

Daily News 02 / 05 / 2018

COLLEGE MEETING: EU budget: Commission proposes a modern budget for a Union that protects, empowers and defends

The Commission is today proposing a pragmatic, modern, long-term budget for the 2021-2027 period. It is an honest response to today's reality in which Europe is expected to play a greater role in providing security and stability in an unstable world, at a time when Brexit will leave a sizeable gap in our budget. Today's proposal responds to this twin challenge through cuts to expenditure and through fresh resources in equal measure. Funding for the Union's new and main priorities will be maintained or reinforced which inevitably means some cuts in other areas. With the stakes so high, it is time to act responsibly. Today's budget proposal is therefore both focused and realistic. The Commission's proposal aligns the Union's budget to our political priorities – as reflected in the positive agenda set out by President Jean-Claude Juncker in his [State of the Union address](#) on 14 September 2016 and agreed by the EU27 Leaders in Bratislava on 16 September 2016 and in the Rome Declaration of 25 March 2017. By focusing on the areas where the Union is best placed to deliver, it is a budget for a Europe that protects, empowers and defends. President **Jean-Claude Juncker** said: *"Today is an important moment for our Union. The new budget is an opportunity to shape our future as a new, ambitious Union of 27 bound together by solidarity. With today's proposal we have put forward a pragmatic plan for how to do more with less. The economic wind in our sails gives us some breathing space but does not shelter us from having to make savings in some areas. We will ensure sound financial management through the first ever rule of law mechanism. This is what it means to act responsibly with our taxpayers' money. The ball is now in the court of Parliament and Council. I strongly believe we should aim to have agreement before the European Parliament elections next year."* Commissioner **Günther H. Oettinger** in charge of Budget and Human Resources said: *"This budget proposal is truly about EU added value. We invest even more in areas where one single Member State cannot act alone or where it is more efficient to act together – be it research, migration, border control or defence. And we continue to finance traditional – but modernised – policies, such as Common Agricultural Policy and Cohesion Policy, because we all benefit from the high standard of our agricultural products and regions catching up economically."* Press release is available [here](#) (all language versions will be available shortly) as well as a detailed [Q&A](#) and a set of [factsheets](#). (For more information: Alexander Winterstein – Tel.: +32 229 93265; Mina Andeeva – Tel.: +32 229 91382)

State aid: Commission clears HRK 105.6 million in restructuring aid for Croatian shipping company Jadroplov

The European Commission has found Croatian plans for restructuring the shipping company Jadroplov to be in line with EU State aid rules. Jadroplov, which is based in Split and suffered from reduced volumes and falling prices

in worldwide trade of dry bulk cargo has started carrying out a comprehensive restructuring program aimed at reducing costs, focusing on core business and alleviating the financial pressure stemming from high-indebtedness. Croatia is supporting the process with a subsidy and two State guarantees on bank loans for a total State support amount of HRK 105.6 million (around €14.2 million). The Commission found that Jadroplov's restructuring plan will enable the company to become viable in the long term without continued State support. Jadroplov will make a significant own contribution to the cost of restructuring of HRK 144.9 million (around €19.5 million), in particular by securing financing from the private market and through asset sales. Moreover, the assets sale contributes to reducing the potential distortions of competition brought about by the restructuring aid. The Commission therefore concluded that the restructuring plan was in line with EU State aid rules, in particular the [2014 Rescue and Restructuring Guidelines](#). More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [State Aid Register](#) under the case number SA.48121. *(For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)*

Big bang theory: Stephen Hawking's last paper co-authored with EU funded researcher Thomas Hertog

Professor Hawking's final theory of the origin of the universe, on which he worked in collaboration with Professor Thomas Hertog from KU Leuven, was published in the latest issue of the renowned [Journal of High-Energy Physics](#). The paper, which was submitted for publication before Hawking's death earlier this year, predicts the universe is finite and far simpler than many current theories about the big bang say. In 2014, Professor Hertog was awarded a €2 million grant from the European Research Council (ERC) for his 5 year-long project on holographic quantum cosmology. Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation Carlos **Moedas** said: *"I am extremely pleased that yet again EU funded research lives up to its reputation of excellence. The universe might not be infinitely expanding, but the list of successful ERC grantees continues to grow. They dare to put concepts into question and push our knowledge over the edge into new realms."* Modern theories predict that our local universe came into existence, when the overall universe expanded after the big bang. It is widely believed that some regions of the universe then never stopped growing, others did. In their new paper, Hawking and Hertog say that this concept of eternal inflation is wrong. They predict that our universe is not a fractal structure, but reasonably smooth and what's more finite. Their results, if confirmed by further work, would imply a significantly smaller range of possible universes. Professor Hertog said: *"This kind of work is ambitious, high-risk, and lies entirely in the realm of the curiosity-driven, fundamental sciences. It fits in very well with the goals and the vision of the ERC. I used my ERC grant to set up a kind of school in theoretical cosmology which has proven to be a fertile and stimulating research environment to explore new ideas."* More information is available in an [ERC press release](#) and an [ERC interview](#) with Professor Hertog. *(For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel.: +32 229 56182; Victoria von*

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Eurostat: Le taux de chômage à 8,5% dans la zone euro, à 7,1% dans l'UE28 (Mars 2018)

