

COLLEGE MEETING: Multiannual Financial Framework after 2020

Ahead of the Informal Leaders' meeting on 23 February 2018, the European Commission is today setting out various options – and their financial consequences – for a new and modern, long-term EU budget that delivers efficiently on its priorities after 2020. When discussing the level of ambition of EU action in areas like protecting the EU's external borders, supporting a true European Defence Union, boosting Europe's digital transformation or making the EU's cohesion and agricultural policies more efficient, it is important for the Leaders to ascertain what their choices would mean concretely in terms of funding at EU level. Today's contribution from the Commission seeks to do exactly that – by quantifying the financial impact of various possible policy choices. Their purpose is to focus minds, to stimulate discussion and to provide a sound factual basis for making the important choices that lie ahead. European Commission President Jean-Claude **Juncker** said: *"Budgets are not bookkeeping exercises – they are about priorities and ambition. They translate our future into figures. So let's first discuss about the Europe we want. Then, Member States must back their ambition up with the money to match. And whilst we all need to understand that business as usual is not an option for this upcoming discussion, I firmly believe that we can square the circle and agree on a budget where everyone will be a net beneficiary."* The Commission is also setting out options to modernise the EU budget, including by possibly strengthening the link between EU funding and the respect for the EU's fundamental values. Moreover, it sets out possibilities for strengthening the link – often referred to as "conditionality" – between the goals of the EU budget and the way it is funded. Finally, a swift political agreement on a new, modern EU budget will be essential to demonstrate that the Union is ready to deliver on the positive political agenda outlined in Bratislava and Rome. Commissioner in charge of Budget and Human Resources, Günther H. **Oettinger** said: *"We must not repeat the unfortunate experience of 2013 when the current EU budget was agreed with considerable delay. If such a delay were to happen again, more than 100,000 EU-funded projects – in key areas like business support, energy efficiency, health care, education and social inclusion – would not be able to start on time, and hundreds of thousands of young people would not be able to benefit from an Erasmus+ exchange in 2021."* The European Commission will table its formal proposal for the next long-term EU budget in the coming months, at the latest in early May 2018. In the meantime, the Commission will continue listening to all stakeholders, including via the [public consultations](#) on the priorities of the EU that were launched in January 2018. A press release is available [online](#), along with a series of explanatory [factsheets](#). The press conference with President Jean-Claude **Juncker** and Commissioner Günther H. Oettinger can be followed on [EbS](#). (For more information: Margaritis Schinas – Tel.: +32 229 60524; Mina Andreeva – Tel.: +32 229 91382; Alexander Winterstein – Tel.: +32 229 93265)

COLLEGE MEETING: A Europe that delivers: Commission presents ideas for a more

efficient European Union

Ahead of the Informal Leaders' meeting on 23 February 2018, the European Commission is today presenting a number of practical steps that could make the European Union's work more efficient, and improve the connection between the leaders of the EU institutions and the citizens of Europe. European Commission President Jean-Claude **Juncker** said today: *"I have always said that form should follow function – this is not the time for long discussions about institutional reform or Treaty change. There are, however, a number of steps we can take to make the work of the European Union even more efficient in delivering on the key priorities that matter for Europeans. There are many options but the goal must be one and the same: creating a Europe that delivers."* Today's contribution from the Commission sets out the different institutional options for improving the organisation of European elections and deepening the connection between the leaders of the EU institutions and the citizens of Europe – from lead candidates, to transnational lists all the way to a double-hatted President for the European Commission and European Council. A [press release](#) is available online, along with a series of explanatory [factsheets](#). (For more information: Margaritis Schinas – Tel.: +32 229 60524; Mina Andreeva – Tel.: +32 229 91382; Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456)

REUNION DU COLLEGE: Initiative citoyenne européenne: la Commission enregistre l'initiative citoyenne intitulée «Nous sommes une Europe accueillante: apportons notre aide!»

