years (2015-17). The second element is the establishment of a continuous project pipeline of viable projects. Finally, the initiative is intended to identify and overcome barriers to investment.

A principal critique of the Juncker plan was that it does not apply fresh money but only changes the labels of funds that were previously allocated to other initiatives. In this light it can be seen as a success of the Commission that China recently (as the first non EU country) started to express interest in the plan. However, it remains unclear how and how much China will contribute.

To achieve the Europe 2020 targets, member states committed themselves to develop national targets and implement own policy initiatives. The Com-

mission sees its role in facilitating coordination and to provide recommendations for macroeconomic and structural reforms. Meanwhile, the Commission decided to streamline the European Semester, focusing on employment and convergence.

Due to the urgency of the youth unemployment situation in several member states, the Commission put forward a proposal for a regulation to increase financing of operational programmes of the Youth Employment Initiative which was adopted on the 20th of May 2015 by the legislators.

### European Commission Work Programme: 2015



The 315€ billion Investment Package



Promoting Labour Integration and Employability



Reviewing the Europe 2020 strategy

## Conclusion

The Commission was able to set up a number of promising initiatives. Most prominently, the investment plan was put into action within six months and some projects already received funding. On the other hand, member states and companies are partly reluctant to give financial commitments as they find bureaucratic burdens to be too high. With re-

gard to the digital single market initiative, progress is slower than expected, e.g. a proposal on the copyright reform was postponed. Progress in the capital markets union (CMU), in particular reducing the dependence on bank funding, is unclear.

## Outlook 2016

Despite a number of promising initiatives by the Commission, making further progress will require considerable efforts of coordination with member states. The Commission is right when it stresses employment and growth through increased investments and the completion of the common markets (financial, digital etc.). Yet, unemployment rates are still high with an EU average of around 10% during 2015. The outlook becomes particularly severe when looking at some national rates, e.g. jobless rates of above 20% in Greece and Spain and above 10% in France, Italy and Portugal. Thus, we observe a rather heterogeneous economic development.

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# Commission Priority 2: Digital Single Market

## Goals and Key Players

The digital economy is at the heart of Europe's desired position as an economically strong, globally competitive and technologically innovative actor and partner. As the EU's worldwide market share in the digital sector is expected to fall or stay flat, Juncker established the digital single market as a top priority for his term. With the aim of curtailing regulatory walls and moving from 28 national digital markets to a single EU one, this policy area will feature prominently in the EU priorities until 2019.

Built on the three pillars of - 1) better access of digital goods, 2) conditions to level the playing field for innovation and 3) maximisation of growth, the digital single market strategy sets targeted actions to be delivered by the end of 2016. The key Commissioners in charge are Andrus Ansip (Digital Single Market) and Günther H. Oettinger (Digital Economy & Society), who look into the four major segments of the digital sector consisting of telecommunications, multiple-system operators (MSO), broadcasting, specifically over-the-top (OTT) content and Internet service providers (ISP) as well as operating systems (OS).

## Progress in 2015

In order to build the digital single market, the Commission has outlined a detailed plan setting out 16 initiatives under the three pillars to lay the framework for the future. It is noteworthy that the Commission successfully brought down barriers in the telecommunications sector by ensuring net neutrality and eliminating roaming charges as of June 2017. Furthermore public discussions have started for plans to harmonise the copyright law, in particular banning "geo-blocking" and defining the role of platforms in the online economy. On top of that, a new transatlantic dimension has been added to the digital single market by finalising the data protection "Umbrella Agreement" with the United States. The Commission is on its way to provide high incentives to building digital networks by creating the right regulatory environment for private investments in the telecom sector and establishing various public funding instruments for digital

infrastructure in rural areas under the cohesion funds.

## Conclusion

Given the potential and the importance of information technology for future economic success in Europe, it is hardly surprising that the digital single market was placed second on the list of Juncker's priorities. Currently only 4% of online services in the EU are cross-border in nature. By promoting digital services, the EU estimates to add 415 billion euro annually to its economic output and create new jobs. Taken together, the series of measures will not only strengthen

the single market, but will also enhance freedom of expression, media pluralism and access to information.