Dans la zone euro (ZE19), le taux de chômage corrigé des variations saisonnières s'est établi à 8,5% en mars 2018, stable par rapport à février 2018 et en baisse par rapport au taux de 9,4% de mars 2017. Il s'agit du taux le plus faible enregistré dans la zone euro depuis décembre 2008. Dans l'UE28, le taux de chômage s'est établi à 7,1% en mars 2018, stable par rapport à février 2018 et en baisse par rapport au taux de 7,9% de mars 2017. Il s'agit du taux le plus faible enregistré dans l'UE28 depuis septembre 2008. Eurostat estime qu'en mars 2018, 17,481 millions d'hommes et de femmes étaient au chômage dans l'UE28, dont 13,824 millions dans la zone euro. Par rapport à février 2018, le nombre de chômeurs a diminué de 94 000 dans l'UE28 et de 83 000 dans la zone euro. Comparé à mars 2017, le chômage a baissé de 1,930 million de personnes dans l'UE28 et de 1,414 million dans la zone euro. Un communiqué de presse Eurostat est à votre disposition [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Christan Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Sara Soumilion – Tel.: +32 229 67094)

Eurostat: Estimation rapide préliminaire pour le premier trimestre 2018, le PIB en hausse de 0,4% dans la zone euro et dans l'UE28, +2,5% et +2,4% respectivement par rapport au premier trimestre 2017

Au cours du premier trimestre 2018, le PIB corrigé des variations saisonnières a augmenté de 0,4% tant dans la zone euro (ZE19) que dans l'UE28 par rapport au trimestre précédent, selon l'estimation rapide préliminaire publiée par Eurostat, l'office statistique de l'Union européenne. Au cours du quatrième trimestre 2017, le PIB avait progressé de 0,7% dans la zone euro et de 0,6% dans l'UE28. En comparaison avec le même trimestre de l'année précédente, le PIB corrigé des variations saisonnières a enregistré une hausse de 2,5% dans la zone euro et de 2,4% dans l'UE28 au premier trimestre 2018, après respectivement +2,8% et +2,7% au quatrième trimestre 2017. Un communiqué de presse Eurostat est à votre disposition [en ligne](#). (For more information: Christian Spahr – Tel.: +32 229 50055)

Tackling illegal content online: Commission launches a public consultation [updated on 02/05/2018 at 16:58]

Following the Commission's [Recommendation](#) presented in March to further step up the work against all forms of illegal content ranging from terrorist content, incitement to hatred and violence, child sexual abuse material, counterfeit products and copyright infringement, the European Commission launched an open [public consultation](#). All respondents are asked to share their experience and challenges faced with the spread and detection of illegal content online. The consultation aims at collecting information on perceptions and various opinions in regard to the effectiveness of voluntary measures to tackle illegal content online. The consultation also aims to gather information and views concerning the need for additional steps from the Commission in this area. The consultation targets specifically citizens, but also online platforms and other online hosting service providers, as well

as organisations who detect and flag illegal content, digital rights organisations, competent authorities, law enforcement bodies, national governments and academia. On 28 September 2017, the Commission adopted a [Communication](#) with guidance on the responsibilities of online service providers regarding illegal content online, followed by a [Recommendation](#) on measures to effectively tackle illegal content online on 1 March 2018. The Commission has published an [inception impact assessment](#) and is collecting evidence on the effectiveness of the voluntary measures and the scale of the problem. The Commission will explore before the end of 2018 possible further measures to improve the effectiveness of combating illegal content online. A factsheet is available [here](#). The public consultation on the illegal content online will be open until 25 June and can be accessed [here](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Inga Höglund – Tel.: +32 229 50698)

[Upcoming events](#) of the European Commission (ex-Top News)

[A modern budget for a Union that protects, empowers and defends: Questions and Answers](#)

What is the long-term EU budget?

The long-term EU budget, also referred to as Multiannual Financial Framework (or 'MFF'), provides a stable framework for implementing the EU's annual budget. It translates the Union's **political priorities** into financial terms, for a period of several years and sets annual maximum amounts ('ceilings') for EU expenditure as a whole and for the main categories/priorities of expenditure ('headings').

Why do we need a long-term EU budget?

By specifying the spending limits for each category of expenditure, the long-term budget ensures that the Union's priorities are **adequately funded** in the medium term.

At the same time, it ensures budgetary **discipline** and ensures that the Union's expenditure develops in an orderly manner in line with the Union's policy objectives and within the limits of its Own Resources. It also gives **certainty** to beneficiaries of EU funds, such as small and medium-sized enterprises, regions catching up, students, researchers, farmers or civil society organisations, as well as to national, regional, and local authorities.

Has the EU always operated with long-term budgets?

Long-term budgets have been part of the European Union's functioning **since 1988** and have covered periods varying from 5 to 7 years:

- The first long-term budget, the so called Delors Package I, covered the years 1988-1992 and focused on establishing the Single Market and consolidating the multiannual framework programme for research and development;
- The second long-term budget 1993-1999, the Delors Package II, gave priority to social and cohesion policy and the introduction of the euro;
- The "Agenda 2000" long-term budget covered the period 2000-2006 and focused on the enlargement of the Union;
- The 2007-2013 long-term budget gave priority to sustainable growth and competitiveness, in order to create more jobs;
- The 2014-2020 long-term budget aimed at getting people into work and the economy growing, tied in with the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.
- The long-term budget proposed today for the period 2021-2027 is a new, modern and pragmatic budget for the Union of 27. It is a clear, simple and flexible budget designed to address the top priorities and policies providing maximum European added value. To put it differently: it is a budget that invests in a Europe that protects, empowers and defends – as called for by President Juncker in his [2016 State of the Union address](#). By moderately reducing funding in Common Agricultural Policy and Cohesion Policy programmes, the proposal also responds in a fair and balanced way to the budgetary consequences of the withdrawal of the United Kingdom, an important contributor to the EU budget.