La Commission européenne a décidé aujourd'hui d'enregistrer une initiative citoyenne européenne (ICE) qui déclare que *"Les États membres ont du mal à gérer la question de la migration. La plupart d'entre nous voulons aider des personnes qui sont dans le besoin, parce que nous ne sommes pas indifférents à leur sort. Des millions de personnes se sont mobilisées pour apporter leur aide. Aujourd'hui, nous voulons être entendus. Exigeons une Europe accueillante! Nous appelons la Commission européenne à agir."* L'initiative demande à la Commission d'"*offr[ir] un soutien [...] aux groupes locaux venant en aide aux réfugiés*", d'"*empêche[r] les États membres de punir les bénévoles*" et de "*défendre [...] les victimes de l'exploitation [...], de la criminalité [...] [et] de violations des droits de l'homme*". L'enregistrement de cette initiative aura lieu le 15 février 2018 et marquera le début d'un processus de douze mois au cours duquel les signatures de soutien seront collectées par ses organisateurs. La décision d'enregistrement prise par la Commission ne concerne que la recevabilité juridique de la proposition. À ce stade, la Commission n'a pas analysé le fond. Si, en l'espace d'un an, l'initiative recueille un million de déclarations de soutien, provenant d'au moins sept États membres différents, la Commission disposera d'un délai de trois mois pour réagir. Elle pourra décider de faire droit à la demande ou non, mais dans les deux cas, elle sera tenue de motiver sa décision. Un communiqué de presse est disponible [ici](#). (For more information: Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456; Tim McPhie – Tel.: +32 229 58602)

COLLEGE MEETING: European Commission proposes to appoint a Member of the Board and Director "Resolution Planning and Decisions" in the Single Resolution Board

Today the European Commission proposed to appoint Mr Bostjan Jazbec as a Member of the Board and Director “Resolution Planning and Decisions” in the Single Resolution Board (“SRB”). In line with Regulation (EU) No 806/2014, which sets up the Board, the Commission had established a shortlist for the function of Member of the Board and Director “Resolution Planning and Decisions” on 20 December 2017. This shortlist was then transmitted to the European Parliament, which has in turn provided feedback. The Commission will now communicate its decision to the European Parliament for approval. Following such approval, it will then be for the Council to appoint Mr Jazbec. The appointment will be for a period of five years, non-renewable. Mr Bostjan Jazbec, a Slovenian official, has been serving as Governor of the Bank of Slovenia and Member of the Governing and General Councils of the European Central Bank since 2013. He also is the Slovenian Governor of the International Monetary Fund and a Member of the Central Bank Governance Group of the Bank for International Settlements. The [SRB](#) is the central resolution authority within the Banking Union. Together with the National Resolution Authorities of participating Member States, it forms the Single Resolution Mechanism, whose purpose is to ensure an orderly resolution of failing banks with minimal costs for taxpayers and to the real economy. *(For more information: Alexander Winterstein – Tel.: +32 229 93265; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)*

Eurostat: Estimation rapide pour le quatrième trimestre 2017: Le PIB en hausse de 0,6% tant dans la zone euro que dans l’UE28, +2,7% et +2,6% respectivement par rapport au quatrième trimestre 2016

Au cours du quatrième trimestre 2017, le PIB corrigé des variations saisonnières a augmenté de 0,6% dans la zone euro (ZE19) ainsi que dans l’UE28 par rapport au trimestre précédent, selon l’estimation rapide publiée par Eurostat, l’office statistique de l’Union européenne. Au cours du troisième trimestre 2017, le PIB avait crû de 0,7% dans les deux zones. En comparaison avec le même trimestre de l’année précédente, le PIB corrigé des variations saisonnières a enregistré une hausse de 2,7% dans la zone euro et de 2,6% dans l’UE28 au quatrième trimestre 2017, après +2,8% dans les deux zones au troisième trimestre 2017. Au cours du quatrième trimestre 2017, le PIB des États-Unis a augmenté de 0,6% par rapport au trimestre précédent (après +0,8% au troisième trimestre 2017). Par rapport au même trimestre de l’année précédente, le PIB a progressé de 2,5% (après +2,3% au troisième trimestre 2017). Sur l’ensemble de l’année 2017, le PIB a progressé de 2,5% dans les deux zones. Un communiqué de presse Eurostat est à votre disposition [en ligne](#). *(For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: + 32 229 58615; Annikky Lamp – Tel.: +32 229 56151)*

