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Sittings of 13 to 16 November 2017
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The Minutes of this session have been published in OJ C 156, 3.5.2018.

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Key to symbols used

* Consultation procedure

*** Consent procedure

***I Ordinary legislative procedure: first reading

***II Ordinary legislative procedure: second reading

***III Ordinary legislative procedure: third reading

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New text is highlighted in **bold italics**. Deletions are indicated using either the ▌ symbol or strikeout. Replacements are indicated by highlighting the new text in **bold italics** and by deleting or striking out the text that has been replaced.
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I

(Resolutions, recommendations and opinions)

RESOLUTIONS

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

P8_TA(2017)0423

Saving lives: Boosting car safety in the EU

European Parliament resolution of 14 November 2017 on saving lives: boosting car safety in the EU

(2017/2085(INI))

(2018/C 356/01)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to the Commission report entitled ‘Saving Lives: Boosting Car Safety in the EU — Reporting on the monitoring and assessment of advanced vehicle safety features, their cost effectiveness and feasibility for the review of the regulations on general vehicle safety and on the protection of pedestrians and other vulnerable road users’ (COM(2016)0787) and to the accompanying Commission staff working document (SWD(2016)0431),


having regard to its resolution of 9 September 2015 on 'The implementation of the 2011 White Paper on Transport: taking stock and the way forward towards sustainable mobility' (2),

having regard to its resolution of 18 May 2017 on road transport in the European Union (3),

having regard to its resolution of 3 July 2013 on 'Road safety 2011-2020 — First milestones towards an injury strategy' (4),

having regard to its resolution of 27 September 2011 on European road safety 2011-2020 (5),

having regard to its resolution of 15 December 2011 on 'The Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area — Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system' (6),

having regard to the Commission communication entitled 'A European strategy on Cooperative Intelligent Transport Systems, a milestone towards cooperative, connected and automated mobility' (COM(2016)0766),

having regard to the Commission communication entitled 'Towards a European road safety area: policy orientations on road safety 2011-2020' (COM(2010)0389),

having regard to the Commission communication entitled 'CARS 2020: Action Plan for a competitive and sustainable automotive industry in Europe' (COM(2012)0636),

having regard to the Commission White Paper entitled 'Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area — Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system' (COM(2011)0144),

having regard to the Commission report entitled 'Benefit and feasibility of a range of new technologies and unregulated measures in the field of vehicle occupant safety and protection of vulnerable road users', drawn up by the Transport Research Laboratory and published on 26 March 2015,

having regard to the Commission staff working document entitled 'On the implementation of objective 6 of the European Commission's policy orientations on road safety 2011-2020 — First milestone towards an injury strategy' (SWD(2013)0094),

having regard to the Council conclusions of 8 June 2017 on road safety in support of the Valletta Declaration of March 2017,

having regard to the package 'Europe on the Move', released by the Commission on 31 May 2017, which includes a set of eight legislative initiatives with a special focus on road transport,

having regard to the United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/260 of 15 April 2016 entitled 'Improving Global Road Safety',

having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure.

(1) OJ L 123, 19.5.2015, p. 77.
(4) OJ C 75, 26.2.2016, p. 49.
(5) OJ C 56 E, 26.2.2013, p. 54.
— having regard to the report of the Committee on Transport and Tourism and the opinion of the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection (A8-0330/2017),

A. whereas every year on Europe’s roads around 25 500 people die and some 135 000 are seriously injured, so that more — and more effective — measures need to be taken, in consultation with Member States, if the vision zero goal of ‘no fatalities’ is to be achieved;

B. whereas road safety depends on three factors: vehicle, infrastructure and drivers’ behaviour, and, therefore, measures in all three areas are necessary in order to enhance road safety and effective measures should be taken in the area of active and passive vehicle safety;

C. whereas the average age of passenger cars, light-duty vehicles and heavy-duty vehicles in the EU is constantly increasing and is now over 10 years; whereas the age of a vehicle has a direct bearing on the consequences of and the injuries sustained in a road accident;

D. whereas driver assistance systems make the vehicles safer and also enable the safe and active participation of persons with reduced mobility and the elderly in road traffic;

E. whereas intelligent driving systems reduce congestion, warn drivers of hazards on their route, and consequently help to lower the risk of causing an accident;

F. whereas the move towards driver-free vehicles is progressing rapidly and road safety generally is an urgent issue, so that a review of the General Safety Regulation must be submitted by the Commission no later than first quarter of 2018; whereas in any event any further delay would be unacceptable;

G. whereas since 38 % of all fatalities occur in urban areas, often involving vulnerable road users, Member States should take vulnerable road users into consideration in urban traffic planning, improving their treatment in relation to modes of transport such as cars and buses; whereas the Commission should present its review of the pedestrian protection regulation;

H. whereas there is a clear link between road safety and the working conditions of professional road users;

**General requests**

1. Stresses that Member States should conduct efficient and regular road checks on drivers, as the main causes of accidents, at present as in the past, are speed levels that are inappropriate and excessive speed for the driving conditions concerned, distraction, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, and excessive fatigue, and therefore:

   (a) calls on the Commission to set a percentage for the numbers of vehicles in classes M1 and N1 to be checked;

   (b) calls on the Commission to introduce stricter controls for the proper enforcement of compulsory working-time limits and rest periods for drivers who are professional road users;

   (c) calls on the Member States to step up exchanges of best practices, particularly regarding smart enforcement strategies, and to introduce penalties which will act as a deterrent to offenders;

2. Notes that around 25 % of all annual traffic fatalities in the EU are caused by alcohol consumption; invites the Commission, therefore, to assess the possible added value of harmonising the EU blood alcohol concentration limit at 0,0 % for new drivers in their first two years and for professional drivers, and welcomes some Member States’ zero tolerance policy for drunk driving;
3. Urges the Commission, bearing in mind the Valletta Declaration on improving road safety issued by the Maltese presidency on 29 March 2017, to include new targets for halving the number of serious injuries on the roads in the EU in its new road safety strategy for the decade 2020-2030;

4. Calls on the Member States to significantly improve the state of their road infrastructure by means of regular and effective maintenance, including of traffic signs and signalling systems, and appropriate upgrades to cope with traffic volumes, and to introduce innovative measures providing full functionality and enhancing the interoperability of driver assistance systems, resulting in so-called intelligent infrastructure; calls on the Commission to set up a mechanism to ensure that the European road infrastructure remains in an adequate condition;

5. Points out that infrastructural alterations (for example certain types of crash barrier or traffic-calming devices) can sometimes cause accidents or make them worse, especially when motorised two-wheelers are involved; calls on the Commission, therefore, to propose any standardisation measure likely to remedy the drawbacks;

6. Observes that many drivers are not aware of the necessity of or how to form a corridor for emergency vehicle access on motorways, and therefore calls on the Commission to set common standards for the creation of such corridors and to launch a European awareness campaign;

7. Observes that for pedestrians and cyclists nearly half of all fatalities resulting from traffic accidents are of persons aged over 65, and that road accidents are the biggest cause of death among young people; calls on the Member States, therefore, to make it possible for older people and young drivers to use the roads safely by developing well-publicised programmes to avert age-specific accident risks;

8. Observes that in 51% of cases the victims of fatal road accidents in urban areas are pedestrians and cyclists, and therefore encourages cities to include targets in their mobility plans for reducing the number of road and traffic accidents; also calls on the Member States to take greater account of more vulnerable road users, by addressing critical accident hotspots and by building and maintaining more safe pedestrian and cycling infrastructure or expanding and modernising existing infrastructure while also ensuring better indications; calls on the Commission also to take further action at EU level over and above the availability of existing funding schemes, in order to facilitate widespread improvements to cycling infrastructure and to mandate new active and passive vehicle safety technologies that protect in particular vulnerable road users;

9. Notes that because some cyclists are ignorant of traffic regulations and/or fail to observe them, situations sometimes arise in which their own safety and that of other road users can be endangered; calls on the Commission to consider what kind of proposal it might make to promote safer cycling, thereby enabling bicycles to be dovetailed smoothly with the other modes of urban mobility;

10. Encourages intelligent transport system (ITS) and public transport operators to further develop technologies for vehicles that encourage drivers to switch to safer modes of transport when entering urban areas;

11. Observes that new means of transport, such as e-bikes and other electric mobility devices, are becoming increasingly popular; calls on the Commission, therefore, to examine the safety requirements for such vehicles without delay, and to make proposals for their safe integration into road transport, while taking due account of subsidiarity;

12. Notes that the development and implementation of safety systems ought to make for road safety, and that this process will accordingly require some kind of adaptation period; calls on the Commission, therefore, to allow for the time necessary to develop such systems before specific technical legislation is put into effect;

13. Recalls that odometer fraud remains an untackled problem, especially in the second-hand car market, as noted by the Commission in its study on the functioning of the market for second-hand cars from a consumer perspective; urges the Commission and the Member States to address the issue of manipulation of or tampering with odometers through effective measures and legislation;
14. Notes that the more vehicles there are on the road, the more likely it is accidents might occur; calls, therefore, on the Member States and the Commission to promote collective and shared mobility, especially in urban areas, in order to reduce the circulating fleet, as well as measures to increase the proportion of bicycles and of professionally driven vehicles;

15. Points out that the equipment that must compulsorily be carried in a vehicle differs from one Member State to another, and calls on the Commission, therefore, to draw up an EU-wide binding list of objects that should fall under the carrying requirement;

16. Maintains that the EU and its research centres should play a leading role in the development of autonomous vehicles, since these will revolutionise the automobile sector, especially in terms of road safety, in which respect they are expected to save thousands of lives every year, as well as contributing to the digitalisation of the internal market;

**Driver assistance systems to increase road safety**

17. Stresses that approximately 92% of all accidents are due to human error or interaction of human error with vehicles and/or infrastructure, and that it should therefore be compulsory to incorporate only those driver assistance systems which improve road safety significantly as demonstrated by scientific evidence, have a favourable cost-benefit ratio, and have attained market maturity; considers that additionally, the resulting purchase price increases should not be so inordinate that the intended customers for such vehicles cannot afford to buy them, and that driver assistance systems, which are of relevance for road safety, should be checked regularly;

18. Calls on the Commission to test the above-mentioned safety devices when performing vehicle market surveillance;

19. Considers that the benefits of improved safety standards and equipment can be realised only if existing and future provisions are implemented and enforced effectively; calls, in this regard, for increased European-level oversight of type-approval authorities and technical services in the Union; calls, in addition, for greater and more independent post-market surveillance of vehicles on roads across the Union to ensure that they continue to conform to safety criteria;

20. Stresses that, when non-conformities are identified, European consumers should be able to count on rapid, appropriate and coordinated corrective measures, including Union-wide vehicle recall where necessary; considers that economic operators should be liable for any damage caused to owners of affected vehicles as a result of non-compliance or following a recall;

21. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to improve the safety level of existing vehicles in use and to support developments and innovations which will increase the safety of cars already in use by incentivising and promoting the retrofitting of vehicles with cost-effective road safety systems that help drivers react better in a dangerous situation;

22. Calls on manufacturers and operators:

(a) to make it clear to drivers what the activation status of each driver assistance system is;