## Outlook 2016

With adapting to market regulations, ensuring consistent standards, modernising radio spectrum policy, enabling standardised services and guaranteeing network quality, the Commission aims to meet the following objectives:

- Rapidly concluding negotiations on common EU data protection rules.
- Giving more ambition to the ongoing reform of telecom rules.
- Modifying copyright rules to reflect new technologies.
- Simplifying consumer rules for online purchases.
- Making it easier for innovators to start their own company.

As an outlook for 2016, the Commission needs to handle overlapping issues regarding the development of the digital single market and trade agreements such as TTIP. This will require to effectively push back existing national regulatory silos within media and digital services even more.

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European Commission  
Work Programme: 2015



A Digital Single Market Package



# Commission Priority 3: Energy Union and Climate

## Goals and Key Players

In February 2015 the European Commission released a “Framework Strategy for a Resilient Energy Union with a Forward-Looking Climate Change Policy”, the Energy Union Package. The goal of the Package is to give EU consumers (households and businesses) secure, sustainable, competitive and affordable energy. To accomplish it, the Commission introduced a strategy with five mutually-reinforcing and closely interrelated dimensions - energy security, internal energy market, energy efficiency, decarbonisation as well as research and innovation. The important players in this agenda are both EU member states and institutions as readiness to approve new legislation and openness to negotiate is essential. The key Commissioners responsible are Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič (Energy Union) and Miguel Arias Cañete (Climate Action & Energy).

## Progress in 2015

During the first half of the year when Latvia held the presidency of the Council of the European Union, the Energy Union made good progress. Some of the steps included an agreement signed in June between the European Commission and the Baltic Sea region countries, aiming at modernising and strengthening the Baltic Energy Market Interconnection Plan. During the same time, twelve European countries signed a declaration for regional cooperation on security of electricity supply within the European internal market. The second half of the year has brought into focus the revision of regulation on security of gas supply and the “Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) and Storage Strategy”. More importantly, the 2nd list of Projects of Common Interest (PCI) should help the security of supply by funding the projects which are set to connect the EU countries via electricity and gas grids to ensure diversification of sources. However the debate is still very much ongoing due to the fact that some states might not be willing to cooperate and do not see the need for an internal market, in particular the ones, who prima-

rily receive the gas from Russia. With the news of Nord Stream extension, which is planned for 2019, the debate to interconnect the European countries further deepens.

However, the Commission is still focused on the goal of a single market area. Compelling the member states to agree to the Energy Union in principle will increase the probability of more pragmatic and less politicised progress in energy market regulation. And the further integrated national electricity and gas markets will become, the more important EU-wide governance of energy policy might be in the long term. For this, the European institutions must prevail in continuous development of the Energy Union.

## Conclusion

The Energy Union’s idea is to remove the physical and regulatory barriers to the free flow of electricity, oil and gas across the bloc. However, it is questionable whether the Commission can persuade the member states to give up little to gain more - an EU-wide integrated energy market.

internal

## Outlook 2016

The year 2016 will mark some significant steps with key legislative proposals on market design and security of electricity and gas supply as well as a new strategy for LNG and gas storage. The review of the Energy Efficiency Directive and the revision of the Renewable Energy Directive will be scrutinised by the European Parliament and national capitals and influenced by the outcome of the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference taking place in Paris. Nevertheless, these measures are only laying the foundations of the Energy Union, which should be completed by 2019 when Juncker leaves office.

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### European Commission Work Programme: 2015



Strategic Framework for Energy Union



A Multilateral Response to Climate Change

# Commission Priority 4: Internal Market

## Goals and Key Players

Almost precisely one year after the November 2014 inauguration of the incumbent European Commission the timing seems to be appropriate to take stock of what has been done or set in motion from the ambitious plans regarding the Internal Market. The key pillars of this priority have been the launching of an investment plan in cooperation with the European Investment Bank (EIB), the establishment of a Capital Markets Union, the harmonisation of corporate tax regimes and the stimulation of labour markets by a Labour Mobility Package. The key Commissioners in charge are Elżbieta Bienkowska (Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs) and Valdis Dombrovskis (Euro & Social Dialogue).

## Progress in 2015

As one of the first achievements, the investment package was set up in an extremely tight time-frame of less than six months and is now operating under the newly established European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI). The main idea is to foster investment projects by providing public money as guarantees, thereby motivating reluctant private investors to come aboard. The primary challenge at the same time is – according to the President of the EIB, Werner Hoyer – the “lack of confidence, bureaucracy and a lack of good projects”.