Sauver des mères et leurs nouveau-nés : un prix européen récompense des avancées scientifiques encourageantes

Hier soir, le prix “[Horizon Birth Day Prize](#)” a été décerné à trois projets de recherche visant à améliorer la santé maternelle et néonatale. Le prix, doté

globalement de 2,5 millions d'euros, récompense des solutions innovantes qui permettent de réduire le nombre de décès et les complications pendant la grossesse et l'accouchement. Carlos **Moedas**, le commissaire à la recherche, la science et l'innovation, a déclaré: *"C'est tragique de constater que, aujourd'hui encore, de nombreuses mères ou leurs nouveau-nés meurent lors de l'accouchement. Ce prix récompense plusieurs projets qui permettent de prévenir les complications et de réduire drastiquement le nombre de décès. La coopération avec la Fondation Bill & Melinda Gates et MSD for Mothers est un excellent exemple de la mise en commun de nos ressources pour sauver des vies humaines."* Le premier prix a été décerné au projet [QUARITE](#), mené par des chercheurs français et canadiens pour leur travail qui a permis de réduire considérablement le taux de mortalité des mères dans des hôpitaux au Mali et au Sénégal. La deuxième place a été attribuée au projet américain [CHAI](#), et la troisième au projet britannique [WOMAN Trial](#). Grace aux programmes européens de recherche et d'innovation, notamment Horizon 2020 (2014-20) et son prédécesseur FP7 (2007-13), la Commission a investi plus de 740 millions d'euros dans la recherche dédiée à la santé maternelle et néonatale. Le "Horizon Birth Day Prize" est une initiative de la Commission européenne, qui s'est engagée à le financer à hauteur d'un million d'euros. La [Fondation Bill & Melinda Gates](#) a contribué à hauteur d'un million d'euros et le [MSD for Mothers](#) a participé à hauteur de 500 000 d'euros. Plus d'informations sont disponibles [ici](#). (Plus d'informations: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Victoria von Hammerstein – Tel.: +32 229 55040; Maud Noyon – Tel. +32 229-80379)

State aid: Commission approves public service compensation to Bornholm airport in Denmark

The European Commission has found the Danish public support to the airport of Bornholm to be in line with EU State aid rules. The public funding facilitates regional connectivity and contributes to the area's development without unduly distorting competition in the Single Market. Bornholm airport is located on an island in the Baltic Sea and is entrusted with the operation of a service of general economic interest (SGEI) requiring it to receive all airlines that wish to fly to and from it. The approved public compensation amounts to approximately DKK 26 million (€3.5 million) annually until 2020. The Commission assessed this measure under its [2014 Guidelines on State aid to airports and airlines](#), which allow Member States to grant aid in the form of SGEI compensation to airports that have an important role for regional connectivity. The Commission's investigation found that without the airport, the island of Bornholm would face significant disadvantages in terms of connectivity and economic development compared to other European regions, as the airport is the most important connection hub for its population to reach the Danish mainland and for tourists from the rest of Europe to reach Bornholm. In line with the Guidelines, the Commission also ensured that the compensation cannot be used to directly subsidise any airline serving the airport. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the [State Aid Register](#) under the case number SA.49331. (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889)

La Commission approuve une nouvelle appellation d'origine protégée pour un vin des Pays-Bas