(b) where systems can be switched off, to introduce two-stage deactivation systems, such that the driver can initially merely switch off the warning signal and can only deactivate the system itself by means of a second procedure;

(c) to ensure that each time a vehicle is started afresh the driver assistance system is restored to active status; and

(d) to introduce a pricing policy which will encourage consumers to choose vehicles equipped with safety and driver assistance systems;

23. Stresses that evident warnings should be sufficiently differentiated to ensure that it is intuitively clear to which system the assistance pertains, and that warnings should also be easy to perceive for elderly persons, persons with a disability, such as hearing and/or sight impairment, and persons with reduced mobility; calls, therefore, on the parties concerned to adopt appropriate uniform standards allowing the possibility of operator-specific solutions;
24. Welcomes the fact that almost all cars tested under the European New Car Assessment Programme for consumers (Euro NCAP) are awarded five stars and that the majority of car manufacturers have successfully responded to the challenge of meeting the new Euro NCAP requirements; notes, however, that not all car models sold in Europe are tested by Euro NCAP, and not all of the same type are sold with the same specification, which may create lack of clarity for consumers and thus offer a false level of confidence in the vehicle in relation to the actual performance of the model purchased; recalls the importance, therefore, of a strong underlying standard of mandatory safety requirements which ensure that all necessary safety equipment is present across the fleet used and sold in the EU;

25. Is of the opinion that the Euro NCAP should always reflect the actual car safety of a specific model, and encourages it to be more ambitious in assessing the safety of new vehicles than the statutory minimum requirements compel it to, and to take into consideration the updated statutory minimum requirements, in order to further promote the development of vehicles that ensure high road safety standards and so that Europe remains ambitious and acts as a global leader in car safety;

26. Calls on the Commission to coordinate the adoption of standards with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) so as to achieve international consistency and at the same time limit to a minimum exemptions from the requirement to install driver assistance systems, in order to improve road safety across the board; stresses, in addition, that manufacturers should create clear information materials to help drivers better understand the various driver assistance systems and their functionalities;

27. Calls for a harmonised European approach which takes into account all existing international and national legislation and ensures its complementarity;

28. Calls on the Commission to investigate the involvement of special-purpose vehicles in urban accidents and, if necessary, to abolish the existing exemptions from the requirement to install driver assistance systems;

29. Stresses that drivers’ instruction should include periodical and additional training in using obligatory driver assistance mechanisms, paying special attention to the elderly and persons with reduced mobility; urges driving schools, on the one hand, to incorporate issues relating to the operation of these systems into their learner training, and, on the other hand, to couple acquiring a driving licence with having received professional, on-road practical training;

30. Notes that financial incentives, for example tax-based or insurance-based, for measures such as the installation of additional safety-relevant driver assistance systems in new and used cars or their inclusion in driver training, can facilitate the market uptake of vehicles with advanced safety features; invites Member States to consider introducing such mechanisms;

31. Calls on the Commission to require market operators to arrange for the use of open standards and interfaces which will further improve interoperability, so that independent tests can be carried out by accessing the relevant vehicle and system data, including their updates, and can be performed by any qualified professional, while respecting proprietary data and intellectual property;

32. Stresses that a high level of data protection and retention as required by Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (the General Data Protection Regulation) and by the right to protection of privacy and personal data should be ensured, as should high IT security, so that the possibility of new accident risks due to remote manipulation of on-board systems or conflicts of compatibility is excluded; recommends that the principle of ownership of data be explored;

33. Stresses the importance of making use of reliable position and time information from satellite-based positioning systems and of applying the EGNOS/GNSS system to road-active safety; calls for more efforts to be made in order to achieve an EGNOS/GNSS road-active safety accuracy of less than one metre, with a view to a shift from the system’s ability to reduce vehicle speed to its ability to automatically intervene and deviate the vehicle trajectory; calls for the promotion of enhanced road safety by integrating EGNOS/GNSS data with on-board control systems;
Safety measures for accident prevention

34. Welcomes the fact that emergency braking is already mandatory, since November 2015, for all new trucks and buses in the EU, but calls on the Commission to make it compulsory to install automatic emergency braking assistants with detection of pedestrians, cyclists, light powered two-wheelers and motorcyclists in cars, light commercial vehicles, buses, coaches and, especially, heavy goods vehicles, as these have a strong potential to prevent road accidents by means of autonomous powerful braking and a resulting shorter stopping distance;

35. Calls for safer front-end design of heavy goods vehicles related to better vision of pedestrians and cyclists, as well as for barriers to avoid collisions and mitigate consequences of collisions;

36. Calls for the compulsory installation of overridable intelligent speed assistant systems that indicate speed limits, stop signs and traffic lights and intervene to assist drivers to remain within speed limits; calls on Member States to ensure that road signs are kept in excellent condition and that road markings are clearly legible; emphasises that for the proper working of intelligent assistant systems it is necessary to have updated online road maps with current speed limit indications;

37. Stresses that, in order to improve road safety, the deceleration of vehicles should be rendered easier for other road users to perceive by means of clear signal lights on vehicles, and expects the compulsory use of an emergency braking indicator in the form of a flashing brake light or flashing hazard lights;

38. Stresses that in view of its relevance to road safety, an overridable lane-keeping assistance that not only warns but also appropriately intervenes, albeit without preventing drivers from acting directly, should be made compulsory; notes that for using this warning system it is necessary that road markings are kept in a condition ensuring that they are clearly recognisable;

39. Emphasises that increasing the direct vision of the driver in heavy goods vehicles, buses and coaches and reducing or eliminating blind spots are vital for improving the road safety of such vehicles; calls on the Commission, therefore, to mandate ambitious differentiated direct vision standards and to make it compulsory to install front, side and rear cameras, sensors and turning assistant systems, while observing that such measures should accord with Directive (EU) 2015/719 and should not result in any extension of the time limits for implementation laid down therein;

40. Stresses the need to provide preconditions for installing alcohol interlock devices and systems to detect driver distraction and drowsiness, and urges the use of alcohol interlocks for professional drivers and for drivers who have caused a traffic accident under the influence of alcohol and have therefore been convicted of a drunk driving offence, as a rehabilitation measure;

41. Observes that trucks are involved in 15% of road fatalities, and that vulnerable road users account for approximately 1,000 truck-related fatalities every year; calls on the Commission, therefore, to accelerate the mandatory introduction for trucks of ambitious differentiated direct vision standards, intelligent speed assistance, and automatic emergency braking systems with cyclist and pedestrian detection;

Safety measures to mitigate the effects of accidents

42. Observes that tyre pressure has significant implications for road safety and fuel consumption as well as for emissions; calls on the Commission, therefore, to make it compulsory to install direct tyre pressure monitoring systems; also calls on the Commission to transpose into EU law the tyre pressure measurement systems amendments aimed at delivering in real world conditions agreed at UNECE;

43. Considers it necessary to make it compulsory to install intelligent seatbelt reminder systems for all front seats for all vehicles and for rear seats for M1 and N1 vehicles;
44. Considers it important to make it compulsory to install automated seatbelt adjustment systems in order to avoid neck damage;

45. Calls on the Commission, from 2019, to extend the eCall installation requirement to motorcycles, heavy goods vehicles and buses and coaches, and also to make the system available for retrofitting so as to ensure that it can cover the highest possible numbers of vehicles on the road;

46. Calls for accurate and reliable EU-wide accident statistics, including statistics on the causes of accidents, exposure data and listing of injuries and accident victims, and observes that an event data recorder could be very helpful in this connection, in which context the data must be kept anonymous and used only for purposes of accident research;

47. Calls for data to be collected throughout the EU on vehicle occupants killed or injured due to causes other than collisions; notes that there are no data available on vehicle heat-stroke casualties;

48. Calls for better fire safety rules for buses and coaches with different types of power, including CNG-powered buses, to maximise the protection of passenger safety;

49. Observes that redesigned front underrun protection of trucks could reduce fatalities in head-on collisions between cars and trucks by 20%; calls on the Commission to mandate improved energy-absorbing front underrun protection for all new trucks;

50. Calls for compulsory frontal, side and rear-end crash tests for:
   (a) all-terrain vehicles (SUVs) with raised seats and a maximum weight of more than 2 500 kg; and
   (b) electrically propelled vehicles and vehicles with other new propulsion technologies;

51. Calls on the Commission to also update the testing requirements for motor vehicle passive safety systems so as to include protection of all vulnerable road users in front and rear impacts, including not only pedestrians but also cyclists;

52. Calls on the Commission to ensure that the market will have sufficient and realistic time to adapt to these measures;

53. Stresses that Directive (EU) 2015/719 on weights and dimensions of heavy goods vehicles has great potential to improve truck safety; calls on the Commission to accelerate work on this directive and come forward with its assessment without delay;

54. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.
Depotment of cohesion policy instruments by regions to address demographic change

European Parliament resolution of 14 November 2017 on the deployment of cohesion policy instruments by regions to address demographic change (2016/2245(INI))

(2018/C 356/02)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to Article 174 and Article 175 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),


— having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on specific provisions for the support from the European Regional Development Fund to the European territorial cooperation goal (4),


— having regard to its resolution of 4 February 2016 on the special situation of islands (6),


— having regard to its resolution of 4 April 2017 on women and their roles in rural areas (8),

— having regard to its resolution of 10 May 2016 on cohesion policy in mountainous regions of the EU (9),

— having regard to its resolution of 9 September 2015 on the Report on the implementation, results and overall assessment of the 2012 European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations (1).

— having regard to its resolution of 10 May 2016 on new territorial development tools in cohesion policy 2014-2020: Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) and Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) (2).

— having regard to its resolution of 15 November 2011 on demographic change and its consequences for the future cohesion policy of the EU (3).

— having regard to its resolution of 11 November 2010 on the demographic challenge and solidarity between the generations (4).

— having regard to its resolution of 22 September 2010 on the European strategy for the economic and social development of mountain regions, islands and sparsely populated areas (5).

— having regard to its resolution of 21 February 2008 on the demographic future of Europe (6).

— having regard to its resolution of 23 March 2006 on demographic challenges and solidarity between the generations (7).


— having regard to the Commission's sixth report on economic, social and territorial cohesion entitled 'Investment for jobs and growth: Promoting development and good governance in EU regions and cities' of 23 July 2014.

— having regard to the Commission communication of 26 April 2017 entitled 'An Initiative to support work-life balance for working parents and carers' (COM(2017)0252).