Building a Capital Markets Union aims to ease the burdens of money raising from capital markets – a financing channel that lags far behind its potential in Europe. This method entails efforts in legislative and regulatory harmonisation on many levels “including increasing the transparency, reliability and comparability of information and addressing financial stability concerns” – and is thus likely to unfold its beneficial effects only in the long run. The Commission took on the process with issuing an Action Plan on the 30th of September 2015, calling for a broader variety of funding sources to share financial risks and make companies as well as EU citizens less vulnerable to banking contractions.

The Action Plan regarding the restructuring of the corporate taxation system has already been presented during summer 2015 with some progress becoming visible in the beginning of October, when member states agreed unanimously to automatically exchange information on cross-border tax rulings as part of the Tax Transparency Package.

To realise the completion of the Internal Market, the Commission furthermore intends to stimulate intra-EU mobility of workers by implementing the Labour Mobility Package. The comprehensive orientation debate on it revolved around the balance between fair rules for posting of workers and the avoidance of social dumping.

**European Commission**  
**Work Programme: 2015**

-  An Internal Market Strategy
-  A Labour Mobility Package
-  Capital Markets Union Action Plan
-  A Framework for Financial Institution Resolution
-  An Aviation Package

## Conclusion

The first year of the Juncker-Commission has yielded new ideas and approaches also with regards to a ‘deeper and fairer’ Internal Market. Their implementation, however, is being slowed down by a number of unprecedented crises in and around the EU. “This is not the time for business as usual” – as Mr. Juncker put it in his State of the Union 2015 speech.

## Outlook 2016

In 2016, the Commission will have to present concrete measures aimed at fostering the growth of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Furthermore, the goal will be to improve the free-flow of services across borders by putting the Single Market Strategy into action. This will require fine-tuning of Single Market legislation and monitoring the implementation in member states, as for example eliminating barriers to cross-border road transport. For the future success of the Internal Market one precondition is essential: The Commission must not let crises management become its business as usual.

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# Commission Priority 5: Economic and Monetary Union

## Goals and Key Players

The deepening of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) represents a significant step in the integration of EU economies. Key EU players intend to accomplish a genuine EMU. These include the Presidents of the following institutions: Jean-Claude Juncker (European Commission), Donald Tusk (European Council), Jeroen Dijsselbloem (Eurogroup), Mario Draghi (European Central Bank) and Martin Schulz (European Parliament). They cooperate in key policy areas:

- An Economic Union aiming at convergence, prosperity and social cohesion.
- A Financial Union which is needed to guarantee the integrity of the common currency across the Monetary Union including the completion of the Banking Union and the Capital Markets Union.
- An integrated Fiscal Union, i.e. a comprehensive framework for sound and integrated fiscal policies.
- A real Political Union focusing on democratic accountability, legitimacy and institutional strengthening.

## Progress in 2015

A key document in the priority of “Economic and Monetary Integration” is the “Five President’s Report”. In it, a roadmap towards the completion of the EMU is put forward. The Report differentiates two stages for turning the vision of a completed EMU into reality, which the Commission started implementing: In a first stage – “Deepening by doing” – the package of measures entails the creation of national competitiveness boards and an improved annual cycle of economic policy guidance and surveillance within a revised European Semester. Furthermore, the implementation of the Macroeconomic Imbalance Procedure is intended to be strengthened. Concerning the Financial Union, the Commission has specified steps towards completing the Banking Union, notably via a common Deposit Insurance System and advancing an effective and direct bank recapitalisation in the

European Stability Mechanism. The Banking Union includes the Single Supervisory Mechanism and the Single Resolution Mechanism. Besides, the European Systemic Risk Board shall be reinforced. With regard to the Fiscal Union, an independent, advisory European Fiscal Board will be established to evaluate the implementation of the EU fiscal framework, providing ad-hoc advice on the fiscal stance appropriate for the whole euro area at the request of the Commission President. As for the Stability and Growth Pact, the Commission specified how it will apply the rules, aiming to encourage structural reforms, investments

and fiscal responsibility. Stage two of the “Five President’s Report” envisages the final completion of the EMU Architecture by 2025 at the latest. Last but not least, the Report proposes a more unified external representation of the euro area in international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund.