Who decides on the long-term budget?

Every long-term budget consists of a comprehensive set of legislation:

- The MFF Regulation sets out the main policy priorities, policy areas and expenditure ceilings;
- More detailed sector-specific legislation sets out the various spending programmes, such as for agriculture, cohesion policy, research, etc. The Commission will present all sector-specific proposals by mid-June.

The MFF Regulation follows a special legislative procedure set out in Article 312 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. The Council will adopt the MFF Regulation **by unanimity**, after receiving the **consent of the European Parliament**. Under this consent procedure, the Parliament, voting with absolute majority, can approve or reject the Council's position, but cannot amend it. With only a few exceptions, the sector-specific legislation is adopted under the **ordinary legislative procedure** where Council and Parliament decide jointly, on an equal footing.

Finally, changing the EU's overall financing system (the Own Resources

Decision) requires **unanimity of Member States** and **ratification by national parliaments** (see below).

Why should the long-term budget be agreed by the European Parliament elections in 2019?

An early agreement is of great practical importance because the MFF Regulation must be agreed before the sector-specific legislation. Whilst the negotiations may run in parallel, it takes 12 to 18 months to agree on the sector-specific legislation for all the multi-annual programmes. In order to allow these programmes to **start on time in January 2021**, an agreement on the sector-specific legislation should be reached **no later than one and a half years before it enters into force**.

In order to be able to effectively spend money as of **January 2021**, many concrete **preparatory steps** have to be taken. Detailed annual programming documents need to be prepared and calls to be published. Applicants need to prepare and submit their proposals which then have to be evaluated. For programmes in shared management, managing authorities at national or regional levels need to prepare and submit strategic planning documents to be agreed with the Commission. Agreement on the next long-term budget in 2019 would provide for a **seamless transition** between the current long-term budget (2014-2020) and the new one and would ensure **predictability and continuity** of funding to the benefit of all.

Past experience shows that a delayed adoption will lead to delayed investments with [negative consequences](#) for the EU economy, in particular in its most fragile regions (see Evolution of commitment ceilings between 2000 and 2020 in current prices – Annex).

2. Key features of the proposed new long-term budget

How big will the next long-term budget be?

The Commission proposes a long-term budget of €1,135 billion in commitments (expressed in 2018 prices) over the period from 2021 to 2027, equivalent to 1.11% of the EU27's gross national income (GNI). (Expressed in current prices – taking inflation into account – this would amount to €1,279 billion in commitments.)

This level of commitments translates into €1,105 billion (or 1.08% of GNI) in payments (again expressed in 2018 prices). The European Development Fund, which is currently an intergovernmental agreement funding the development policy in countries in Africa, Caribbean and the Pacific amounting to €30 billion in the 2014-2020 period, will be integrated in the EU budget.

In real terms, the future long term budget for 2021-2027 is **broadly similar** to the one for the current period 2014-2020, taking into account the inclusion of the European Development Fund.

The Commission is proposing an increase of expenditure, predominantly through additional resources but also through redeployments (proportionally roughly 80% and 20%, respectively) to fund **new and pressing priorities** and reinforce

existing programmes with clear European added value (see below). At the same time, the Commission's proposal takes fair account of the impact of the withdrawal of the United Kingdom, through a balanced combination of reductions/redeployments and an increase of expenditure (proportionally roughly 50% each). For that purpose, the proposal includes reductions of roughly 5% in both the Common Agricultural Policy and Cohesion Policy programmes, as they have the largest financial envelopes.

The Commission's proposals are based on a **rigorous assessment** of the resources needed to deliver efficiently on the Union's goals, and of the efficiency and "added value" (where the Union budget can have a bigger impact than public spending at national level) of spending in each area.

Are you presenting your proposal in current prices (taking inflation into account) or constant 2018 prices?

The Commission is publishing today – in full transparency – the relevant tables in both constant 2018 and current prices, so that there is total clarity as to the different envelopes proposed for the policy areas and programmes.

Whereas the tables in constant 2018 prices are the relevant ones from a legal point of view and reflect the real changes throughout the period (not taking inflation into account), the Commission is also publishing the data in current prices so that governments and citizens have a clear view of the proposed expenditure throughout the whole 7 year period. This being a long-term budget for a period of 7 years, it takes forecast inflation (of around 2% annually or 14% over that period) into account. Naturally, inflation has an impact on the overall amounts – both in the EU budget and in any national budget.

How did the Commission identify the priority areas in the new long-term budget?

The priorities and principles underpinning the proposal are the result of an open and **inclusive debate** started over a year ago with the [White Paper on the Future of Europe](#) of 1 March 2017. They are part of the positive agenda proposed by President Jean-Claude Juncker in his [State of the Union address](#) before the European Parliament on 14 September 2016 and agreed by the Leaders of the 27 Member States in [Bratislava](#) on 16 September 2016 as well as in the [Rome Declaration](#) of 25 March 2017.

Then, in June 2017 the main issues were laid out in the Commission's [Reflection Paper on the future of EU Finances](#), and on 14 February 2018 the Commission [set out options](#) for the future EU budget.

The Commission has **listened carefully** to the European Parliament, to Member States, to national Parliaments, to the beneficiaries of EU funding and to other stakeholders. Commissioner Oettinger met with EU leaders when he visited 27 EU Member States. Open public consultations held earlier this year generated more than 11,000 responses.

In addition, the Commission has also conducted a thorough **spending review** of

the current EU spending programmes (also published as part of today's set of proposals). This has helped to pinpoint what has worked well and should be preserved or enhanced in the future long-term budget. It also showed where reform is needed to unlock the full potential of the EU budget.