(2) Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0211.
having regard to the opinion of the European Committee of the Regions of 16 June 2016 on the EU response to the demographic challenge (1),

— having regard to the study of September 2013 of the European Parliament Directorate-General for Internal Policies, Department B: Structural and Cohesion Policies, entitled ‘How can regional and cohesion policies tackle demographic challenges?’;

— having regard to the ESPON publication on ‘ Revealing territorial potentials and shaping new policies in specific types of territories in Europe: islands, mountains, sparsely populated and coastal regions’ (2);

— having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,

— having regard to the report of the Committee on Regional Development and the position in the form of amendments of the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality (A8-0329/2017),

A. whereas demographic change is a genuine issue in Europe and across the globe and a key challenge, not just in general, but also for local development and territorial enhancement policies in the EU today, together with employment-related issues, uncontrolled globalisation, climate change, the transition towards low-carbon economies and the challenges posed by the industrial and technological shift and social and economic inclusion;

B. whereas, as is the case in most post-industrial societies, the population of Europe has been characterised by increasing longevity and low fertility rates for several decades, which is liable to alter the population structure and age pyramid, and entail side-effects of a shrinking working age population and aging population; whereas the economic crisis which has affected the entire European Union has had a strong impact on many areas and regions, particularly the countryside, and has, most notably, generated poverty and caused depopulation; whereas a persistent gender pay gap and increasing pension gap strongly hinder the participation of women in the labour market;

C. whereas rapid population growth in developing countries and demographic decline of the EU population is projected to translate into the shrinkage of the European Union’s percentage share of the world’s population from 6.9% in 2015 to 5.1% in 2060 (3);

D. whereas it is projected that 132 out of 273 NUTS level 2 regions will see a decrease in population between 2015 and 2050 (4); whereas this decrease will affect Local Administrative Units (LAUs) in particular;

E. whereas the top priority for the European Union and all the Member States is to promote growth that is at once smart, sustainable and inclusive;

F. whereas geographical or demographic features serve to exacerbate development problems; whereas, for this reason, the Treaty of Lisbon added territorial cohesion to the goals of economic and social cohesion;

G. whereas demographic change does not affect all countries and regions in a uniform manner, on account of both its natural dynamics and the migratory movements that it entails, with the majority of urban and, in particular, metropolitan areas experiencing a population gain and most rural and remote areas experiencing a decline, the picture being very mixed in the outermost regions; whereas such imbalances represent major challenges both for territories suffering from depopulation and for those experiencing a population influx; whereas isolated areas and areas to which access is limited are the most exposed to demographic decline; whereas, on the other hand, attention should be drawn to the effects of ‘suburbanisation’, which, as a consequence of a large population movement from big cities to their surrounding areas, puts pressure on both local and regional authorities;

H. whereas European regions are not unbroken expanses of territory; whereas they can contain pockets of unemployment or poverty and face particular challenges, especially as regards demographic change, making it vital to set up targeted instruments to reduce sub-regional disparities and help bring about a better territorial balance in terms of urban, peri-urban, and rural areas;

I. whereas women, and single mothers in particular, are more exposed to poverty and exclusion;

J. whereas demographic change poses a challenge in ensuring the social cohesion and well-being of the whole population, and in encouraging balanced economic development; whereas demographic change has repercussions on infrastructure and the accessibility and quality of services, which translates into connectivity divides or medical deserts and is often the result of insufficient links between urban and rural populations;

K. whereas demographic change involves major policy challenges in different areas linked to a wide range of cohesion policy fields; whereas regional policy, and its European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds, including the Cohesion Fund, are key instruments for addressing this change;

L. whereas non-urbanised areas in the European Union are home to 113 million people, 12 million farms and 172 million hectares of agricultural land and make an extensive contribution to European economies, cultures and ecosystems;

M. whereas adequate infrastructure and an adequate level of services are important factors in managing the population structure in regions that are sparsely populated or suffering from emigration, where the importance of investment and jobs is greater;

N. whereas proper infrastructure and access to public services and high-quality jobs are important factors influencing the decision whether or not to stay in a particular area;

O. whereas women are more exposed to poverty and social exclusion than men — all the more so when they are aged over 60;

P. whereas demographic change has a greater impact on regions which are lagging behind;

Q. whereas demographic change affecting rural areas has economic and social consequences, causes territorial fragmentation and affects quality of life and the environment, all in addition to its serious demographic consequences;

R. whereas gender equality is a fundamental right, a common value of the EU and a necessary condition for achieving the EU objectives of growth, employment and social cohesion;

S. whereas gender equality represents an important tool for economic development and social cohesion;

T. whereas negative demographic change increases the demand for stronger solidarity between generations;

General

1. Stresses that demographic change entails major economic, social, fiscal and environmental pressures on Member State governments and regional and local authorities in terms of providing public services, especially welfare and social services, building and managing infrastructure, and ensuring the preservation of ecosystems through sustainable spatial planning; stresses that these pressures will be exacerbated by a declining active population and a higher dependency ratio; underlines the crucial role of high-quality public and private services; underlines the importance of accessible high-quality and affordable public and private services as a tool for ensuring gender equality;
2. Considers that demographic change should be tackled in a coordinated manner through the action of all European, national, regional and local authorities and by pursuing adaptation strategies reflecting local and regional realities and delivering effective multi-level governance both in the architecture of these specific policies targeted at particular regions and in their implementation; is of the opinion that such a coordinated and integrated response should seek to improve the quality of life of citizens and provide them with better economic opportunities, and should seek to invest in the quality, availability and affordability of social and public services in the regions concerned; considers, furthermore, that civil society representatives and other stakeholders should be involved; points out that a comprehensive approach of any kind must reflect the role of cities, rural areas, fishing and coastal areas as well as areas confronted with specific problems linked to their geographical or demographic situation, and that, therefore, said approach will also have to take account of the specific challenges posed by the outermost regions, northernmost regions with very low population density and islands, cross-border and mountain regions, as expressly acknowledged in the Lisbon Treaty; calls on the Member States and the Commission to take into account the effects of different policies on gender equality and demographic change;

3. Recognises that demographic change, while creating new challenges, also brings development opportunities at a local level, as a result of shifts in demand in urban societies, especially with regard to food, leisure and rest, through the potential of agriculture, forestry and fishing to produce high-quality, safe and distinctive products; considers that rural tourism in general and ecotourism, e-commerce, community-based services and the silver economy in particular also provide opportunities for development at a local level, enhancing the value of domestic agricultural or non-agricultural products, such as handicrafts, embroidery and ceramics, via the European system of the protection of geographical indications; underlines in this respect the importance of smart specialisation strategies for supporting regions and local territories in identifying high value-added activities and for building attractive innovation ecosystems on the basis of a genuine multi-functional rural development strategy that incorporates the circular economy into regional planning; points out that agritourism, which helps to maintain a dynamic lifestyle in rural areas, is also a significant sector; highlights the importance of social dialogue and the inclusion of social partners together with other local stakeholders and authorities at all stages of ESI Fund programming and implementation for better anticipating the effects of demographic change on local labour markets and developing new strategies addressing such challenges;

**Characteristics of demographic change in the EU**

4. Notes that the main problems relating to the demographic change currently experienced in many parts of the EU are aging brought on by disruption of the age pyramid, a drop in birth rates and subsequent drastic drop in infant and youth populations, constant population loss, skilled workforce shortages, a lack of jobs, young people moving away for want of job opportunities and changes in demographic structure; recognises that the current agriculture policy, the loss of traditional activities, products, production systems, labour force and local know-how, the invisible work done by women, the lack of entrepreneurship, regions lagging behind or unable to compete owing to a lack of investment, or loss of biodiversity, and loss of woodland to shrubs and fire risk, are further significant problems connected with demographic change; underlines that the impact of these trends differs significantly from one region to another, partly on account of the movement of people to big urban centres in search of jobs;

5. Stresses that one of the main objectives of an EU demographic policy should be to take into account all territories having to contend with demographic imbalances and the specificities of those territories, factors which cohesion policy has long been seeking to adapt to, and will have to do much more to adapt to after 2020; emphasises the fact that while demographic change affects all areas, whether rural or urban, its implications differ and depend on different factors such as the intensity and speed at which change occurs or whether it affects regions with net immigration or regions with a shrinking population;

6. Stresses the need to promote and support small and medium-sized mountain and rural farms which, by using traditional techniques and production methods that exploit natural resources — such as pastures and different types of forage crops — in an integrated and sustainable manner, produce products with specific quality characteristics and could serve to reverse or decrease depopulation in those areas;
7. Stresses that those demographic phenomena affecting the Union are not new, but have now increased with an unprecedented intensity, in particular as a result of social and economic pressures; draws attention to the steady increase in the number of elderly people — around 2 million people every year reach the age of 60 — which impacts on spatial, housing and transport planning and on other types of infrastructure and services; notes with concern that regions characterised by a sharp decline in working-age population will be particularly hit by demographic challenges; recognises that lack of investment, poor infrastructure, low connectivity rates, limited access to social services and a lack of jobs are key contributory factors to depopulation; stresses that demographic changes can have a considerable impact on pensions and on environmental sustainability in particular, as the depopulation of rural areas and increasing urbanisation affect eco-systems, nature conservation and the use of natural resources, with particular repercussions on urban land use, infrastructure, housing markets and greenery;

8. Considers that the gender dimension of demographic change should be taken into account in a cross-cutting manner, as regions experiencing demographic decline also suffer from gender and age imbalances due to out-migration; believes that the challenges presented by demographic change can and must be addressed within a policy framework propitious to gender equality, which is why gender must be factored into debates on all matters connected with demographic issues; considers, therefore, that the implementation of gender mainstreaming within all ESI Funds should be further strengthened in the future;

9. Recalls that the Europe 2020 Strategy addresses demographic challenges in most of its seven flagship initiatives, which were designed to overcome the problems of and establish vital priorities for the EU in the fields of employment, innovation, education, poverty reduction, and climate and energy; points out that a fundamental part of implementation of the strategy and its flagship initiatives is based on financial support through cohesion policy instruments, including provisions to tackle population change and aging, and that these dimensions need to be stressed in all European Union instruments;

10. Considers that the challenges of declining and aging populations will require objective, thorough and comprehensive reassessments of many established economic, social and political policies and programmes, which will need to incorporate a long-term perspective;