La Commission européenne a approuvé la demande d'inscription des vins néerlandais "Mergelland" dans le registre des appellations d'origine protégées (AOP). Les vins produits sous l'appellation "Mergelland" peuvent être blancs ou rouges. Ils proviennent de différents cépages, tels que le Pinot Noir, le Riesling, le Gewürztraminer ou encore le Chardonnay, tous cultivés sur le territoire des communes néerlandaises de Maastricht, Meerssen, Nuth, Simpelveld, Voerendaal, Vaals, Gulpen-Wittem, Eijsden-Margraten et Valkenburg aan de Geul, dans le sud du pays. Le Mergelland est considéré comme le berceau de la viticulture néerlandaise moderne. La particularité de la région, et ce qui la distingue du reste des Pays-Bas, est la prédominance de cépages classiques originaires du Nord de la France et d'Allemagne et son climat favorable pour les vignes. Cette nouvelle appellation va rejoindre plus de 1750 vins déjà protégés dont la liste est disponible dans la base de données [e-bacchus](#). Pour plus d'informations, voir aussi les pages sur la [politique de qualité](#). *(pour plus d'information: Daniel Rosario – Tel: +32 2 29 56185; Clémence Robin – Tel: +32 229 52 509)*

Eurostat: Décembre 2017 comparé à novembre 2017: La production industrielle en hausse de 0,4% dans la zone euro, en hausse de 0,3% dans l'UE28

En décembre 2017 par rapport à novembre 2017, la production industrielle corrigée des variations saisonnières a augmenté de 0,4% dans la zone euro (ZE19) et de 0,3% dans l'UE28, selon les estimations d'Eurostat, l'office statistique de l'Union européenne. En novembre 2017, la production industrielle avait progressé de 1,3% dans la zone euro et de 1,2% dans l'UE28. En décembre 2017 par rapport à décembre 2016, la production industrielle a augmenté de 5,2% dans la zone euro et de 4,8% dans l'UE28. Par rapport à 2016, la production industrielle moyenne de l'année 2017 a progressé de 3,0% dans la zone euro et de 3,3% dans l'UE28. Un communiqué de presse Eurostat est à votre disposition [en ligne](#). *(For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel.: +32 229 56182; Victoria von Hammerstein – Tel.: +32 229 55040; Maud Noyon – Tel.: +32 229 80379)*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Le commissaire Navracsics discutera au Conseil des prochaines étapes de la construction d'un espace européen de l'éducation

Le Commissaire à l'éducation, la culture, la jeunesse et au sport, Tibor Navracsics, participera demain au Conseil des ministres de l'éducation pour débattre des projets inscrits par les chefs d'Etat et de gouvernement de l'UE dans les [conclusions](#) du Conseil européen du 14 décembre 2017. Ce débat permettra à la Commission d'entendre les différents points de vue des ministres sur la manière dont la Commission et les États membres peuvent œuvrer ensemble en faveur d'un [espace européen de l'éducation](#) dans lequel l'apprentissage à l'école, les études supérieures et la recherche ne seraient pas enfermés dans des frontières. Ce sera également l'occasion de tirer parti

du récent [Sommet sur l'éducation](#) que le Commissaire Navracsics a organisé le 25 janvier à Bruxelles et auquel de nombreux ministres de l'éducation ont participé. Pour le débat politique sur [l'évaluation à mi-parcours](#) et l'avenir du [programme Erasmus+](#), le Commissaire sera accompagné de Marianne **Thyssen**, Commissaire à l'emploi, aux affaires sociales, aux compétences et à la mobilité de la main-d'œuvre. Ce débat intervient à un moment charnière dans la réflexion sur l'avenir d'Erasmus+ suite à l'appel lancé par le Conseil européen pour *"intensifier la mobilité et les échanges, notamment dans le cadre d'un programme Erasmus+ qui soit sensiblement renforcé, inclusif et étendu"*. Les ministres organiseront également un déjeuner-débat sur le renforcement de la coopération dans le domaine de l'éducation pour des sociétés inclusives, cohésives et innovantes. Plus d'informations sur la réunion du Conseil sont disponibles [ici](#). Une [conférence de presse](#) suivra la réunion vers 15h00. (Pour plus d'informations: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tél .: +32 2 29 67083, Joseph Waldstein – Tél .: +32 2 29 56184)

Vice-President Šefčovič in Azerbaijan to attend the Southern Gas Corridor Advisory Council

