



The State of the Union 2016: Towards a Better Europe – A Europe that Protects, Empowers and Defends

Strasbourg, 14 September 2016

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European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker today delivered his 2016 State of the Union address, before the Members of the European Parliament in Strasbourg, taking stock of achievements of the past year and presenting his priorities for the year ahead. He outlined how the Commission will address the most pressing challenges the European Union is facing.

President Juncker said today: *"The next twelve months are decisive if we want to reunite our Union. Europe is a cord of many strands – it only works when we are all pulling in the same direction: EU institutions, national governments and national Parliaments alike. And we have to show again that this is possible, in a selected number of areas where common solutions are most urgent. I am therefore proposing a positive agenda of concrete European actions for the next twelve months."*

President Juncker's speech in the European Parliament was accompanied by the adoption of concrete initiatives by the European Commission on investment, the Digital Single Market, Capital Markets Union and security, putting words immediately into action.

Key messages of the State of the Union 2016

Europe at a critical juncture

"Europe can only work if we all work for unity and commonality, and forget the rivalry between competences and institutions. Only then will Europe be more than the sum of its parts."

"European nations have to defend the rationale for unity. No one can do it for them."

"The great, democratic nations of Europe must not bend to the winds of populism. Europe must not cower in the face of terrorism. No, Member States must build a Europe that protects."

Preserving the European Way of Life

Free Movement: *"We Europeans can never accept Polish workers being harassed, beaten up or even murdered on the streets of Harlow. The free movement of workers is as much a common European value as our fight against discrimination and racism."*

Death penalty: *"We Europeans stand firmly against the death penalty. Because we believe in and respect the value of human life."*

Trade: *"The EU-Canada trade agreement is the best and most progressive deal the EU has ever negotiated. I will work with you and with all Member States to see this agreement ratified as soon as possible."*

Data protection: *"Europeans do not like drones overhead recording their every move, or companies stockpiling their every mouse click. In Europe, privacy matters. This is a question of human dignity."*

Posting of workers: *"Workers should get the same pay for the same work in the same place. Europe is not the Wild West, but a social market economy."*

Competition: *"In Europe, consumers are protected against cartels and abuses by powerful companies. This goes for giants like Apple too. In Europe we do not accept powerful companies getting illegal backroom deals on their taxes. The Commission watches over this fairness. This is the social side of competition law."*

Steel industry: *"We already have 37 anti-dumping and anti-subsidy measures in place to protect our steel industry from unfair competition. But we need to do more. I call on all Member States and on this Parliament to support the Commission in strengthening our trade defence instruments. We should not be naïve free traders, but be able to respond as forcefully to dumping as the United States."*

Agricultural sector: *"The Commission will always stand by our farmers, particularly when they go*

through difficult moments as is the case today. Because I will not accept that milk is cheaper than water."

A Europe that Empowers

Copyright: "I want journalists, publishers and authors to be paid fairly for their work, whether it is made in studios or living rooms, whether it is disseminated offline or online, whether it is published via a copying machine or commercially hyperlinked on the web."

Connectivity: "We propose today to equip every European village and every city with free wireless internet access around the main centres of public life by 2020."

Investment and Jobs: "Europe must invest strongly in its youth, in its jobseekers, in its start-ups. Today, we propose to double the duration of the European Fund for Strategic Investments and double its financial capacity."

"I cannot and will not accept that the millennials, Generation Y, might be the first generation in 70 years to be poorer than their parents."

Solidarity: "Solidarity is the glue that keeps our Union together. But I also know that solidarity must be given voluntarily. It must come from the heart. It cannot be forced."

Migration: "Today we are launching an ambitious Investment Plan for Africa and the Neighbourhood which has the potential to raise €44 billion in investments. It can go up to €88 billion if Member States pitch in. The new Investment Plan for Africa and the Neighbourhood will offer lifelines for those who would otherwise be pushed to take dangerous journeys in search of a better life."

A Europe that Defends

Terrorism: "Just as we have stood shoulder to shoulder in grief, so must we stand united in our response."

"In face of the worst of humanity we have to stay true to our values, to ourselves. And what we are is democratic societies, plural societies, open and tolerant. But that tolerance cannot come at the price of our security."

Security: "We will defend our borders with the new European Border and Coast Guard. I want to see at least 200 extra border guards and 50 extra vehicles deployed at the Bulgarian external borders as of October."

Global Europe: "Europe can no longer afford to piggy-back on the military might of others or let France alone defend its honour in Mali."

"For European defence to be strong, the European defence industry needs to innovate. That is why we will propose before the end of the year a European Defence Fund, to turbo boost research and innovation."

A European Strategy Syria: "Federica Mogherini, our High Representative and my Vice-President, is doing a fantastic job. But she needs to become our European Foreign Minister via whom all diplomatic services, of big and small countries alike, pool their forces to achieve leverage in international negotiations. This is why I call today for a European Strategy for Syria."

A Defence Union: "Europe needs to toughen up. Nowhere is this truer than in our defence policy. The Lisbon Treaty enables those Member States who wish, to pool their defence capabilities in the form of a permanent structured cooperation. I think the time to make use of this possibility is now."

A Europe that takes responsibility

"I call on each of the 27 leaders making their way to Bratislava to think of three reasons why we need the European Union. Three things they are willing to take responsibility for defending. And that they are willing to deliver swiftly afterwards."

"I have asked each of my Commissioners to be ready to discuss, in the next two weeks, the State of our Union in the national Parliaments of the countries they each know best. Because Europe can only be built with the Member States, never against them."

"It is not right that when EU countries cannot decide among themselves whether or not to ban the use of glyphosate in herbicides, the Commission is forced by Parliament and Council to take a decision. So we will change those rules – because that is not democracy."

"Being political means correcting technocratic mistakes immediately when they happen. The Commission, the Parliament and the Council have jointly decided to abolish mobile roaming charges. This is a promise we will deliver. Not just for business travellers who go abroad for two days. Not only for the holiday maker who spends two weeks in the sun. But for our cross-border workers. And for the millions of Erasmus students who spend their studies abroad for one or two semesters. You will see a

new, better draft as of next week. When you roam, it should be like at home."

"Taking responsibility also means holding ourselves accountable to voters. That is why we will propose to change the absurd rule that Commissioners have to step down from their functions when they want to run in European elections. We should encourage Commissioners to seek the necessary rendez-vous with democracy. And not prevent this."

Background

Every year in September, the President of the European Commission delivers his State of the Union speech before the European Parliament. The speech is followed by a plenary debate with Members of the European Parliament. The speech kick-starts the dialogue with the Parliament and Council to prepare the Commission Work Programme for the following year. In addition, President Juncker and First Vice-President Timmermans sent today a Letter of Intent to European Parliament President Martin Schulz and Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico, holder of the rotating Presidency of the Council to outline the concrete initiatives the Commission is planning to take in the months to come. This is specifically foreseen in the 2010 Framework Agreement on relations between the European Parliament and the European Commission.

This year's State of the Union address also constitutes the European Commission's contribution to the informal meeting of the 27 Heads of State or Government in Bratislava on 16 September 2016.

For more information

The 2016 State of the Union Speech, the Letter of Intent a report on progress on the ten political priorities of the European Commission are available at: www.ec.europa.eu/soteu

[The 2015 State of the Union speech](#)

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