Coordination of EU policies

11. Calls for a greater coordination of EU instruments, in particular the common agricultural policy (CAP), ESI Funds, including the Cohesion Fund, European Territorial Cooperation, the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) and the Connecting Europe Facility, so as to ensure a more comprehensive approach to demographic change; suggests that, given that the mechanisms employed so far have not held back the advance of demographic imbalances, a review of existing policies and of the functioning of all such mechanisms is required; welcomes, in this context, the efforts made to maximise synergies between the ESI Funds and EFSI; calls on the Commission once more to propose a strategy on demographic change which prioritises the following fields: decent employment and good-quality industrial relations, paying special attention to new forms of work and their social role; the territorial aspect of policies promoting economic activity and employment; the promotion of infrastructure as a factor in business location, so territories facing demographic challenges become accessible and competitive; widespread ICT cover competitive as regards both quality and price in territories with a lower population density; the provision of basic welfare state services in territories facing demographic challenges; local public transport to ensure access to public services; policies designed to ensure a better balance between family and professional commitments, sustainable generational renewal and adequate care for dependent persons; policies on the reception, integration and return of migrants and refugees under international protection; and the extensive use of new, more attractive settings for conveying information about rural life; underlines the importance of existing initiatives such as the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing, Ambient Assisted Living and the EIT Digital and Health Knowledge Innovation Communities; calls on the Commission to take into account the solutions already developed by these initiatives when addressing the demographic challenges faced by European regions; stresses the importance of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning as a way of supporting education and training in areas at risk of depopulation; considers that the better regulation agenda should require the impact analysis conducted prior to any EU legislative initiative to include the effects the latter may have on demography;
12. Highlights the importance of the EU incorporating demographic considerations throughout the policy spectrum, including in its budget headings, in order to enable the development of these policies, particularly in cohesion, employment, agriculture, environment, the information society, RDI (research, development and innovation), employment, education, social policy, and transport; considers that the findings of demographic impact reports need to be incorporated into the design of its policies and demographic criteria factored into the assessments of those policies’ outcomes and undesired effects with a view to favouring an approach to demographic change that includes the involvement of regional and local authorities; is of the opinion that special attention should be paid to rural areas which face these demographic problems particularly acutely; highlights, in this context, the potential of the Smart Villages initiative, whereby with modern technologies such as 5G and innovation, rural communities can be revitalised; stresses, in addition, the importance of strengthened cooperation between rural and urban areas; highlights the importance of providing universal access to high-quality and affordable public services and infrastructures, including digital public services and infrastructures, particularly for children, young people and the elderly, in order to foster social inclusion, ensure gender equality and alleviate the effects of demographic change; stresses the importance of providing new opportunities for paid employment, particularly in areas at risk of depopulation, in order to preserve communities and create the conditions to facilitate a satisfactory life-work balance; considers it important to insist on a global geographical vision for urban and rural areas as complementary functional spaces; stresses that greater integration between the various funds is needed, in order for there to be genuine participatory and sustainable local development; points out that EU demographic policy should aim to be more complete and more coordinated with Member States and horizontally; recalls that the European Union does not just contribute funds for regional development but also shapes to a large extent the capacity of local and regional authorities to use their own funds to combat social territorial inequalities; stresses that even if, as a result of modernising state aid, those exceptions for which notification is not required have been simplified and increased in number, the current framework is still very complex and burdensome for smaller regional and local authorities; considers that, even if public procurement regulations were simplified in 2014, there are still too many obstacles for small local and regional authorities to be able to improve the economy of these sensitive areas;

13. Considers that the EU should support migration and inclusion policies in the Member States, by respecting the rights and competencies of those Member States, as well as the subsidiarity principle, in order to minimise negative demographic trends; highlights the significant role of family-creating and family-supporting policies; considers that local and regional bodies should be authorised to implement successfully integration policies on the ground; takes the view that local and regional authorities should be active participants in measures taken to address demographic challenges; calls for the annual growth survey and the country-specific recommendations to consider regional disparities and imbalances between regions within the Member States; believes that in border regions such cooperation must reflect both the demands and scope for cross-border initiatives; suggests that training programmes be developed in this field in order to create a better understanding and greater awareness of the issues involved; considers that tackling demographic problems must have an integral throughout Europe and that solving a problem in one part of the continent should not have negative effects on other areas in Europe; calls for the creation, at a pan-European level, of networks for the exchange of good practices and experiences through which local and regional authorities, as well as civil society stakeholders, can educate each other on addressing issues created by demographic change;

Enhancing the effectiveness of European funds

14. Stresses that ESI Funds must address demographic change more effectively in the next programming period, by means of: a greater, better targeted focus on demographic change as a priority area in final regulations and in guidelines to support Member States, regions and local governments, exploring the potential of ESI Funds for the purposes of addressing demographic change and devising and implementing association agreements and operational programmes; a more proactive approach in demographic policy-making and the exchange of good practices and experiences for institutional learning; technical support for managing authorities and local stakeholders in implementing effective policies addressing demographic change at both regional and local levels; and the obligatory active participation of local authorities in the design, management and in-house evaluation of programmes implementing funds and the necessary identification of regions faced with demographic challenges at NUTS 3 and LAU level; encourages the provision of technical support and
training for local stakeholders and the managing authorities for the purposes of implementing effective policies addressing demographic change at national, regional and local level; takes the view that, in some Member States, subsidies at NUTS 2 level often conceal socio-territorial, intra-regional and even supra-regional inequalities; calls for the EU’s maps to use a scale sufficient to reflect territory-related problems so that they may help target support to the most disadvantaged areas;

15. Asks that the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) make a greater contribution to and provide more support towards helping areas with high aging, rurality and population outflow indices to improve their transport and telecommunications infrastructure, bridge the digital divide (including between generations), and enjoy better public services; stresses, in this context, the importance of the field of e-health; calls on the Member States and regions to better target available investments to address demographic changes and their impact;

16. Urges the Commission to use cohesion policy measures to put a brake on increasing migration out of sparsely populated regions, where adequate infrastructure and an adequate level of services are essential preconditions, particularly for retaining families with children;

17. Stresses that the European Social Fund (ESF) should step up its work in training and educating young people, and should promote employability and help people strike a better work-life balance and combat the social and digital exclusion of elderly persons; stresses, furthermore, that the fund should improve employment prospects through preparatory programmes for the inhabitants of declining regions, and by boosting the social and digital inclusion of women, young people and senior citizens in those areas; points out, in that connection, that care will be taken, when using the ESF to support the outermost regions, to ensure a better balance between working and family life; calls on the Commission to consider setting up a specific envelope, within the scope of existing funds, dedicated to addressing areas experiencing severe and permanent demographic disadvantages; asks for the fund to be disbursed according to arrangements which prioritise lines of action in the short, medium and long term; stresses the importance of including the Cohesion Fund in future strategies to address demographic change, recalling that the fund was established with a view to strengthening the EU’s economic, social and territorial cohesion; considers it important for far greater support to be provided through the ESF for small organisations which develop and run innovative social projects, as well as pan-EU transnational pilot projects that address social and employment issues, so as to facilitate innovative regional, cross-border, transnational and macro-regional cooperation and hence respond to the challenges created by demographic change;

18. Regrets the fact that, as highlighted by the European Court of Auditors Special report No 5/2017, the EU Youth Guarantee, which should be aimed at helping young people without jobs, training or education, has made limited progress, and its results have fallen short of initial expectations;

19. Takes the view that, with a view to avoiding territorial divides, the EFSI should benefit regions with the most unfavourable demographic dynamics by means of greater investment in EU priority areas such as energy, transport, education, business, innovation research, SMEs, education or social infrastructure; takes the view that consideration of a special status for demographically disadvantaged regions should be discussed in the development of post-2020 cohesion policy;

The future of cohesion policy to address demographic change

20. Believes that cohesion policy provides the right tools with which to address demographic change, especially in connection with other EU, national and regional policies, both in respect of population aging and population loss, and should therefore play a more prominent role to support regions and provide flexibility in adapting to demographic change; believes that this should also be reflected in the fund-specific regulations in addressing demographic change, as part of its explicit remit under Article 174 TFEU; calls for a precise definition of the notion of ‘severe and permanent demographic handicaps’ referred to in Article 174 TFEU and Article 121 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 that would enable demographic challenges to be statistically quantified; highlights the importance of urban-rural linkages, and invites the Commission to reflect on the opportunity to complement integrated sustainable urban development strategies with partnerships for sustainable urban-rural development; considers that the Commission should take proactive measures to prevent the adverse effects of demographic change and provide technical assistance to the regions most affected by depopulation;
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21. Stresses that cohesion policy should promote the employability and inclusion of women, especially mothers who struggle with finding employment; calls, therefore, for women to be given access to training and learning programmes; points out, however, that the qualifications obtained should respond to labour market needs; stresses the importance of helping young mothers to return to work by providing reliable all-day childcare facilities for children of all ages, including facilities for pre-school learning, in order to stop depopulation;

22. Believes that in order to address demographic challenges, the regions should use ESI Funds more proactively in order to tackle youth unemployment and give young people the opportunity to start a proper career; notes that this could be achieved by supporting training programmes and entrepreneurship for young people;

23. Calls for the establishment of a legal framework within the future Common Provisions Regulation (CPR) in order to recognise regions facing severe and permanent demographic challenges; stresses the need for a more proactive and dedicated approach to demographic policy-making, as regional divergence in demographic patterns will most likely produce a substantial unequal socio-economic impact on European territories, which might further increase regional disparities in the EU; calls for the strengthening and administrative streamlining of the new instruments for enhancing the bottom-up approach and multi-level governance — such as community-led local development (CLLD) and integrated territorial investment (ITI) — so as to increase local and regional involvement as part of an integrated and holistic approach to regional development; calls for the creation of portal-based services, which will help existing rural businesses to connect better with their urban-based counterparts; highlights the importance of taking greater account, under the future cohesion policy, of specific territorial characteristics which manifest themselves at sub-regional levels; stresses that a lack of capacity disparities in the EU; calls for the strengthening and administrative streamlining of the new instruments for enhancing the territorial investment (ITI) — so as to increase local and regional involvement as part of an integrated and holistic approach to regional development; calls for the creation of portal-based services, which will help existing rural businesses to connect better with their urban-based counterparts;

24. Invites the Commission to consider defining new criteria with which to distinguish territories facing demographic challenges by means of demographic, economic, environmental-impact and accessibility variables, and to conduct studies on potential socio-economic and environmental indicators to complement the GDP indicator with criteria including social capital, life expectancy and quality of the environment; considers that GDP and population density are not indicators which are in themselves sufficient to classify territories with severe and permanent demographic handicaps; asks the Commission to incorporate into cohesion policy, in addition to the GDP indicator, new, dynamic indicators, such as a demographic indicator, and in particular the EU Regional Social Progress Index, so as to provide a more complete picture of the specific challenges facing these regions, or to consider an additional allocation for these regions similar to that for sparsely populated areas in the current programming period (CPR Annex VII, point 9); stresses the need for specific tools to monitor and evaluate the potential and real impact of ESI Funds in addressing demographic change by drafting guidelines for the subsequent development of relevant demographic indicators; stresses the importance of having reliable, up-to-date, disaggregated statistics for the purposes of a more efficient and objective political administration, particularly for a more detailed understanding of the intrinsic features of the EU’s various sparsely populated areas; calls, therefore, for Eurostat to provide greater detail in statistics of relevance for devising a suitable European demographic policy, especially demographic, family-related, social and economic indicators, and thus urges them to be broken down at least at a sub-regional — i.e. NUTS 3 — level;

25. Considers that the future cohesion policy should include specific measures for the areas most affected by demographic challenges, and allow for greater flexibility in setting thematic objectives or co-financing rates, with a view to coordinating inter-regional and intra-regional strategies within the same Member State, with local participation; calls on the Commission to consider a national strategy for demographic development as a new ex-ante conditionality;

26. Calls on the Commission to incorporate a flagship initiative on demographics into the Europe 2020 strategy, financed by existing ESI funds and comprising a raft of measures in three categories: smart growth, by means of action to help regions affected by demographic challenges in the field of ICT, RDI and SMEs; inclusive growth, by means of specific action to encourage young people to remain in their region, ensuring sustainable generational renewal, self-employment and social inclusion measures for migrants and refugees under international protection; and sustainable growth, by means of measures to help these regions invest in the green economy, including sustainable transport systems; welcomes the EU Action for Smart Villages, which calls for policies to pay particular attention to overcoming the digital divide between rural
and urban areas and to tap into the potential offered by the connectivity and digitisation of rural areas, and which supports the Smart Island Initiative as a bottom-up effort on the part of the European island authorities and communities seeking to improve life on islands through sustainable and integrated solutions;

27. Considers that the post-2020 multiannual financial framework should give a forceful, decisive impetus to efforts to address demographic challenges, taking into account the current demographic situation and trends, and must incorporate the promotion of solutions using targeted measures such as a budget item in funding, where appropriate; calls for services and infrastructure reinforcing social and digital inclusion to be strengthened under the second pillar of the CAP, intended to foster rural development and financed under the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), and for a reversal of trends towards social and economic decline and depopulation in areas with severe and permanent demographic handicaps; calls on national, regional and local authorities to exchange experience, best practices and new approaches to preventing the negative consequences of demographic change; believes that the trans-European transport networks (TEN-T) and the motorways of the sea (MoS) should serve areas with severe and permanent demographic handicaps;

28. Underlines the added value of the single community-led local development (CLLD) methodology across all ESI Funds for developing and implementing integrated and tailor-made bottom-up solutions; regrets the fact, however, that CLLD is only mandatory for the EAFRD and that local and participatory approaches are declining in the ERDF, ESF and European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF); calls on the Commission, therefore, to make the use of CLLD obligatory across all ESI Funds;

29. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.
Action plan on retail financial services


(2018/C 356/03)

The European Parliament,


— having regard to the ‘Report on Good Practices on Comparison Websites’ of 2014 by the European Insurance and Occupational Pensions Authority,

— having regard to the opinion addressed to the EU institutions in April 2016 by the European Insurance and Occupational Pensions Authority on ‘A Common Framework for Risk Assessment and Transparency for IORPs’,


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(2) OJ L 263, 7.10.2009, p. 11.
(4) OJ L 60, 28.2.2014, p. 34.