## Conclusion

Since the outset of the financial crisis, the EMU has been strengthened, particularly with the launch of the Banking Union. However, the EMU remains incomplete due to its existing political shortcomings. As a consequence, the “Five President’s Report” laid down a roadmap containing two stages towards the completion of the EMU. All in all, the Commission will adopt all necessary measures – building on existing instruments – to prepare the smooth transition from stage one to stage two.

## Outlook 2016

It will be crucial that the Competitiveness Boards and the European Fiscal Board become operational in 2016. Furthermore, the Commission needs to facilitate a wide and open consultation on completing the EMU, including public debates in 2016. In mid-2016, the Commission plans to establish an expert group in order to explore the legal, political and economic preconditions which are necessary to accomplish the goals set in the Report. The competitiveness boards and the European Fiscal Board should be operational by 2016.

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### European Commission

#### Work Programme: 2015



A Package on Deepening Economic and Monetary Union



Directive: the automatic exchange of information on cross-border tax ruling



Reviewing the Europe 2020 strategy

# Commission Priority 6: EU-US Free Trade

## Goals and Key Players

Negotiations with the United States on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) are a key political priority for EU institutions. At stake are major economic benefits for the EU and the US, not to mention the geopolitical dimension of a large transatlantic market able to impose its standards and compete with major emerging economies such as China or India. As for the key players within the EU, Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker and Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström are leading the negotiations under the scrutiny of a centre-left German MEP, Bernd Lange, Chairman of the International Trade Committee (INTA).

TTIP, however, is also the most controversial policy on the EU political agenda. A considerable number of NGOs, citizen groups and political parties are opposed to free import of genetically-modified organisms (GMOs) from America, the dilution of Europe's environmental and food safety standards as well as the provisions on Investor-to-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) allowing companies to take legal action against governments.

## Progress in 2015

Advocates of an ambitious agreement have been rather unsuccessful to convince a critical public opinion. EU institutions have attempted to address these concerns, multiplying political statements, indicating 'red lines' that the EU would not trespass. A French minister blamed the US for being unwilling to compromise. But even the most enthusiastic free-marketers in the Parliament admit that standing in favour of TTIP in the current climate is an uphill struggle.

Adopting a resolution on TTIP was a crucial test for the 'grand coalition' between centre-right and centre-left in the Parliament. The text supports negotiations but calls for a revised investment protection mechanism. MEPs' concerns seem to have been heard as Commissi-

oner Malmström has released a proposal for a New Investment Court System to replace the ISDS mechanism in ongoing and future free trade negotiations.

## Conclusion

Negotiations have been progressing slowly yet with more transparency, as the Commission has published its mandate, most position papers and proposals in order to counter complaints about an opaque and undemocratic process. Achieving a deal before the end of the year is no longer the plan, even if the US has now concluded talks on a Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

The apparently successful eleventh round of talks in October in Miami just came to an end.

## Outlook 2016

But the discussion on the most delicate issues, such as tariffs on agricultural products, will be continued throughout 2016. A next round of talks is planned for February.

As for 2016, the Commission is keeping TTIP as a 'top priority' in its new work programme, aiming at a successful adoption. Nevertheless, as the European Parliament must approve international trade agreements, it is uncertain whether the EU can pick its way through the political minefield in 2016.

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European Commission  
Work Programme: 2015



A Trade and Investment  
Strategy for Jobs and Growth



# Commission Priority 7: Justice and Fundamental Rights

## Goals and Key Players

Within the remit of Justice and Fundamental Rights, the European Commission has set five overall objectives in order to secure the rule of law whilst adopting a tough stance against all sorts of discrimination:

- Prevent terrorism and counter radicalisation;
- Fight organized crime;
- Fight cybercrime;
- Enable citizens and companies to defend their rights abroad better;
- Push for an EU legislation against discrimination.

The key players responsible for handling the policy priority include the First Vice-President of the Commission, Frans Timmermans (Better Regulation, Interinstitutional Relations, the Rule of Law and the Charter of Fundamental Rights) as well as the Commissioners Věra Jourová (Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality) and Dimitris Avramopoulos (Migration, Home Affairs, Citizenship).