What is "EU added value"? How does the new EU budget deliver it?

The "EU added value" of the budget refers to the areas where the Union budget can have a bigger impact than public spending at national level could. The EU budget is modest in comparison to the size of the European economy and national budgets. In the [Rome Declaration](#), EU leaders agreed that the European Union should be "big on big issues and small on small issues". The same is true of the EU's budget: it must invest in the 'big' areas, where the Union can have a greater impact than public spending at national level. This notably includes support for **shared goals** such as the protection of the EU's external borders.

Pooling resources can achieve results that Member States acting alone cannot. Examples include cutting-edge research projects that bring together the best researchers from across Europe, or empowering young people and small businesses to take full advantage of the opportunities the Single Market and the digital economy offer. Other instances include key strategic investments such as investing in satellites, in expensive supercomputers or in connecting different parts of the EU with each other. These investments hold the key to Europe's future prosperity and its leadership in achieving the global Sustainable Development Goals. The same is true when it comes to equipping the Union to defend and protect its citizens in a fast-changing world where many of the most pressing issues transcend national borders.

At the same time, the Commission has critically examined where **savings can be made** without undermining the core purpose of EU programmes. The result of these changes will be a **rebalancing of the budget** and an increasing focus on the areas where the European added value is highest.

How do you propose to make the new long-term budget clearer and simpler?

The Commission is proposing a more coherent, focused and transparent framework for the EU's budget. The structure of the new budget will be **clearer and more closely aligned with political priorities**. In this vein, the number of programmes will be reduced by roughly a third (from 58 to 37), including by bringing fragmented funding sources together into new integrated programmes and **radically streamlining** the use of financial instruments.

For example, the new and fully integrated "InvestEU" Fund will bring centrally managed financial instruments supporting strategic investment throughout the EU together under a single programme. In practical terms, this means avoiding overlaps while ensuring additionality of investments from other public and private sources. Moreover, the **administrative burden will be reduced** for beneficiaries and intermediaries.

Another important element is that the rules will be more coherent, on the basis of a **single rule book**. This will further reduce the administrative

burden for beneficiaries and managing authorities. It will encourage participation in EU programmes and accelerate implementation. It will make it easier for different programmes and instruments to work together to boost the impact of the EU budget. In particular, the Commission will propose to simplify and **streamline State aid rules** to make it easier to link up instruments from the EU budget with national funding.

What are you proposing to make the new long-term budget more flexible and agile to react more rapidly to unexpected events?

Whilst the EU budget did play a key role in funding a joint response to the various dimensions of the migration crisis, the limits of the current framework became clear. In an unstable geopolitical environment, Europe must be able to **respond quickly and effectively** to unforeseen demands. The Commission is therefore proposing to make the EU budget more agile by increasing flexibility both within and between programmes as well as between headings and years.

The Commission also proposes to **establish a Union Reserve**. This will be financed from any available margins (the difference between the ceiling and the money actually committed or paid in a given year) as well as from committed but unused funds. This Reserve is a powerful new tool to tackle unforeseen events and to respond to emergencies in areas such as security and migration. It will also help address the economic and social consequences of trade disruptions once other available instruments have been exploited.

What is the link in the new long-term budget between sound financial management and respect of the rule of law?

The Commission is introducing a new rule of law mechanism to protect EU taxpayers' money. One of the prerequisites for **sound financial management** and effective EU funding is the successful operation of the **rule of law** in areas such as the proper functioning of the judiciary and the prevention and sanctioning of fraud or corruption. The purpose of the new rules (a Regulation) proposed today is to strengthen the EU budget and to **protect it from financial risks** linked to generalised deficiencies in the rule of law.

Under the current rules, Member States are already required to show that their rules and procedures for financial management of EU money are robust and funding is sufficiently protected from abuse or fraud. The new proposed rules would allow the Union to **suspend, reduce or restrict access to EU funding** in a manner **proportionate** to the nature, gravity and scope of the rule of law deficiencies.

Importantly, the proposed mechanism would not affect the individual beneficiaries of EU funding, since they cannot be held responsible for the overall functioning of the rule of law. Member States would continue to be obliged to implement the affected programmes and make payments to Erasmus students, researchers, civil society or any other end user recipients or beneficiaries.

3. Key novelties of the new long-term budget – expenditure side

Which are the areas where you propose to spend more in the future?

Investing now in areas such as research and innovation, young people and the digital economy will pay rich dividends for future generations. This is why the Commission is proposing to increase funding in a number of key areas including:

- an almost **9 fold increase** of investments in **digital transformation and networks** to reach € 12 billion (complemented by the investment supported by the InvestEU Fund via loans, guarantees and other financial instruments);
- more than **doubling** programmes for **young people** (such as ERASMUS+ with €30 billion and the European Solidarity Corps with €1.3 billion), including €700 million to support Interrail passes for young people;
- almost **tripling** expenditure for **external border management, migration and asylum**, to reach around €33 billion, up from the current €13 billion, which could fund 10,000 border guards by 2027 for the European Border and Coast Guard Agency;
- increasing investment in **research and innovation** by 50%, with €100 billion set aside for the flagship programmes Horizon Europe and Euratom;
- increasing investment in **security** by 40% to reach €4.8 billion and creating a €13 billion **Defence Fund** of to complement and catalyse national expenditure in research and capability development. Investments needed to facilitate **military mobility** throughout the EU will be funded by €6.5 billion through the Connecting Europe Facility;
- reinforcing funding for **external action** by 26% to reach €120 billion, with a specific emphasis on Europe's neighbourhood and preserving a specific (and not pre-allocated) reserve to deal with emerging challenges, notably in the area of stability and migration. In order to complement programmes funded by the EU budget in the area of defence, the High Representative is proposing to create an off-budget **€10.5 billion European Peace Facility** to reinforce possible joint engagement in non-EU countries.