— having regard to the Commission report of 8 August 2014 on the operation of the European Supervisory Authorities (ESAs) and the European System of Financial Supervision (ESFS) (COM(2014)0509),


— having regard to the Commission Green Paper of 10 December 2015 on ‘Retail financial services: better products, more choice, and greater opportunities for consumers and businesses’ (COM(2015)0630),

— having regard to the response by the European Banking Authority of 21 March 2016 to the Commission Green Paper on retail financial services,

— having regard to the Special Eurobarometer 446 of July 2016 on Financial Products and Services,

— having regard to its resolution of 22 November 2016 on the Green Paper on Retail Financial Services (5),

— having regard to the report of 2016 by Better Finance entitled ‘Pension Savings: The Real Return’,

— having regard to its resolution of 17 May 2017 on ‘FinTech: the influence of technology on the future of the financial sector’ (6),

— having regard to the Commission consultation document of 21 March 2017 on the review of the ESAs,


— having regard to the UK Financial Conduct Authority’s Asset Management Market Study of June 2017,

— having regard to Protocol No 1 on the role of national parliaments in the European Union,

— having regard to Protocol No 2 on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality,

— having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure.

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— having regard to the report of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and the opinion of the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection (A8-0326/2017),

A. whereas the EU market in retail financial services remains rather underdeveloped and highly fragmented, while work is ongoing in different Member States; whereas, therefore, urgent and efficient action is needed to facilitate innovation that is beneficial to end-users while releasing the full potential of the single market in retail financial services, and that would boost competitiveness, lowering prices and increasing the choice and diversity of products;

B. whereas we should remain ambitious as regards breaking down national barriers and curbing the existing tendencies that block innovation in retail financial services; calls on the Commission and the Council to be more ambitious in the area of cross-border retail investments under the capital markets union (CMU), by tackling not just the easier issues but also the most important barriers affecting this market, which include language, concerns over fraud or crime, uncertainty about the tax implications, differences in securities and corporate law, unknown redress and insolvency proceedings, and lack of confidence in consumer protection frameworks;

C. whereas a European retail financial services market would only be viable if it represented real added value for consumers and financial services providers by ensuring effective competition and consumer protection, notably in relation to products that are necessary for participation in economic life and for vulnerable consumers;

D. whereas the Special Eurobarometer 446 concludes that, when it comes to financial products or services, Europeans are still purchasing mostly in their own country and often do not even express a need or desire to have access to these services abroad, although some actual barriers are also preventing them from doing so; whereas even within their own Member State, only a small proportion seek out more attractive offers and change their providers; whereas the resulting lack of (cross-border) competition may prevent consumers and small investors from getting the best deal in the financial products and services they purchase;

E. whereas the definition of FinTech is set out in Parliament’s resolution of 17 May 2017, which states that FinTech should be understood as finance enabled by or provided via new technologies, affecting the whole financial sector in all its components, from banking to insurance, pension funds, investment advice, payment services and market infrastructures; whereas applying technologies to the provision of retail financial services can potentially help overcome certain obstacles to the internal market and enhance the sector’s operational efficiency; whereas digitalisation is not sufficient on its own to overcome these obstacles; whereas closer integration of cross-border retail financial services and better information in respect of the opportunities this market offers can help bolster informed demand which raises the bar in terms of quality standards in this field;

1. Notes that in the Commission’s Consumer Financial Services Action Plan some of the concerns are taken on board that were raised by Parliament in its report on the Green Paper on retail financial services, with the aim of ensuring consumer protection in the context of striving towards a robust technology-enabled single market for retail financial services, while protecting consumers, encouraging competition, guaranteeing data protection, lowering prices and fighting tax fraud, tax evasion, tax avoidance and money laundering; believes, nevertheless, that the Action Plan falls short of the ambition to create a regulatory environment conducive to transparency, growth and innovation and with a high level of trust on the part of businesses and consumers in retail financial products; notes the continued high levels and opacity of fees and commissions in relation to private pensions, investment funds and other retail products that significantly reduce the real returns to retail investors’ shares, however, the Commission’s view that the transposition and implementation of legislative acts that have been drawn up in recent years in the area of financial services, including MiFID 2 and IDD, should be maintained and given priority, while new legislative initiatives should be presented if needed;
2. Welcomes the development of new financial services and institutions contributing to competition on financial markets and to new opportunities for consumers; notes, however, that in 2016 FinTech funding in Europe accounted for only USD 2.2 billion, as compared to USD 12.8 billion in the US and USD 8.6 billion in China, which demonstrates the urgent need for a quick mentality shift and an adequate regulatory response to technological developments in order for Europe to become a lead market for innovation; stresses that a genuine single market for retail financial services in which a high level of consumer protection and a level playing field for new market entrants are assured will make the EU attractive as a hub for innovative financial services and will provide consumers with more and better choice at lower rates; emphasises that although new technologies present regulatory challenges, they also offer great opportunities for innovation that benefit end-users and represent a stimulus for economic growth and jobs;

3. Considers it vital to ensure that financial services of all kinds — including but not limited to the opening of current and savings accounts and the provision of bank cards, consumer loans and mortgages, insurance and sovereign debt — can be provided on a cross-border basis;

4. Considers it to be against the principles of the internal retail financial services market to require customers to be resident in the Member State in which the financial product — including sovereign debt instruments — is offered, or to hold a national identity document issued by that Member State, for the effective provision of the product;

5. Believes that it would be beneficial to facilitate the acquisition of sovereign debt by retail investors;

6. Takes the view, in line with paragraph 135 of its resolution of 14 February 2017 on the annual report on EU competition policy (1), that current and savings accounts should not incur commission for users unless they are linked to specific services;

7. Stresses that access to cash via ATMs is an essential public service that must be provided without any discriminatory or unfair practices and must not, therefore, incur excessive costs;

8. Reminds the Commission that financial institutions continue to cancel payment cards if the holder moves to another Member State, and calls for action to be taken in this respect, including by alerting national authorities;

9. Welcomes the fact that the Action Plan aims to tackle a number of important issues and that in some of the areas it sets out specific actions to be taken by the Commission, with a clear timetable;

10. Believes that the Commission should play a more proactive role in using the CMU, while closely involving Parliament as part of the implementation of the Paris agreement to support the growing sustainable and responsible investment (SRI) market by promoting sustainable investments, through the provision of effective and standardised Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) information by listed companies and financial intermediates and the adequate reflection of such criteria in investment management systems and disclosure standards; urges the Commission, furthermore, to promote environmental, social and governance (ESG) ‘rating services’ and a consistent framework for the green bonds market, building on the relevant Commission study and the work of the G20 study group on green finance; asks the Commission to put forward a proposal for the creation of an ‘EU savings account’ in order to unlock long-term financing and support ecological transition in Europe;

11. Underlines the importance of vital financial centres providing dynamic marketplaces for retail services;

\[(\text{1})\] Texts adopted, P8_TA(2017)0027.
12. Considers a high level of consumer protection and transparency to be key to the development of a single market in retail financial services; insists, notably, on the need to ensure the protection of vulnerable consumers through the efficient implementation of the Basic Payment Account Directive and that further measures are also required, such as financial education policies; believes that EU and national financial consumer legislation needs to be strengthened and properly enforced and, where necessary, further harmonised across all Member States;

13. Calls on the Commission to ensure that the ‘same service, same risk, same rule, same supervision’ principle is applied so that competition is not distorted, in particular with the emergence of new market players; stresses that these rules must not hold back innovation; urges the Commission to clarify the use of general good provisions which currently could be vicariously used by Member States to block new products entering their market, and to empower the ESAs to become an active mediator between Member States when there are conflicting interpretations regarding the use of such provisions;

14. Stresses that a European retail financial services market must benefit SMEs in terms of both supply and demand; specifies that in terms of supply this means ensuring an improvement in access to financing for SMEs, while in terms of demand it means enabling SMEs to access cross-border markets more easily; emphasises that increasing competition must not penalise SMEs providing retail financial services which operate on a local basis;

15. Urges the Commission to ensure that the European financial supervisors (EBA, ESMA and EIOPA) are provided with appropriate resources and empowered to perform their full range of regulatory and supervisory duties in the interests of consumer protection;

16. Asks the Commission to investigate the possibility of introducing a 29th regime for retail financial products; calls on the Commission, furthermore, to look into the possibility of creating a harmonised legal framework for standardised default options for the most commonly used EU financial products, along the lines of the Basic Bank Account and PEPP model;

**Action 1 — Lower charges on non-euro transactions**

17. Recalls that fees for cross-border payments outside of the euro area still remain high; calls, therefore, on the Commission to rapidly propose an amendment to Regulation (EC) No 924/2009 in order to reduce charges for cross-border transactions in all Member States; regrets, in this context, the lack of a common European online banking payments instrument, such as an EU-wide, European-owned credit or debit card;

**Action 2 — Transparency in currency conversion**

18. Emphasises that enforcing the current legislation is central to tackling the lack of transparency in ‘dynamic currency conversion’: points out that Directive (EU) 2015/2366 lays down an obligation for merchants to clearly highlight and present the final cost of the dynamic currency conversion for consumers, including when those consumers are making ATM withdrawals involving currency conversion; stresses, however, that consumers must be able to choose the best rates and should be aware of fees and additional costs when making transactions, payments abroad or ATM withdrawals, including when using dynamic currency conversion; asks the Commission to ensure that providers disclose any exchange rate mark-up, as a charge as part of the costs and charges disclosure required under PSD2, and that the rates offered by different financial services providers are presented in a transparent manner; notes that enhanced financial literacy of consumers is vital for achieving this aim; recommends the carrying-out of ‘mystery shopping’ exercises at EU level, with a view to assessing and reporting publicly on barriers to cross-border access, quality of service and compliance with EU law and to monitoring developments in products and services;