Vice-President for the Energy Union Maroš **Šefčovič** arrives in Baku, Azerbaijan, later today, to attend the 4th meeting of the Southern Gas Corridor Advisory Council. The Council gathers all main actors involved in the Southern Gas Corridor, which is a strategic initiative that aims to bring Caspian, Central Asian, Middle Eastern and the Black Sea gas resources to the European markets. The meeting is crucial for streamlining the development and implementation of the Corridor by bringing together all the countries and stakeholders involved. Ministers from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey will also attend, as invitations were extended to the energy ministers of the relevant EU Member States, partner countries and international financing institutions. On the margins, Vice-President will hold bilateral talks with Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev. Before arriving to Baku, Vice-President **Šefčovič** said: *"I am looking forward to receiving a detailed update from the operators and consortia on various projects of the Southern Gas Corridor. It has a strategic importance for the European energy security, especially in the most vulnerable parts of Europe, such as South-East Europe and Southern Italy. We all stand to gain from this 'bridge' between the EU market and the Caspian region. In the long run, our objective is to create a pan-European energy market based on free trade, competition and diversified supplies, sources and routes."* (For more information: Anca Paduraru – Tel.: +32 229 91269; Aikaterini Apostola – Tel.: +32 229 87624)

Commissioner Stylianides visits Ireland to present rescEU, the EU's comprehensive plan to strengthen its emergency response to disasters

Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides** is travelling to Dublin today to meet with Mr Paul Kehoe, Minister of State at the Department of Defence. The visit provides an opportunity for Commissioner **Stylianides** to present [rescEU](#), the European Commission's ambitious new plan to strengthen Europe's ability to deal with natural disasters. Ireland has recently witnessed the unprecedented weather phenomenon of hurricane Ophelia. In anticipation of more frequent and extreme

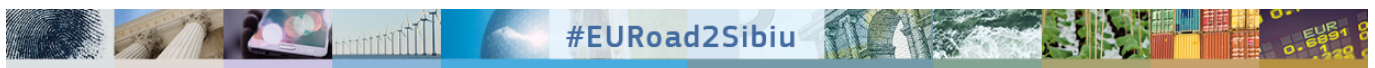
weather conditions also in Europe, the Commission's proposal intends to create a more robust EU civil protection mechanism, enabling the EU to better support all Member States to help citizens when national capacities have been exhausted. The comprehensive plan focusses on two complementary strands of action, targeting a stronger collective response at European level, rescEU, and stepping up disaster prevention and preparedness capacities. Administrative procedures will be streamlined and simplified to reduce the time needed to deploy life-saving assistance. *(For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz de Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)*

Commissioner Jourová in Prague

Tomorrow and Friday, 15 and 16 February, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, Vera **Jourová**, will be in Prague, Czech Republic. On Thursday, she will give a keynote speech at the international [‘Digital Czech Republic’](#) conference. The Commissioner will also give an opening speech at the Round Table addressing the issue of dual quality of food and food standardisation, which will be attended by several representatives of consumer organisations and the Czech Agriculture and Food Inspection Authority. Later in the afternoon, Commissioner Jourová will meet with the ANO party caucus in the Czech Senate. To conclude the day, Commissioner Jourová will attend a dinner with female CEOs. On Friday, the Commissioner will participate in the Round Table of the National Convention, with participants ranging from the government to businesses and civil society, to discuss the institutional reforms of the EU. *(For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Mélanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659)*

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

EU long-term budget after 2020: European Commission sets out options – and their consequences



European Commission President **Jean-Claude Juncker** said: “Budgets are not bookkeeping exercises – they are about priorities and ambition. They translate our future into figures. So let’s first discuss about the Europe we want. Then, Member States must back their ambition up with the money to match. And whilst we all need to understand that business as usual is not an option for this upcoming discussion, I firmly believe that we can square the circle and agree on a budget where everyone will be a net beneficiary.”

At their meeting on 23 February, the European Union's Leaders will discuss about how to ensure that the priorities they have set for the Union – on 16 September 2016 in Bratislava and on 25 March 2017 in the Rome Declaration – can be adequately funded and thus turned into reality. Both elements – defining common priorities and equipping the Union to implement them – are inseparable.