What is the role of agriculture and cohesion policy in the new long-term budget?

Both policies remain **as important as before** and, consequently, fully retain their predominant position in terms of funding in the overall long-term budget. They will continue to deliver on their core objectives but will be **modernised** to make them more efficient and to target support to where it is needed most.

At the same time, the EU has gained **new responsibilities** since those two policies were introduced several decades ago. It is therefore logical that their relative shares decrease. Moreover, the United Kingdom's withdrawal requires reductions of roughly 5% in both the Common Agricultural Policy and Cohesion Policy programmes, as these have the largest share of the EU budget.

Agriculture

Europe needs a **resilient, sustainable and competitive agricultural sector** in order to ensure production of high-quality, safe and affordable food for Europeans and a strong socio-economic fabric in rural areas. The Commission is therefore proposing a **reformed, modernised Common Agricultural Policy** which will ensure access to high-quality food while maintaining a fully integrated single market for agricultural goods in the EU. The reformed policy will place a greater emphasis on the environment and climate and will support the transition towards a more sustainable agricultural sector and the development of vibrant rural areas. **Direct payment levels** per hectare between Member States will be streamlined and better targeted. They will continue to converge towards the EU average.

A stronger focus will be put on **supporting small and medium-sized farms**.

Under the new rules, Member States will be given more responsibility for making the best use of the agriculture budget. They will have more flexibility than today to shift funds between direct payments and rural development, in line with national needs and targets.

A **new crisis reserve** will be created to address crises generated by unforeseeable developments in international markets or by specific shocks to the agricultural sector as a result of the actions of non-EU countries.

Cohesion Policy

In the same vein, the Commission is proposing to **modernise and strengthen Cohesion Policy**. Working together with other programmes, the funds will continue to offer essential support to the development of Europe's Member States and regions. The aim is to drive up convergence and to help **reduce economic, social and territorial disparities** within Member States and across Europe.

Moreover, Cohesion Policy will play an even more important role in the future by supporting the **ongoing economic reform** process in the Member States. The Commission proposes to strengthen the link between the EU budget and the European Semester of economic policy coordination.

The design of the new EU budget reflects [President Juncker's call](#) to **overcome divisions** and to make the Union more united. The main objective of cohesion policy is and will remain to **help Member States and regions lagging economically or structurally behind** to catch up with the rest of the EU. Thus, the relative per capita gross domestic product will remain the predominant criterion for allocating funds – while other factors such as unemployment (notably youth unemployment), climate change and the reception and integration of migrants will also be taken into account. Details will be presented in the weeks to come.

What instruments are you proposing for a stable and efficient Economic and Monetary Union?

The Commission proposes 2 new instruments: a **Reform Support Programme** and a

European Investment Stabilisation Function. These new instruments will help to support economic and social convergence and **maintain macroeconomic stability** in the euro area by supporting reforms that foster resilience domestically and by helping to maintain investment levels in the event of large asymmetric shocks.

They will **complement other EU funds**, notably the European Structural and Investment Funds and the new InvestEU Fund, and they will strengthen the link between the EU budget and the European Semester.

The **Reform Support Programme** – with an overall budget of €25 billion – will offer financial and technical support to all Member States for the pursuit of priority reforms, especially in the context of the European Semester. In addition, a **Convergence Facility** will provide dedicated support to non-euro area Member States on their way to joining the common currency.

A **European Investment Stabilisation Function** will help to maintain investment levels in the event of large asymmetric shocks. It will be in the form of back-to-back loans guaranteed by the EU budget of up to €30 billion, coupled with financial assistance to the Member State to cover the interest payments at the due date of reimbursement. The loans will give extra financial support at a time when public finances become stretched and priority investments must be maintained.

4. Key novelties of the new long-term budget – financing and Own Resources

Where does the money come from in the current long-term budget?

The revenue sources of the EU budget have remained the same over the last decades: customs duties, contributions from the Member States based on value added tax (VAT) and those based on gross national income (GNI). After a gradual decrease of customs duties, the GNI contributions became the predominant source of funding the EU budget (at about 80%, together with VAT-based contributions).

–**Customs duties** are levied on economic operators, collected at the external borders of the EU and go directly to the EU budget. Member States currently retain 20% of the amount as collection costs;

-The current **VAT** bases of all Member States are harmonised through a complex statistical process before a uniform rate of 0.3% is levied on each Member State, with some exceptions;

-The **GNI** Own Resource finances the part of the budget not covered by other revenues. The same percentage is levied on each Member State's GNI. The rate is fixed as part of the annual budgetary procedure. Some Member States benefit from a reduction.

What types of new funding sources are you suggesting for the new long-term budget, and why?

The Commission proposes to introduce a “basket” of new Own Resources, composed of:

-20% of the revenues from the **Emissions Trading System**;

-A 3% call rate applied to the new **Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base** (to be phased in once the necessary legislation has been adopted);

-A national contribution calculated on the amount of **non-recycled plastic** packaging waste in each Member State (0.80 € per kilo).

Attributing a share of certain harmonised tax bases (such as the Common Consolidated Corporate Tax base) or other sources anchored in EU policies or legislation (such as the European Emissions Trading Scheme like non-recycled plastic packaging waste) to the EU budget is a way to improve synergies between the Union and national economies, and to better align the EU budget's funding with its policy priorities.