**Action 3 — Easier product switching**

19. Draws attention to the low switching levels of consumers for most banking and non-life insurance products, which constitute a barrier to entering retail cross-border markets, and therefore encourages the Commission to make it easier for consumers to switch to more advantageous retail financial services across the EU as well as to terminate financial contracts, and to make loans and other financial products available across borders; highlights the large potential for the provision of cross-border insurance products, such as motor insurance; notes, however, that the principle of contractual freedom allows
financial institutions to decide with whom they enter into a contract; urges the Commission, in this context, to recognise
the importance of controlling predatory lending and payday loans, which have resulted in the exploitation of vulnerable
consumers and SMEs:

20. Approves of the Commission’s ambition to incorporate the achievements of the Payment Accounts Directive so as
to make it easier to change financial services providers and products; calls on the Commission to present legislative
initiatives, designed specifically for the financial sector, to end unjustified geo-blocking in order to facilitate switching by
customers to more advantageous retail financial services in other Member States; notes that adequate disclosure and
consumer protection will be key in achieving this;

Action 4 — Quality comparison websites

21. Stresses the usefulness of a well-structured and easy-to-use EU comparison portal covering the European retail
financial markets in their entirety; encourages the Commission to examine the range of existing independent portals in
place in Member States for this aim; emphasises that comparison tools must be accurate and of relevance to consumers, and
must focus not only on the price of products but also on their quality, taking into consideration other criteria such as
availability of branch networks, face-to-face contact and sustainability of business practices, and bearing in mind that only
similar products can be compared; points out that products should be compared only with similar products so as to avoid
confusing consumers;

22. Urges the Commission to promote tools such as Points of Single Contact, which will enhance competition and assist
retail financial services firms;

Action 5 — Better motor insurance

23. Takes the view that subsequently to the Commission’s REFIT review of the Motor Insurance Directive, amendments
to the directive will be vital to ensure compensation for traffic accident victims and to facilitate the cross-border portability
and recognition of no-claims bonuses, also in light of the CJEU judgments to the effect that the scope of the Motor
Insurance Directive should be revised as soon as possible in order to address the non-recognition of no-claims bonuses and
ensure that it applies to the circumstances that were intended by the co-legislators;

Action 6 — Transparent pricing of car rentals

24. Calls on the Commission to examine whether further initiatives are needed on car rentals selling insurance, with
a view to ensuring transparent pricing covering all car rental companies across all Member States;

Action 7 — Deeper single market for consumer credit

25. Stresses that addressing consumer over-indebtedness must be given priority if the Commission aims to explore ways
of facilitating cross-border access to loans; calls for action on means of coordinating debt information, on a basis of full
compliance with EU law, including data protection laws and consumer protection laws, so that individual creditors can
know how indebted a customer is before extending more credit, leading to a more efficient market in which credit providers
can compete against each other; calls, with that aim in mind, for a comprehensive evaluation of the causes of consumer
over-indebtedness; points out that financial education is an effective means of protecting consumers who are at risk of over-
indebtedness; urges the Commission, consequently, to promote financial education and foster multi-stakeholder
collaboration in this important field; recalls, in the context of the increased use of customer data or big data by financial
institutions, the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which grant the data subject the right to
obtain an explanation of a decision reached by automated processing and to challenge this decision; stresses the need to
guarantee that incorrect data can be changed and that only verifiable and relevant data are used; calls on all stakeholders to increase efforts to guarantee the enforcement of these rights; is of the opinion that consent given to the use of personal data needs to be dynamic and that data subjects must be able to alter and adapt their consent;

**Action 8 — Fair consumer protection rules**

26. Asks the Commission to assess carefully whether national consumer protection rules and practices do not act as unfair barriers to cross-border investment and whether, in line with well-established internal market legislation and case-law, they are justified by overriding reasons relating to the public interest that are necessary and proportionate in view of the objectives to be attained; stresses that the relevant European consumer protection rules often deliberately leave some leeway for national transposition, to enable European law to be inserted into existing national regulations; underlines nevertheless that the dismantling of national barriers must not be achieved to the detriment of consumer protection and that consumer protection should remain a guiding priority in designing legislation; is concerned that much of the paperwork produced in response to EU legislation from providers of retail financial products and services is not in fact strictly required in law and is of little or no practical benefit to consumers while imposing a burden that can result in unnecessarily higher costs to those consumers; calls on the Commission to review such documentation with the aim of streamlining it while not sacrificing consumer protection benefits; stresses that access to relevant and comprehensible information is crucial in enabling the consumer to take informed financial decisions; notes, however, that it is the quality and not the quantity of the information provided which is decisive; stresses the need to coordinate as effectively as possible the information requirements vis-à-vis customers laid down in various European legal acts; emphasises that double or contradictory disclosure requirements must be avoided, in order not to create unnecessary red tape and expenditure and not to confuse clients;

27. Calls on the Commission to consider omnibus legislation in order to move away from the current silo-based patchwork of MiFID, IDD, AIFMD, etc., and towards the completion of a solid and consistent consumer transparency framework, removing unnecessary complexity for financial service providers, including supervisory convergence between Member States; calls on the Commission to promote an extended use in sectoral legislation of the ESAs’ consumer protection mandate and to take this into account in the framework of the upcoming review of the funding and governance of the ESAs; calls on the Commission to mandate the ESAs to lead the work on convergence of conduct-of-business supervision practices between Member States;

28. Welcomes the Commission’s intention to prepare a campaign to raise awareness of FIN-NET, a network that helps consumers enforce their rights without having to go to court by finding a competent alternative dispute resolution (ADR) body; believes that FIN-NET should further improve its coverage, clarify its role and improve its website;

**Action 9 — Better creditworthiness assessments**

29. Invites the Commission to propose harmonised cross-border creditworthiness assessment standards and principles in order to better mitigate the risk of increasing over-indebtedness when facilitating pan-European online credit, taking the conclusions of published reports on the implementation of the Mortgage Credit Directive and the Consumer Credit Directive thoroughly into account;

**Action 10 — FinTech for retail financial services**

30. Recognises the right of consumers to use software to initiate payments and share information about themselves;

31. Supports the Commission’s intention to present an all-inclusive FinTech Action Plan in the framework of its CMU and digital single market (DSM) strategies, thus contributing to an effective and well-functioning integrated technology-driven single market in financial services benefiting all European end-users, while at the same time ensuring a level playing field; supports the Commission’s creation of a FinTech task force; points out that the new landscape emerging from the
development of FinTech calls for the establishment of a variety of appropriate new safeguards such as, inter alia, education of consumers regarding new products or rules on anti-money laundering and leverage on FinTech credit platforms;

32. Calls on the Commission to examine its resolution on ‘FinTech: the influence of technology on the future of the financial sector’, to promote consumer protection, security, innovation and fair competition, and to ensure that the principle of ‘same services, same risks, same rules, same supervision’ applies to all companies regardless of their sector or location; stresses that FinTech should be understood as finance enabled by or provided via new technologies affecting the whole financial sector in all its components, from banking to insurance, pension funds, investment advice, payment services and market infrastructures;

33. Urges the Commission to create an environment that is conducive to innovative solutions; notes that innovative companies such as FinTechs provide the competition needed to create an effective retail financial services market;

34. Underlines that different new financial institutions under the name of FinTech have the same responsibilities towards customers and for financial stability as other corresponding traditional institutions and services;

Action 11 — Digital identity checks

35. Stresses the potential of e-signature and e-identification for easier transactions, and calls on the Commission to build on the work of the eIDAS Regulation; underlines the need to take into consideration persons unable or unwilling to use e-signature or e-identification; promotes the interoperability of cross-border e-identification in the financial services sector and calls for a level playing field across Member States (and possibly beyond, in EEA countries and Switzerland) to be ensured; asks the Commission, furthermore, to urgently assess the current regulatory barriers to e-identification techniques, and stresses that any initiative taken should be technologically neutral;

36. Reiterates the need for the Commission to identify and remove regulatory barriers to the use of pan-European electronic signature systems for subscribing to financial services, thereby facilitating EU-wide cross-border digital onboarding while not affecting the level of security of existing systems or their ability to comply with the requirements of the Fourth Anti-Money Laundering Directive;

Action 12 — Online selling of financial services

37. Stresses the need to adapt the existing EU legal framework for the digital world in order to counteract consumer protection risks connected with distance online selling, thereby creating new business opportunities for European start-ups and FinTechs; points out the consumer risks associated with online gambling games guise as financial products, i.e. binary options; believes that a strong and harmonised European supervision is needed to protect consumers and avoid regulatory loopholes; stresses that European consumer protection standards apply irrespective of whether selling takes place via traditional or modern distribution channels;

38. Underlines the importance of cybersecurity and regrets the fact that the Commission does not address cybersecurity issues in its Action Plan; calls on the Commission, therefore, to ensure that those issues are included in the work of its task force;

39. Stresses the need to maintain the provision of high street banks, which provide an essential public service and are of particular benefit to SMEs, the elderly and vulnerable consumers, who are less likely to use e-banking and favour face-to-face interaction; recognises that branch closures degrade financial infrastructure at a local level and can be extremely damaging to communities;
40. Notes that the increased use of customer data or big data by financial institutions may lead to benefits to consumers, such as the development of more tailored, segmented and cheaper offers based on more efficient allocation of risk and capital; is concerned, on the other hand, at the development of dynamic pricing and its potential to lead to worse outcomes for consumers with respect to comparability of offers, and hence also for effective competition and risk pooling and mutualisation in the credit and insurance sector;

41. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.
Rule of law in Malta

European Parliament resolution of 15 November 2017 on the rule of law in Malta (2017/2935(RSP))

(2018/C 356/04)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to Articles 2, 4, 5, 6, 9 and 10 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU),

— having regard to Article 20 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),

— having regard to Articles 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12 and 47 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,

— having regard to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the related case law of the European Court of Human Rights,

— having regard to its resolution of 16 January 2014 on EU citizenship for sale (1),

— having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to the numerous UN human rights treaties which are binding on all the Member States,

— having regard to the Commission communication of 11 March 2014 entitled ‘A new EU Framework to strengthen the Rule of Law’ (COM(2014)0158),

— having regard to the plenary debate on media freedom in Malta of 24 October 2017,

— having regard to the Panama Papers and Malta Files revelations made by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists and the European Investigative Collaborations network,

— having regard to its resolution of 25 October 2016 with recommendations to the Commission on the establishment of an EU mechanism on democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights (2),

— having regard to its resolution of 24 October 2017 on legitimate measures to protect whistle-blowers acting in the public interest when disclosing the confidential information of companies and public bodies (3),

— having regard to the report and recommendations of the Committee of Inquiry to investigate alleged contraventions and maladministration in the application of Union law in relation to money laundering, tax avoidance and tax evasion (the PANA Committee), and the report’s annex on the Committee’s mission to Malta,

— having regard to Rule 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas the European Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, and whereas these values are universal and common to the Member States;