## Progress in 2015

In the course of this year, progress has been made on several fields: The Commission presented the EU Agenda on Security, which forms the basis for cooperation and joint action between the member states in the next five years. A strong emphasis has been put on the exchange of data and police and judicial cooperation. In this context, the Commission adopted new measures to fight terrorism, with improvements made to the Schengen Information System, which allows the national authorities to exchange valuable information about persons who joined terrorist groups outside the EU. Measures were also taken to counter radicalisation, cut terrorist financing and enhance the capacities of Europol. As part of strengthening police cooperation, Europol launched the European Union Internet Referral Unit to counter terrorist propaganda. Both the reform of Europol and Eurojust along with the overhaul of the EU Data Protection legislation have been placed high on the Commission's agenda. On-going negotiations between the institutions on the Passenger Name Record (PNR) draft directive are

indicative of the political will to strike the right balance between security concerns and civil liberties. The Commission has finalised negotiations on the EU-U.S. data protection umbrella agreement, which enables EU citizens to seek judicial redress in the U.S. for disclosures of protected information. Besides, the Commission is pushing for appointing an European Public Prosecutor who would be supposed to investigate and prosecute EU-fraud affecting the Union's financial interests. However, the topic of cross-border investigations has aroused controversy within Council on Justice and Home Affairs on October 8th.

The goal of improving the protection of mothers has led the Commission to withdraw its draft Maternity Leave Directive as this legislation has stalled since 2008. In so doing, Timmermans intends to enable a fresh start, thereby facilitating female participation in the labour market.

## Conclusion

With policy improvements, innovations as well as strong incentives being implemented, the new Commission has been able to make a considerable leap forward. Even though the EU's readiness to improve the security as well as civil and fundamental rights has become tangible, there is undoubtedly a lot of work left to be done in order to clear a backlog of policies.

## Outlook 2016

The major task for the Commission will be the implementation of the European Agenda of Security accompanied by measures to tackle the problem of foreign terrorist fighters as for example the revision of the Framework Decision on terrorism. One of the main challenges for 2016 will most likely be the refugee problem, which has probably already reached its peak in this year. Therefore, it is to be expected that security-related issues will be given more attention putting other policies to the backburner. since they are the only means to ensure that our continent regains a competitive advantage once consumers – enterprises and citizens – can make use of the best telecommunications services.

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**European Commission**  
**Work Programme: 2015**

 **EU Accession to the European Convention on Human Rights**

 **A European Security Agenda 2015-2020**



# Commission Priority 8: Migration

## Goals and Key Players

As a candidate for the Presidency of the European Commission in 2014, Jean-Claude Juncker laid out his political guidelines - "A New Start for Europe" - to the European Parliament (22nd of October 2014), proposing "a new policy on migration" and stating that "recent terrible events in the Mediterranean have shown us that Europe needs to manage migration better, in all aspects."

As political management of migration is highly complex during a crisis and cross-cutting in nature, the matter is handled by a team of Commissioners under the umbrella of the project team "Europe and the World". Key stakeholders are the Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos (Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship), member states and neighbouring countries.

## Progress in 2015

The Commission released its "European Agenda on Migration" on the 13th of May in 2015, outlining concrete and immediate actions it will take, including tripling Frontex capacities, measures for emergency relocations, an EU-wide resettlement scheme and a Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) operation in the Mediterranean to capture and destroy boats. However, these measures have not prevented the current reality. Looking back on 2015, the migration pressure on Europe has dramatically increased as millions of people from Syria, Central Asia and parts of Africa move towards the EU. The most frequently used entry point into Europe has shifted to the South-Eastern Mediterranean. Yet this movement stretches beyond the EU frontline to reach prosperous EU states, pressuring governments for a "common" solution - "common" being the key and contested word.

Migration has evoked divergent national interests, tempting governments to opt for a populist approach. This is why Juncker has urged member state governments' "not to cave in to populist demands to turn (migrants) back." The April tragedies that left at least 800 people dead in the Mediterranean, once again brought 'burden sharing' back into serious consideration. Since then, a series of measures has been taken to commonly address the pressing migratory challenges. After a

proposal by the Commission, the interior ministers on the 20th of July 2015 agreed to relocate 40.000 asylum seekers from Greece and Italy. At the Valletta summit on migration, the Commission launched the EU Emergency Trust Fund to tackle root causes of irregular migration in Africa.

## Conclusion

The Commission should harness its global role to address the root causes of migration. Along with EU funding, migrant distribution and emergency relief assistance are crucial endeavours the EU needs to pursue. The refugee's contribution may help the EU tackle its demographic decline, thereby turning a terrible situation into opportunity.