On the basis of the Commission's proposals, the share of the new Own Resources is estimated to amount to an annual average of around €22 billion over the 2021-2027 period, corresponding to approximately 12% the EU budget's revenues. This will contribute to financing new priorities and reducing national GNI-based contributions accordingly.

In parallel, the Commission is proposing savings in some of the main spending areas and reforms across the budget to make it more streamlined and to get the most from every euro.

Creating new revenue sources for the EU budget is a big decision with high stakes – how is it taken, and by whom?

The Own Resources Decision, which sets out the EU's overall financing system, can only be changed with unanimity of Member States and ratification by national parliaments. As a result, such changes occur rarely. The last substantial, qualitative change dates back to the 1980s when the so-called 'Delors packages' were adopted and the Gross National Income -based component was introduced to cater for the increase of expenditure related to the implementation of the Single Market and the enlargement to new Member States.

Why is the Commission proposing to increase the Own Resources ceiling?

The Own Resources Decision also includes a ceiling for annual calls for Own Resources in order to give certainty and predictability to Member States for their budgetary and financial planning. Today, this ceiling is set at 1.20% of EU GNI. With the United Kingdom's withdrawal, this ceiling automatically decreases by around 16% (which is to say, by the United Kingdom's share of EU GNI).

At the same time, the integration of the European Development Fund into the EU budget will need to be accompanied by an increase in the ceiling. A sufficient margin between that ceiling and the payments ceiling is also necessary to ensure that the Union is able – under any circumstances – to fulfil its financial obligations, even in times of economic downturns. This is also important for maintaining the EU's triple-A-rating.

The Commission therefore proposes to increase the Own Resources ceiling to

1.29% of the EU-27 GNI.

Now that the United Kingdom (which has a large rebate) is leaving, isn't it time to make the EU budget fairer and abolish the various rebates?

Making the budget fairer and simpler requires addressing the issue of rebates, some of which go back to the early 1980s. A number of Member States have been benefitting from a complex system of corrections and rebates, the most important of these being the United Kingdom correction – **the UK rebate**.

In addition, an increasing number of other correction mechanisms have been developed over time. Since 2002, Austria, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden have benefited from a permanent reduction of their contribution to financing the UK rebate – the “**rebates on the rebate**”. Additional reductions were also granted to certain Member States whose budgetary burden was considered excessive. Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden obtained temporarily reduced Value Added Tax call rates for the 2014-2020 period. Austria, the Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark also benefited from a lump-sum reduction to GNI-based contributions.

Likewise, the current share of 20% retained by Member States from all customs revenues does not correspond to the actual cost. Neither is it used for reinforcing customs control systems. It simply flows into national budgets without reflecting the needs and expenditure needed to protect the customs union. It can therefore be considered as **an indirect rebate** to certain Member States.

As a result, the gross amounts of corrections and rebates (even without taking into account the UK rebate itself) exceed a yearly amount of €5 billion for the current long-term budget. This has made the financing system of the EU budget overly complex and opaque, and less fair.

The United Kingdom leaving the EU provides an **opportunity to simplify and reform** the current, complicated system of rebates and rebates on rebates. The Commission proposes to eliminate all corrections on the revenue side (rebates) and to reduce the amount Member States keep when collecting customs revenues for the EU budget from 20% to 10%. Both measures will **make the EU budget fairer and more transparent**.

At the same time and in order to avoid a significant and sudden increase in the contributions as of 2021 of certain Member States, the Commission proposes **lump sum reductions** to their GNI-based contribution, which will be gradually **phased out over 5 years**, and totally eliminated by 2026. In the same vein, while reducing the collection costs retained by Member States the Commission also proposes to strengthen the financial support for customs equipment and information technology more targeted to the actual needs.

For More information

- EU budget: Commission proposes a modern budget for a Union that protects, empowers and defends (a [press release](#) of 2 May 2018)
- Fact sheets ([2 May 2018](#))

EU budget: Commission proposes a modern budget for a Union that protects, empowers and defends

It is an honest response to today's reality in which Europe is expected to play a greater role in providing security and stability in an unstable world, at a time when Brexit will leave a sizeable gap in our budget. Today's proposal responds to this twin challenge through cuts to expenditure and through fresh resources in equal measure. Funding for the Union's new and main priorities will be maintained or reinforced which inevitably means some cuts in other areas. With the stakes so high, it is time to act responsibly. Today's budget proposal is therefore both focused and realistic.

The Commission's proposal aligns the Union's budget to our political priorities – as reflected in the positive agenda set out by President Jean-Claude Juncker in his [State of the Union address](#) on 14 September 2016 and agreed by the EU27 Leaders in Bratislava on 16 September 2016 and in the Rome Declaration of 25 March 2017. By focusing on the areas where the Union is best placed to deliver, it is a budget for a Europe that protects, empowers and defends.

European Commission President **Jean-Claude Juncker** said: *"Today is an important moment for our Union. The new budget is an opportunity to shape our future as a new, ambitious Union of 27 bound together by solidarity. With today's proposal we have put forward a pragmatic plan for how to do more with less. The economic wind in our sails gives us some breathing space but does not shelter us from having to make savings in some areas. We will ensure sound financial management through the first ever rule of law mechanism. This is what it means to act responsibly with our taxpayers' money. The ball is now in the court of Parliament and Council. I strongly believe we should aim to have agreement before the European Parliament elections next year."*

Commissioner **Günther H. Oettinger** in charge of Budget and Human Resources said: *"This budget proposal is truly about EU added value. We invest even more in areas where one single Member State cannot act alone or where it is more efficient to act together – be it research, migration, border control or defence. And we continue to finance traditional – but modernised – policies, such as Common Agricultural Policy and Cohesion Policy, because we all benefit from the high standard of our agricultural products and regions catching up economically."*

1. A focused budget: matching ambitions with resources

The European Union at 27 has set its political priorities and now needs the resources to match these.