(2) Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0409.
(3) Texts adopted, P8_TA(2017)0402.
B. whereas the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union is part of EU primary law; whereas freedom of expression and freedom and pluralism of the media are enshrined in Article 11 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Article 10 of the ECHR; whereas, in accordance with Article 2, Article 3(1) and Article 7 of the TEU, the Union has the possibility to act in order to protect the common values on which it was founded; whereas the rule of law mechanism should be applied with equal strength to all Member States;

C. whereas the EU is a constitutional system that functions on the presumption of mutual trust, namely that Member States will act in conformity with democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights;

D. whereas the independence of the judiciary is enshrined in Article 47 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Article 6 of the ECHR, and is an essential requirement of the democratic principle of separation of powers;

E. whereas the Maltese anti-corruption investigative journalist and blogger Daphne Caruana Galizia was assassinated in a car bomb attack on 16 October 2017;

F. whereas this assassination led to street demonstrations and civil society protests in Malta calling for justice, accountability and respect for the rule of law;

G. whereas the Media Pluralism Monitor's 2016 Country Report on Malta identified medium (close to high) levels of risk with regard to market plurality and political independence, and identified risk-increasing factors relating to lack of data on the media market, lack of protection and self-regulation of journalists and editorial autonomy, direct political ownership of media outlets and lack of media literacy policy (1);

H. whereas the 2017 World Press Freedom Index (published by Reporters Without Borders) identifies Malta’s defamation laws, which are punishable by fines or imprisonment and broadly used, especially by politicians, against journalists, as a key factor limiting freedom of expression in Malta (2);

I. whereas the Maltese Parliament is currently discussing a bill proposed by the Maltese Government which abolishes criminal libel and introduces an ad hoc prohibition on recourse to any form of precautionary orders or warrants in actions for libel or defamation under any law (3);

J. whereas Daphne Caruana Galizia was facing numerous libel charges brought by political representatives from across the political spectrum in Malta;

K. whereas Ms Caruana Galizia had her bank accounts frozen this year by a court order issuing precautionary warrants relating to a libel case brought by a government minister, before the outcome of the case had been reached;

L. whereas media outlets in Malta have reported coming under severe pressure from Pilatus Bank, which is at the centre of money-laundering allegations, to retract or remove stories concerning that bank; whereas Pilatus Bank has commenced legal action in the USA against Maltese media for tarnishing its reputation; whereas a leaked Financial Intelligence Analysis Unit (FIAU) compliance report reveals that Pilatus Bank’s clients are predominantly Politically

(2) See https://rsf.org/en/malta.
Exposed Persons from Azerbaijan, but that the bank did not apply enhanced customer due diligence to these clients as required by the Anti-Money Laundering Directive (AMLD); whereas a government MP has called for an investigation into the FIAU whistle-blower;  

M. whereas prior to the assassination of Daphne Caruana Galizia, a whistle-blower at the centre of corruption and money-laundering allegations involving Politically Exposed Persons in Malta fled the country;  

N. whereas the Maltese Government has implemented the Protection of the Whistleblower Act, 2013 (1), and is one of a minority of EU Member States which have enshrined dedicated whistle-blower protection measures in law;  

O. whereas under the Constitution and laws of Malta, the Police Commissioner is appointed by the Prime Minister, the Attorney-General is appointed by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister, and members of the judiciary are, as from 2017, appointed after a committee has scrutinised judicial nominees prior to their appointment (2); whereas the independence of law enforcement and the judiciary in Malta may be compromised by the fact that the government is empowered to appoint the Police Commissioner, the head of the FIAU and the Attorney-General;  

P. whereas various media reports note that a large number of jobs in Maltese public companies were created a few weeks before the June 2017 elections, raising concerns as to whether this was done for electoral motives;  

Q. whereas Malta refused to join the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO), the independent Union body with the authority to investigate and prosecute EU fraud and other crimes affecting the Union's financial interests;  

R. whereas the Panama Papers revelations from April 2016 showed that a total of 714 companies linked to Malta are listed in the Panama Papers database of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists; whereas these documents included revelations regarding a current minister and a former minister from the previous administration, and high-ranking officials;  

S. whereas the European Parliament organised a delegation visit to Malta in February 2017 in the framework of its inquiry into the Panama Papers; whereas this delegation concluded in its mission report that there are reasons to believe that the Maltese police force is not well equipped to fulfil its task optimally, possibly suggesting a case of maladministration; whereas this delegation noted that the number of convictions and confiscations related to money laundering in Malta seems extremely low in relation to the on-average number of reports sent to the police by the FIAU; whereas a government official and a former minister refused the PANA Committee's request to meet during this mission;  

T. whereas two confidential reports from the FIAU in Malta, dated 2016, were published in May 2017 and concluded that there was reasonable suspicion of money laundering related to a government official; whereas a third report, published at the same time, detailed the on-site inspection carried out by the FIAU at Pilatus Bank and allegedly found the bank in violation of Malta's anti-money laundering legislation; whereas Pilatus Bank's licensing process has been expeditious compared with the average time required to ensure compliance with standards laid down in the Capital Requirements Directive;  

U. whereas the head of the FIAU and the Police Commissioner, which are both positions directly filled by the Government, resigned shortly after the completion of these reports; whereas no police investigation was launched into these serious allegations of money laundering by Politically Exposed Persons, including a member of the Government; whereas magistrates were appointed on the above-mentioned cases; whereas two FIAU staff were laid off after the leak of the FIAU reports in the press;  

whereas the European Commission was informed of these allegations in June 2017 at least, with a request to hold a further inquiry into Malta and its respect for, and adequate implementation of, the third AMLD and the Capital Requirements Directive;

whereas EU citizenship is one of the EU's major achievements and whereas, according to the Treaties, matters of residency and citizenship fall within the exclusive competences of the Member States; whereas the EU has the power to monitor anti-corruption practices by Member States;

whereas it is confirmed in settled case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union that it is for each Member State, having due regard to Union law, to lay down the conditions for acquisition and loss of nationality; whereas since the entry into force of the Treaty of Maastricht, granting Member State nationality also means granting EU citizenship and hence strong additional rights, meaning that naturalisation decisions by a Member State are not neutral with regard to other Member States and the EU;

whereas the Maltese Government created an Individual Investor Programme in 2014 which sells Maltese and EU citizenship to third-country nationals at a price of EUR 650,000; whereas the list of recipients of this citizenship remains unclear as they are not identified in the published list of naturalised citizens; whereas a leaked FIAU report from 2016 raised concerns about possible corruption in the administration of this programme;

whereas management of this Individual Investor Programme was awarded by the government to Nexia BT, an intermediary named in the Panama Papers as the initiator of trusts and offshore companies for Maltese Politically Exposed Persons, including a member of the Government; whereas the Panama Papers suggest that Nexia BT has acted with a lack of due diligence in providing all the information necessary to identify beneficial ownership;

whereas the report by Europol's Financial Intelligence Group, entitled 'From suspicion to action — converting financial intelligence into greater operational impact', highlights that certain parties, including criminal organisations, have abused aspects of Malta's internet-based industries to launder the proceeds of crime; whereas this should not be interpreted as being reflective of the industry as a whole;

1. Strongly condemns the assassination of Daphne Caruana Galizia and calls on the Maltese Government to deploy all necessary resources to bring her murderers to justice;

2. Calls for an independent international investigation into the murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia; acknowledges the Maltese authorities’ moves to invite the participation of international law enforcement bodies, including the US Federal Bureau of Investigation, and Dutch forensic specialists in this regard; calls for the full involvement of Europol in the investigation for its duration;

3. Notes that the protection of investigative journalists and whistle-blowers is in the vital interests of society; calls on the Maltese authorities, and all EU Member States, to ensure the protection of journalists’ and whistle-blowers’ personal safety and livelihoods;

4. Calls on the Conference of Presidents to create a ‘European Daphne Caruana Galizia prize for investigative journalism’, to be awarded annually for outstanding investigative journalism in Europe;

5. Regrets that developments in Malta in recent years have led to serious concerns about the rule of law, democracy and fundamental rights, including freedom of the media and the independence of the police and the judiciary;
6. Calls on the Commission to establish a dialogue with the Maltese Government regarding the functioning of the rule of law in Malta and to ensure respect for European values; calls on the Commission to keep Parliament fully informed of its assessment; reiterates the need for a regular process of monitoring and dialogue involving all Member States in order to safeguard the EU’s fundamental values of democracy, fundamental rights and the rule of law, involving the Council, the Commission and Parliament, as put forward in its resolution of 25 October 2016 on the establishment of an EU mechanism on democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights (the DRFP Act);

7. Regrets that several serious allegations of corruption and breach of anti-money laundering and banking supervision obligations have not been investigated by the police in Malta, which represents a threat to the rule of law in this Member State; acknowledges that there are several magisterial inquiries under way regarding some of these allegations; specifically regrets the fact that there has been no police investigation to date in Malta into the revelations regarding the Panama Papers and Politically Exposed Persons in the leaked FIAU reports, and notes that some of those named in the FIAU reports remain part of the government; calls on the Maltese Police Commissioner to open such an investigation;

8. Notes the comments made by Malta’s Chief Justice in regard to the rule of law and supports his assertion that without proper law enforcement the rule of law in Malta cannot be safeguarded (1);

9. Expresses concern at the report drawn up by the PANA Committee following its visit to Malta, stating that the public institutions in charge of compliance, fraud and financial crime are highly politicised;

10. Calls on the Commission to verify whether Malta is in compliance with the third AMLD and the Capital Requirements Directive; notes that Malta is one of several Member States against which the Commission took initial infringement action for failing to transpose the fourth AMLD by the deadline of 26 June 2017; acknowledges that this transposition is under way;

11. Calls on the Maltese authorities to join the EPPO in order to work together with other participating Member States against EU fraud and other crimes affecting the Union’s financial interests;

12. Calls on the Maltese supervisory and judiciary authorities to investigate the licensing process of Pilatus Bank, in particular regarding fulfilment of the fit and proper requirements for the management body of financial institutions, as mentioned in the Capital Requirements Directive, and to investigate the compliance of Nexia BT with the AMLD;

13. Reiterates the frequently expressed concern by members of this House about Citizenship by Investment Schemes in general, including in Malta and other EU Member States; calls on Malta to make it clear who has purchased a Maltese passport and all the rights that come with it, and what safeguards are in place to ensure that all these new citizens have actually spent a year in Malta prior to the purchase; calls on the Commission to monitor such citizenship programmes in Member States, as the latter must have due regard for EU law when exercising their competence in the area of nationality;

14. Calls on Malta and all the other Member States to ensure that the fight against tax evasion is given priority and that all necessary resources are dedicated to this cause;

15. Regrets the decision by the Commission not to publish the EU anti-corruption report in 2017;

16. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Council of Europe and the President of the Republic of Malta.