The Commission is contributing to this important discussion in three ways: First, by providing the necessary facts about the EU budget, its benefits, achievements and added value. Second, by drawing up scenarios which illustrate the financial impact of various possible policy choices. And third, by showing the consequences for students, researchers, infrastructure projects and many others in case the adoption of the new EU budget were to be delayed.

Options for the future EU budget

When discussing about the level of ambition of EU action in areas like protecting the EU's external borders, supporting a true European Defence Union, boosting Europe's digital transformation or making the EU's cohesion and agricultural policies more efficient, it is important for the Leaders to ascertain what their choices would mean concretely in terms of funding at EU level. Today's contribution from the Commission seeks to do exactly that – by quantifying the financial impact of various possible policy choices. Those are not the Commission's own proposals, but illustrations based on ideas frequently put forward in the public debate. Their purpose is to focus minds, to stimulate discussion and to provide a sound factual basis for making the important choices that lie ahead.

For example, if Leaders agree to honor the frequently made pledge to improve the protection of the EU's external borders, this would cost €20 to 25 bn over seven years, and up to €150 billion for a full EU border management system. Indeed, each political priority – the European Defence Union, supporting the mobility of young people, powering Europe's digital transformation, boosting research and innovation or underpinning a genuine Economic and Monetary Union – will need to be properly funded to become a reality.

Modernising and financing the EU budget

The Commission is also setting out options to modernise the EU budget, including by making the link between the goals of the EU budget and the way it is funded stronger. Moreover, it sets out possibilities for strengthening the link – often referred to as “conditionality” – between EU funding and the respect for the EU's fundamental values..

Timing matters – for citizens and businesses

A swift political agreement on a new, modern EU budget will be essential to demonstrate that the Union is ready to deliver on the positive political agenda outlined in Bratislava and Rome.

Commissioner in charge of Budget and Human Resources, **Günther H. Oettinger** said: “We must not repeat the unfortunate experience of 2013 when the current EU budget was agreed with considerable delay. If such a delay were to happen again, more than 100,000 EU-funded projects – in key areas like business support, energy efficiency, health care, education and social inclusion – would not be able to start on time, and hundreds of thousands of young people would not be able to benefit from an Erasmus+ exchange in 2021”.

Beyond being politically desirable, an early agreement is also a practical imperative. Partners and beneficiaries of EU funding – from students and researchers to infrastructure, health care or energy projects – as well as national and regional authorities deserve and need legal and financial certainty. The Commission draws the Leaders' attention to concrete examples of the detrimental impact which a delay would have on citizens and businesses all across the EU. The Commission believes that the unfortunate experience with the late adoption of the current EU budget – with significant delays in the launch of the new programmes and, consequently, in achieving the funding priorities – should not be repeated.

Next steps

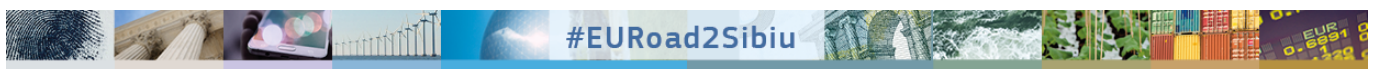
The European Commission will table its formal proposal for the next long-term EU budget in the coming months, at the latest in early May 2018. In the meantime, the Commission will continue listening to all stakeholders, including via the [public consultations](#) on the priorities of the EU that were launched in January 2018.