Overall, the Commission proposes a long-term budget of **€1,135 billion in commitments** (expressed in 2018 prices)[\[1\]](#) over the period from 2021 to 2027, equivalent to **1.11% of the EU27's gross national income** (GNI) (see Annex 2; a [general fact sheet](#)). This level of commitments translates into €1,105 billion (or 1.08% of GNI) in payments (in 2018 prices[\[2\]](#)). This includes the integration into the EU budget of the European Development Fund – the EU's main tool for financing development cooperation with countries in Africa, the Caribbean and Pacific and which to date is an intergovernmental agreement. Taking into account inflation, this is comparable to the size of the current 2014-2020 budget (including the European Development Fund).

To fund new and pressing priorities, **current levels of funding will need to be increased**. Investing now in areas such as research and innovation, young people, the digital economy, border management, security and defence will contribute to prosperity, sustainability and security in the future. For instance, the budget of Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps will be doubled.

At the same time, the Commission has critically examined where **savings** can be made and **efficiency** improved. The Commission is proposing that funding for the Common Agricultural Policy and Cohesion Policy is moderately reduced – both by around 5% – to reflect the new reality of a Union at 27. These policies will be modernised to ensure they can still deliver with less and even serve new priorities. For example, Cohesion Policy will have an increasingly important role to play in supporting structural reform and in the long-term integration of migrants.

The result of these changes will be a rebalancing of the budget and an increased focus on the areas where the EU budget can make the biggest difference.

2. A modern, simple and flexible budget

The EU budget is modest in comparison with the size of the European economy and national budgets. And yet it can make a real difference to the lives of citizens and businesses – provided it invests in areas where the Union can have a bigger impact than public spending at national level, where it can provide real **European added value**. Examples include cutting-edge research projects that bring together the best researchers from across Europe, large infrastructures or projects to succeed the digital transformation or equipping the Union with the tools it needs to protect and defend its citizens. This is indispensable in today's fast-changing world in which Europe is faced with demographic challenges, instability in its neighbourhood and many more pressing issues that transcend national borders.

The Commission is therefore proposing a modern, simple and flexible budget:

Modern: A new Union of 27 needs a new, modern budget that shows that Europe has learnt the lessons of the past. This means further cutting red tape for beneficiaries and managing authorities by making rules more coherent on the basis of a single rulebook. And it also means setting clearer objectives and focusing more on performance. This will make it easier to monitor and measure

results – and to make changes when necessary.

Simple: The structure of the budget will be clearer and more closely aligned with the Union's priorities. Today, funds are spread over too many programmes and instruments, both within and outside the budget. The Commission therefore proposes to reduce the number of programmes by more than a third (from 58 currently to 37 in the future), for example by bringing fragmented funding sources together into new integrated programmes and radically streamlining the use of financial instruments, including through the InvestEU Fund.

Flexible: Recent challenges –especially the migration and refugee crisis in 2015 – have clearly shown the limits of flexibility in the current EU budget to react quickly and effectively enough. The Commission's proposal therefore includes increased flexibility within and between programmes, strengthening crisis management instruments and creating a new "Union Reserve" to tackle unforeseen events and to respond to emergencies in areas such as security and migration.

3. The EU budget and the rule of law: sound financial management

A major innovation in the proposed budget is the strengthened link between EU funding and the rule of law. Respect for the rule of law is an essential precondition for sound financial management and effective EU funding. The Commission is therefore proposing a [new mechanism](#) to protect the EU budget from financial risks linked to generalised deficiencies regarding the rule of law in the Member States. The new proposed tools would allow the Union to suspend, reduce or restrict access to EU funding in a manner proportionate to the nature, gravity and scope of the rule of law deficiencies. Such a decision would be proposed by the Commission and adopted by the Council through reverse qualified majority voting [\[3\]](#).

4. An EU budget for a strong and stable Economic and Monetary Union

A stable euro area is a precondition for jobs, growth, investment and social fairness in the Union as a whole. In December 2017, as part of its roadmap for deepening Europe's Economic and Monetary Union, the Commission [set out](#) how new budgetary instruments could be developed within the framework of the EU's public finances in order to support a stable euro area and convergence towards the euro area. In the new Multiannual Financial Framework, two [new instruments](#) are proposed:

- A new **Reform Support Programme** which – with an overall budget of **€25 billion** – will offer financial and technical support to all Member States for the pursuit of priority reforms, especially in the context of the European Semester. In addition, a Convergence Facility will provide dedicated support to non-euro area Member States on their way to joining the common currency.
- A **European Investment Stabilisation Function** which will help to maintain investment levels in the event of large asymmetric shocks. It will start in the form of back-to-back loans under the EU budget of **up to €30 billion**, coupled with financial assistance to Member States to cover the costs of the interest. The loans will give extra financial support at a time when public

finances become stretched and priority investments must be maintained.

5. Modern sources of funding for the EU budget

New priorities need new investment. This is why the Commission proposes to fund these through a combination of fresh money (roughly 80%), redeployments and savings (roughly 20%).