## Outlook 2016

The 17-point plan, announced on the 25th of October 2015, shows that only a common approach and not the "everyone on their own"-method

is the way to deal with the migratory challenges ahead. Europe can only live up to its own values if and when the member states truly act as a union and take decisive and efficient actions. Whatever the response of the EU will be; whatever member states might work out; whatever European people do to accept the new circumstances - time will tell.

Time however is something refugees do not have. Put into perspective, this "new emigration of nations" will not be the last on planet earth; future generations will judge the actions of today. Juncker's Commission therefore has a daunting task of not only preventing additional human tragedy but also to keep alive the idea of a unified Europe both on the political level and in the minds of the European citizens.

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European Commission  
Work Programme: 2015



A European Agenda on Migration

# Commission Priority 9: EU as a Global Actor

## Goals and Key Players

This year the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, rehashed the idea of creating a European army. Amidst the escalating Ukraine crisis, Juncker echoed the prioritisation of defence issues mentioned in his political guidelines.

Juncker's goal, however, should be understood as the continuation of the 'Pleven Plan' (1950) for the European Defence Community. His plan mirrors the importance of military cooperation among member states and is not a proposal for the immediate creation of a stand-alone EU army. Two decisions affirmed his commitment to push the security and defence agenda further:

- Appointing Michel Barnier as Special Adviser on European Defence and Security Policy.
- Creating an External Action Group to assemble Commissioners with external relations portfolios.

This reflects Juncker's comprehensive approach. With it, the security imperative is addressed horizontally and projected into trade, finance, neighbourhood and development policies to enhance the CSDP and the CFSP. In his political guidelines, Juncker singled out four general objectives to strengthen European actorship globally: (1) Quick response to military threats; (2) Peace and stability proliferation in the region by continuing enlargement efforts despite the halt on accession until 2019; (3) Creation of synergies in defence procurement; (4) Establishment of a permanent, voluntary EU defence force.

## Progress in 2015

The fragile security on EU borders shows that these ambitious plans have little chance of full realisation during the current Commission tenure as the EU is predominantly a crisis manager and a re-actor in the neighbourhood. In spite of that, the Commission issued a communication on a European Neighbourhood Policy Strategy to agree on long-term goals. However, current migration flows have been tackled in an uncoordinated, damage-control manner, laying bare the need for a revision of the current migration framework.

Regarding the objectives on defence capabilities, no ground-breaking measures have been taken or proposed in the past 12 months. In spring 2015, Commissioner Elżbieta Bieńkowska established a high level group of key stakeholders to solicit advice on how to "support defence research programmes relevant to the CSDP", which was proposed by the European Council in December 2013. Furthermore, High Representative and Commission Vice President Federica Mogherini initiated the revision of the European Security Strategy due in 2016.

### European Commission

#### Work Programme: 2015



A Communication on European Neighbourhood Policy



Post 2015 Sustainable Development Goals

## Conclusion

To summarise the work on CFSP and CSDP in 2015: The Commission has embarked on *due diligence* of existing tools and security-related instruments. This procedure to make EU internal mechanisms in external action more effective are backed with the attempt to strengthen EU partners' capacities in managing security threats. On-going conflicts around the EU have made the

Union aware of its lack of power in guaranteeing security in the neighbourhood.

## Outlook 2016

By mid-2016, the Commission will develop an EU-wide strategic framework for Security Sector Reform. This document should pool available tools of CSDP, CFSP and development as well as in the area of Freedom, Security and Justice under a single scheme. Another topic to watch closely next year will be the Post-Cotonou 2020 policy framework by which the aid-driven, post-colonial logic should be abandoned.

One crucial development in 2016 will be the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. Despite Russia contesting the entry into force of the EU-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement on the 1st of January 2016, Mogherini, along with leading European politicians, strives to convince President Putin that this agreement is not meant against Russia.