For More Information:

- Communication *"A new, modern Multiannual Financial Framework for a EU that delivers efficiently on its priorities post-2020"*

- [Fact sheets](#)
- [Reflection paper on the future of EU finances](#)
- [Public consultations: The future of EU finances – have your say on the EU budget after 2020](#)

A Europe that delivers: Commission presents ideas for a more efficient European Union



European Commission President **Jean-Claude Juncker** said today: *"With the Bratislava Roadmap, the Rome Declaration and now the Leaders' Agenda, Europe has rightly been focused on creating a Union that delivers concrete and tangible results for its citizens on the issues that matter to them. We must continue on this path. I have always said that form should follow function – now is not the time for long discussions of institutional reform or Treaty change. There are, however, a number of steps we can take to make our work even more efficient in delivering on our key priorities. There are many options but the goal must be one and the same: creating a Europe that delivers."*

Lead Candidates: Building on the 2014 "Spitzenkandidaten" experience

The 2014 election process strengthened the relationship between the three EU institutions and improved the efficiency of their work. It helped them to align themselves around a common work programme for the five year mandate. This is what enabled the Juncker Commission to work in a more political way and concentrate on where the Union delivers the best results, leaving the rest to Member States.

In his 2017 State of the Union Address, President Juncker said that the 2014 'lead candidate' experiment should continue. Today, the European Commission is setting out how the process can be improved on the basis of the current Treaties while respecting the balance between the EU institutions and among the Member States. This includes calling on **political parties to make an earlier choice of the lead candidates, before the end of 2018, and for an earlier start to the campaign.** This would give voters more opportunity to identify with the candidates and the political programmes they stand for.

The Commission is also recommending the link **between national parties and European parties be made more visible.** Political parties at national level should boost transparency about the European parties they are affiliated to, for example by using their logos in campaign and ballot material. They should also position themselves clearly on important European issues and express their intention for participating in political groups in the European Parliament and their choice for European Commission President.

Composition of the European Parliament and the European Commission

Leaders in the European Council have to decide – on the basis of a proposal from the European Parliament – on **the composition of the European Parliament for the 2019-2024 term** and what to do with the seats left vacant by the UK. One option is to reserve a number of these seats for a **transnational constituency.** Whilst in a recent Resolution (from 7 February), the European Parliament voted not to call for the creation of a transnational constituency, it did leave the door open for future debates. A number of Member States have recently expressed support for this idea, whereas others have expressed their disagreement with its establishment. A transnational constituency could strengthen the European dimension of the election by giving candidates the possibility to reach more citizens across Europe. On the other hand, parliamentarians normally represent and communicate closely with the voters who elected them on a local or national level, both for

reasons of accountability and to be able to raise concerns of their constituents. The Commission is sympathetic to the idea of transnational lists, but this will require unanimous agreement of the Council, and changes to electoral law in all 27 Member States in the next year to be applied for the 2019 elections.

The College of Commissioners currently consists of 28 members, one from each Member State – in line with a Decision of the European Council from 22 May 2013. Before the next European Commission is appointed, leaders will have to decide whether to maintain the principle of one Member from each Member State, or to make the Commission smaller. A smaller executive would in theory be more efficient in its operation, easier to manage and would allow a more balanced distribution of portfolios. But a smaller Commission would also mean that some Member States would not be represented at the political level of the institution, and would lose the advantage of maintaining a direct political communication channel with their citizens and national authorities.

A Double-Hatted President for the Commission and Council

In his State of the Union speech in 2017, President Juncker first suggested the idea of a double-hatted President. A single person holding the two offices of President of the European Council and President of the European Commission could make the structure of the Union more efficient. This is possible under the current Treaties. A dual appointment does not require merging the two institutions. The President of the European Commission is already a Member of the European Council, and neither of the two Presidents vote in the European Council; their role is to advise, bring input from the work of their services, help to build bridges and map out common ground.

Citizens' Dialogues

The European Commission regularly organises Citizens' Dialogues with Members of the Commission, the European Parliament, national governments, local and regional authorities and civil society representatives. Almost 500 of these interactive public debates have been held in 160 locations since 2012, and the Commission will increase their frequency between now and the European elections in May 2019, with a target of reaching around **500 more events**. The Commission also welcomes the initiatives of individual Member States to organise their own national conversations with citizens on the future of Europe and is ready to offer its support where it can, for example by linking the process to the online consultation on the future of Europe which could remain open until 9 May 2019. The Commission will share the benefits of its experience with Member States.