Building on recommendations from the High-Level Group on the “Future Financing of the EU”, the Commission proposes to modernise and simplify the current overall financing – “Own Resources” – system and diversify the budget’s [sources of revenue](#).

New sources to finance the long-term budget

The Commission proposes to simplify the current Value Added Tax (VAT) based Own Resource and to introduce a basket of new Own Resources that is linked to our political priorities.

The proposed basket of new Own Resources includes:

- 20% of the revenues from the Emissions Trading System;
- A 3% call rate applied to the new Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base (to be phased in once the necessary legislation has been adopted);
- A national contribution calculated on the amount of non-recycled plastic packaging waste in each Member State (0.80 € per kilo).

These new Own Resources will represent about 12% of the total EU budget and could contribute up to €22 billion per year to funding the new priorities.

Rebates

- The United Kingdom leaving the EU provides an opportunity to address the complicated system of rebates and even “rebates on rebates”. The Commission proposes to eliminate all rebates and to reduce from 20% to 10% the amount Member States keep when collecting customs revenues (being one of the “Own Resources”) for the EU budget. Both measures will make the EU budget simpler and fairer.
- In order to avoid any sudden and drastic increases in contributions for some Member States, the Commission proposes to phase out the current rebates over a period of five years.

What happens now?

Building on today’s proposals, the Commission will present, in the weeks to come, detailed proposals for the future sector-specific financial programmes (see Annex 1).

The decision on the future long-term EU budget will then fall to the Council, acting by unanimity, with the consent of the European Parliament. **Timing is**

of the essence. Negotiations on the current long-term EU budget took too long. As a result, key financial programmes were [delayed](#) and projects with real potential to spur the economic recovery postponed.

Negotiations should therefore be given the utmost priority, and agreement should be reached before the European Parliament elections and the summit in Sibiu on 9 May 2019. The Commission will do everything in its power to allow for a swift agreement.

For More Information

-A modern budget for an EU that protects, empowers and defends: Questions and Answers ([2 May 2018](#))

-Factsheets and legal texts ([2 May 2018](#)):

- o Communication including an Annex describing each programme

- o Multiannual Financial Framework Regulation (2 May 2018)

- o Regulation on budget implementation in accordance with the rule of law

- o Interinstitutional Agreement on budgetary discipline on cooperation in budgetary matters and on sound financial management

- o Own Resources Decision, implementing proposals and a related Staff Working Document

- o Regulation, Implementing Regulation, Amendment of Regulation No 1553/89

- o Definitive uniform arrangements for the collection of own resources accruing from VAT ([Council Regulation \(EEC, Euratom\) No 1553/89](#))

- o Staff working document on the spending review

-Key information related to the EU budget for the future – Multiannual Financial Framework ([2021-2027](#))

– [Communication](#) and [fact sheets](#) ([press release](#), 14 February 2018)

– Reflection paper on the Future of EU Finances ([28 June 2017](#))

[\[1\]](#) Expressed in current prices (taking into account inflation), this would amount to €1,279 billion in commitments.

[\[2\]](#) Expressed in current prices (taking into account inflation), this would amount to €1,246 billion in payments.

[\[3\]](#) Under reverse qualified majority voting, the Commission's proposal is deemed to be adopted by the Council unless it decides by qualified majority to reject the Commission's proposal.

Declaration by the High Representative, Federica Mogherini, on behalf of the EU on the occasion of the World Press Freedom Day, 3 May 2018

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On this day we celebrate the **World Press Freedom Day** in a difficult context for journalism. Freedom of expression and Freedom of the press are threatened around the world.

Attacks against media and journalists are attacks against democracy, against the freedom of all of us. We pay tribute to all journalists in Europe and worldwide who have lost their lives in the exercise of their profession. We call on all states to condemn violence against journalists, to take action to improve the safety of journalists with particular attention to women journalists, and to bring perpetrators and instigators of such violence to justice.

The European Union is founded on the values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, on free and pluralistic media as enshrined in the EU's fundamental rights charter. Press freedom plays a crucial role in promoting good governance, transparency, and accountability. Independent journalism is vital to hold states accountable and to monitor democratic processes. Free, diverse and independent media, both online and offline, are pillars of a pluralistic and open society, and they bear the great responsibility to guarantee checked and correct news to the public.

Respect for freedom of expression is integrated in all EU policies and development programmes. EU legislation, policies and instruments have been designed to strengthen media freedom across the union and to improve transparency, credibility and diversity of information online. The EU will continue funding targeted projects in third countries enhancing quality of journalism, access to public information and freedom of expression.

We will consistently condemn violence against journalists and oppose – in

bilateral contacts with third countries as well as in multilateral and regional fora – any legislation, regulation or political pressure that limits freedom of expression and will take concrete steps to prevent and respond to attacks against journalists and bloggers, including emergency assistance to protect human rights defenders at high risk, sometimes by means of relocation.

Today we reaffirm EU's determination to keep protecting and promoting freedom of opinion and of expression as rights to be exercised by everyone everywhere, based on the principles of equality, non-discrimination and universality, through any media, within our borders and beyond.

[Download as pdf](#)

March 2018 – Euro area unemployment at 8.5% – EU28 at 7.1%

The **euro area** (EA19) seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate was 8.5% in March 2018, stable compared with February 2018 and down from 9.4% in March 2017. This is the lowest rate recorded in the **euro area** since December 2008. The **EU28** unemployment rate was 7.1% in March 2018, stable compared with February 2018 and down from 7.9% in March 2017. This is the lowest rate recorded in the **EU28** since September 2008. These figures are published by **Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union**.

[Full text available on EUROSTAT website](#)