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# Commission Priority 10: Democratic Change

## Goals and Key Players

Despite efforts in recent years to “bring the public back in”, for example by introducing the European Citizen’s Initiative with the Lisbon Treaty, EU institutions are still considered undemocratic and trust across the 28 Member States remains limited. From the overall and somewhat vague objective of “Democratic Change”, the Commission deduced five concrete political goals it aims to achieve:

- Goal 1: Creating a mandatory register for stakeholders lobbying the Commission, Parliament and Council.
- Goal 2: Working with the European Parliament and the Council to remove unnecessary red tape at both European and national level.
- Goal 3: Finding ways to deepen cooperation between national parliaments and the Commission by establishing the so called “yellow card procedure”.
- Goal 4: Reviewing the laws that oblige the Commission to authorise genetically modified organisms (GMOs), even when a majority of national governments is against this.
- Goal 5: Increasing the number of women in management and other administrative positions in the Commission.

## Progress in 2015

With respect to goal number two and goal number four the Commission has already taken concrete action. In April this year, Health and Food Safety Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis has sent a proposal to the EP and the Council through the ordinary legislative procedure, allowing member states to opt out from the authorisation of GMO-food. Furthermore, on the 19th of May 2015 an ambitious “Better Regulation Agenda” was adopted under the leadership of First Vice-President Frans Timmermans. It is designed to improve the openness and transparency of the EU decision-making process, thereby tackling goal number two. Timmermans also submitted a proposal for a new “Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law-Making” entering into negotiations with the EP and the Council. Core elements are a new web portal (already in place)

monitoring the Commission’s initiatives, a new public consultation mechanism for the evaluation of policies already in place, a more inclusive assessment procedure of new proposals and finally a transformation of the Commission’s Impact Assessment Board into an independent “Regulatory Scrutiny Board” with half of its members coming from outside of the Commission.

## Conclusion

The attractiveness of the Commission’s “Democratic Change” agenda lies in its modesty and its pragmatism. The Commission does not aspire after an invocation of a major democratic revolution. Instead, Juncker addresses rather realizable issues which are still symbolically important, have the potential to increase the Union’s efficiency and do touch the people’s concerns. The fact that particularly under the leadership of Frans Timmermans the Commission has been able to present concrete results already in its first year in office makes the roadmap credible and sparks hopes that it indeed might be

completed until 2019.

## Outlook 2016

According to the Commission’s official work programme for 2016, it envisages to conclude the negotiations on the new “Inter-institutional Agreement on Better Regulation” with the EP and the Council by the end of the year. Another inter-institutional agreement, namely a proposal for the mandatory transparency register for interest representatives, shall be brought forward in 2016 – without specification of the expected point in time. Furthermore, in the year to come, the Commission wants to stabilise and expand its consultation mechanisms with the national parliaments, a process which has already been triggered in 2006. Summing up, already in 2016 four of five goals of the “Democratic Change”-project are planned to be tackled or even fulfilled – a quite showable record.

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**European Commission**  
**Work Programme: 2015**

-  **An EU Agreement on Better Law Making**
-  **A Mandatory Transparency Register**
-  **Review of the GMO Decision Making Process**



# Conclusion

By issuing its annual work programme, the EU Commission usually attempts to set the agenda of EU politics. Yet 2015 has been exceptional as Europe is pushed from one crisis to another. Pressing migratory flows, the euro crisis and barbaric terrorist attacks have dominated the political agenda. These challenges are undoubtedly of an ambivalent nature. President Jean-Claude Juncker was compelled to adapt his policy responses accordingly. To tackle the consequences of the migratory movements, the Commission proposed quotas for the relocation of refugees in an attempt to ease the burden on recipient and transit countries – a move which was rebuked by some reluctant member states. During bail-out negotiations between Greece and its creditors, the Commission successfully adopted the role of a tireless mediator to bring partners back together time and time again. As a reaction to the attacks on the Charlie Hebdo newspaper in January 2015, the Commissioners accelerated the announcement of the European Agenda on Security to support member states' cooperation in the fight against terrorism. Indeed, these crises have haunted this Commission throughout

their first year. Nevertheless, the Commission pursued the implementation in most of its priorities according to plan, thereby keeping the European vessel steady in the rough sea. Looking at the goals of the work programme for 2015, the "Investment Plan for Europe" stands out as the cornerstone of Juncker's agenda. It is supposed to promote economic growth, job creation as well as to overcome investment shortages in network infrastructure.

As for 2016, it remains to be seen if the Juncker Commission is able to maintain the legislative momentum it has picked up in the first year. To increase the odds of success, the EU will need to appreciate Jean Monnet's determination and spirit: „Continue, continue, there is no future for the people of Europe other than in union.“

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