Background

Today's proposed ideas and options are a direct follow-up to the [European Commission's report \(from 8 May 2015\) on the 2014 European Parliament elections](#) which pledged to identify ways of further enhancing the European dimension and the democratic legitimacy of the EU decision-making process, and to examine further, and seek to address, the reasons for the persistently low turnout in some Member States.

For more information

[Communication: A Europe that Delivers: Institutional options for making the EU's work more efficient](#)

[Recommendation: on enhancing the European nature and efficient conduct of the 2019 elections to the European Parliament](#)

[European Commission Report on the 2014 European Parliament elections](#)

[2018 report on European and municipal elections](#)

[Factsheets:](#)

- Options for making the European Union's work more efficient
- The composition of the European Parliament and European Council – what to expect in 2019
- The birth of the 'Spitzenkandidaten' and the 2014 European election campaign
- Dialogue with citizens ahead of the European elections
- New rules for making the 2019 European elections more transparent
- A double-hatted President?
- Visits and meetings of Members of the Commission with national Parliaments since the beginning of the mandate

[**Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the alignment of certain third countries concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Venezuela**](#)

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On 22 January 2018 the Council adopted Decision (CFSP) 2018/90^[1] implementing Council Decision 2017/2074/CFSP.

In view of the continuing deterioration of the situation in Venezuela, seven persons should be included in the list of natural and legal persons, entities and bodies subject to restrictive measures in Annex I to Decision (CFSP) 2017/2074.

The Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro* and Albania*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia.

They will ensure that their national policies conform to this Council Decision.

The European Union takes note of this commitment and welcomes it.

^[1] Published on 22.01.2018 in the Official Journal of the European Union L 16 I/14

*The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

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European Citizens' Initiative: Commission registers 'We are a welcoming Europe, let us help!' initiative

The European Commission has today decided to register a European Citizens' Initiative entitled 'We are a welcoming Europe, let us help!' which states: *"Governments are struggling to handle migration. Most of us want to help people in need because we care. Millions have stood up to help. Now we want to be heard. Let's reclaim a Welcoming Europe! We call upon the European Commission to act."* The organisers call on the Commission to *"support local groups that help refugees... stop governments punishing volunteers... defend victims of exploitation, crime and human rights abuses"* (see Annex).

The Commission's decision to register the Initiative concerns only the legal

admissibility of the proposal. The Commission has not analysed the substance at this stage.

The registration of this Initiative will take place on 15 February 2018, starting a one-year process of collection of signatures of support by its organisers. Should the initiative receive one million statements of support within one year, from at least seven different Member States, the Commission will have to react within three months. The Commission can decide either to follow the request or not, and in both instances would be required to explain its reasoning.

Background

European Citizens' Initiatives were introduced with the Lisbon Treaty and launched as an agenda-setting tool in the hands of citizens in April 2012, upon the entry into force of the European Citizens' Initiative Regulation which implements the Treaty provisions.

Once formally registered, a European Citizens' Initiative allows one million citizens from at least one quarter of EU Member States to invite the European Commission to propose a legal act in areas where the Commission has the power to do so.

The conditions for admissibility, as foreseen by the European Citizens' Initiative Regulation, are that the proposed action does not manifestly fall outside the framework of the Commission's powers to submit a proposal for a legal act, that it is not manifestly abusive, frivolous or vexatious and that it is not manifestly contrary to the values of the Union.

For more information

[ECIs currently collecting signatures](#)

[ECI website](#)

[ECI Regulation](#)

Annex – Description of the objectives of 'We are a welcoming Europe, let us help!'

1. Citizens across Europe want to sponsor refugees to offer them a safe home and a new life. We want the Commission to offer direct support to local groups that help refugees who are granted national visas.
2. No one should be prosecuted or fined for offering humanitarian help or shelter. We want the Commission to stop those governments that are punishing volunteers.
3. Everyone has the right to justice. We want the Commission to guarantee more effective ways and rules to defend all victims of labour exploitation and crime across Europe and all victims of human rights abuses at our

borders.