P8_TA(2017)0439

Multilateral negotiations in view of the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference

European Parliament resolution of 15 November 2017 on multilateral negotiations in view of the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires, 10-13 December 2017 (2017/2861(RSP))

(2018/C 356/05)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to the Doha Ministerial Declaration of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) of 14 November 2001 (*),

— having regard to the Hong Kong Ministerial Declaration of the WTO of 18 December 2005 (**),

— having regard to its previous resolutions on the Doha Development Agenda (DDA), in particular those of 9 October 2008 (***), 16 December 2009 (**), 14 September 2011 (**), 21 November 2013 (****) and 26 November 2015 (**),

— having regard to the results of the 9th Ministerial Conference held in Bali in December 2013, and in particular the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) (**),

— having regard to the results of the 10th Ministerial Conference held in Nairobi in December 2015 and the Ministerial Declaration adopted on 19 December 2015 (**),

— having regard to the Outcome Document adopted by consensus on 14 June 2016 at the Annual Session of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO in Geneva (**),

— having regard to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (**),

— having regard to the 6th Global Review of Aid for Trade, which took place in Geneva from 11 to 13 July 2017 (**),

— having regard to Rule 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas since its creation, the WTO has played a pivotal role in strengthening multilateralism, promoting an inclusive world economic order and fostering an open, rule-based and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system; whereas the Doha Round was launched in 2001 with the objectives of creating new trading opportunities, strengthening multilateral trade rules and addressing current imbalances in the trading system by placing the needs and interests of developing countries, and especially of the least developed countries (LDCs), at the heart of the negotiations;
B. whereas the EU has consistently advocated a strong multilateral rule-based approach to trade, while recognising that complementary approaches such as bilateral, regional and plurilateral agreements may also foster trade opening and economic development, especially by unlocking liberalisation and upgrading rules and disciplines in policy areas tackled less thoroughly by the WTO, and may support the multilateral system, provided that such agreements are WTO compatible, are based on shared rules and create the conditions for possible future multilateralisation;

C. whereas the results of the 9th Ministerial Conference in 2013 were of systemic importance, in particular the conclusion of the TFA, the most significant multilateral trade deal concluded since the establishment of the WTO in 1995;

D. whereas certain WTO members are trying to undermine the current model of international trade dispute settlement; whereas the Appellate Body of the WTO is approaching the minimum number of judges it needs to function; whereas the US recently rejected proposals from the EU and some Latin American countries to begin a selection process to fill the growing number of vacancies; whereas this deadlock, which has already left two of the seven seats on the Appellate Body vacant, could lead to the collapse of a system that is essential to managing disputes among the world’s most powerful trading nations;

E. whereas the outcomes achieved at the 10th Ministerial Conference in 2015 were also of major importance, with a series of six ministerial decisions on agriculture, cotton and issues related to LDCs, including a commitment to abolish export subsidies for farm exports, which is probably the most significant outcome on agriculture ever within the WTO;

F. whereas recent discussions on how to advance on the DDA have clearly shown that WTO members have differing views as to how to proceed with the negotiations, which demonstrates that a review of the level of ambition is needed in order to realistically achieve outcomes across all pillars of the negotiations, and whereas this review needs to take full account of the reality of today’s trading environment;

G. whereas the digital transformation of the economy opens up new channels for trade, facilitating the participation of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in world trade through e-commerce; whereas this is increasingly seen as a matter in which the WTO could play an important role;

H. whereas the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC11) will take place in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from 10 to 13 December 2017;

1. Reiterates its full commitment to the enduring value of multilateralism and calls for a trade agenda based on free, fair and rule-based trade for the benefit of all, which supports the sustainable development agenda by giving primary importance to social, environmental and human rights, and ensuring that multilaterally agreed and harmonised rules are uniformly applied to all;

2. Emphasises the need to build on the results agreed at the 9th and 10th Ministerial Conferences to take and guarantee substantive progressive steps at MC11 in Buenos Aires in December 2017, with a view to maintaining and strengthening the multilateral trade architecture; stresses that, despite this, the parties should pursue new policy objectives in areas such a digital trade and investment facilitation;

3. Urges all WTO members to capitalise on the momentum created by recent progress, bearing in mind the strategic objective of strengthening the multilateral trading system and the need to consolidate the WTO as the centre of trade negotiations, while at the same time recognising that new approaches are necessary in order to face the current challenges; acknowledges that flexibility, openness, inclusiveness and political engagement will be key to advancing in a global, balanced and realistic way on the remaining issues of the DDA; takes the view that, since the Doha Round was launched in 2001, the world has changed dramatically in economic, political and technological terms, and that new challenges such as e-commerce, digital trade, investment transparency, subsidies and overcapacity, global value chains, public procurement, domestic regulation for services, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and greater compatibility between
trade, labour and environmental agendas beyond the DDA need to be discussed, which can be done without prejudice to outstanding issues on the DDA; stresses the need to enable developing countries to find their own approaches for continuing to ensure equal opportunities in these new sectors;

4. Underlines the importance of the WTO functioning as an efficient and effective negotiating forum on all issues of interest to its members and providing a platform for open discussion on global trade-related issues;

5. Stresses the need to go to Buenos Aires with well advanced textual proposals in order to ensure more transparent and inclusive trade negotiations, as the Ministerial Conference should be thoroughly prepared for through negotiations at committee level; commends, in this regard, the advanced negotiations on issues such as fisheries subsidies as a way to combat overfishing and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing;

6. Takes note of the proposals put forward on domestic support in agriculture, including the joint proposal by the EU and Brazil; considers that moving the debate forward in this area could be a crucial outcome of MC11; reiterates, in this context, the need to find a permanent solution on public stockholding for food security purposes, cotton support and subsidies, in keeping with the Nairobi Ministerial Decision; stresses that the negotiations on this topic and their potential outcome must not take precedence over the discussions on the future of common agricultural policy;

7. Reaffirms the importance of advancing negotiations and reaching outcomes on other issues raised by members, including: domestic regulation in services, e-commerce, investment facilitation, horizontal subsidies and improving transparency and good regulatory practices for the benefit of SMEs;

8. Believes that the outcome of the 2017 Ministerial Conference should clearly recognise the importance of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and of the Paris Agreement commitments in the fight against climate change and the role which trade can play in contributing towards their achievement, and that it must define concrete actions to be taken in this regard, given that global standards and a multilateral playing field are beneficial for global trade;

9. Reaffirms the links between gender equality and inclusive development, emphasising that women’s empowerment is key to the eradication of poverty and that removing barriers to women’s participation in trade is critical for economic development; acknowledges the need to develop interventions that address the range of barriers that limit opportunities for women in the economy; calls on WTO members to include a work programme to ensure that gender-aware trade policy features among the outcomes of the 2017 Ministerial Conference;

10. Draws attention to the 6th Global Review of Aid for Trade held in July 2017 in Geneva, entitled ‘promoting trade, inclusiveness and connectivity for sustainable development’ and which focused on the need to bridge the digital divide, among other things;

11. Supports the view that this should be translated into concrete actions in order to facilitate e-commerce and turn digital opportunities into trade realities; underlines that better connectivity offers more business opportunities by making it easier and less costly, including for business people in MSMEs in developing countries, to access markets; notes, in this regard, that investment in infrastructure remains a key challenge and that it is crucial to achieve progress in this area; calls, therefore, on the WTO membership to promote investment in infrastructure, encouraging, among other initiatives, public-private partnerships;

12. Highlights the importance of discussing possible trade policy answers to the increasing phenomenon of servicification in the field of trade in goods (‘mode 5’);
13. Calls on the Commission to continue its efforts towards developing a set of binding multilateral disciplines on e-commerce in the WTO; supports the EU communication entitled ‘An enabling environment to facilitate online transactions’ presented to the Members of the Council for Trade in Services in June 2017, which provides a much-needed and timely set of common principles on consumer protection, unsolicited messages, authentication and trust services and electronic contracts, which would enhance the trust and confidence of consumers online and create an enabling environment for digital trade;

14. Encourages the resumption of the plurilateral trade negotiations on the Environmental Goods Agreement;

15. Welcomes the entry into force of the TFA on 22 February 2017; considers that this agreement will bring significant benefits to all WTO members, and in particular to developing countries and relevant economic operators, by enhancing transparency and legal certainty and reducing administrative costs and the length of customs procedures;

16. Stresses the importance of all WTO members delivering on the decisions taken in both Nairobi and Bali, including the creation of new export opportunities for LDC service providers under the LDC services waiver and the simplification of regulations governing rules of origin; takes note of the growing interest among WTO members in a services facilitation agreement; calls for enhanced efforts at multilateral level to significantly simplify and harmonise rules of origin;

17. Stresses the crucial importance of the WTO for the rule-based trading system and sees as critical the need to secure the implementation of its decisions, the enforcement of binding commitments and the settlement of trade disputes, as well as its unique contribution to promoting greater transparency and peer review, notably through the trade policy review mechanism (TPRM); expresses its utmost concern that several posts on the Appellate Body remain vacant, which severely constrains the work of this crucial body by threatening to undermine the current and proper functioning of the dispute settlement, and insists on a rapid decision on filling these posts;

18. Stresses the need for a final MC11 declaration in which members could specify new areas and areas listed on the Doha Round agenda in which they will start and continue to negotiate;

19. Calls on the Commission and the Council to ensure that Parliament continues to be closely involved in the preparation of MC11, and is promptly updated and consulted during the 2017 Ministerial Conference; calls on the Commission to continue to make the case to other WTO members for increasing the importance of the parliamentary dimension of the WTO;

20. Calls on WTO members to ensure democratic legitimacy and transparency by strengthening the parliamentary dimension of the WTO; stresses, in this connection, the need to ensure that parliamentarians have better access to trade negotiations and are involved in the formulation and implementation of WTO decisions, and that trade policies are properly scrutinised in the interests of their citizens;

21. Regrets that the Mini-Ministerial Conference of 9 and 10 October 2017 in Marrakesh did not lead to significant progress with a view to the MC11; calls on all parties to fully assume their own responsibilities and translate the willingness emerging from the political declarations into concrete actions in the negotiations, in order to achieve positive results at the MC11 in Buenos Aires and create a solid basis for further actions and decisions beyond the 2017 Ministerial Conference;

22. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and the Director-General of the WTO.

(2018/C 356/06)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to the Commission communication entitled ‘An Action Plan for nature, people and the economy’ (COM(2017)0198),

— having regard to its resolution of 2 February 2016 on the mid-term review of the EU’s Biodiversity Strategy (1),

— having regard to the Fitness Check of the EU Nature Legislation (Birds and Habitats Directives) (SWD(2016)0472),

— having regard to the European Court of Auditors Special Report No 1/2017 entitled ‘More efforts needed to implement the Natura 2000 network to its full potential’,

— having regard to the Commission report entitled ‘Reporting under the EU Habitats and Birds Directives 2007-2012: The State of Nature in the EU’,

— having regard to the Eurostat biodiversity statistics of November 2016,

— having regard to the Council conclusions of 19 June 2017 on the EU Action Plan for nature, people and the economy (2),

— having regard to the question to the Commission on an Action Plan for nature, people and the economy (O-000067/2017 — B8-0608/2017),

— having regard to Rules 128(5) and 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas approximately only half of protected bird species and a smaller number of other protected species and habitats in the Union currently have good conservation status, and whereas only 50 % of all Natura 2000 sites have management plans with conservation objectives and measures;

B. whereas the Nature Directives have an important role to play in helping achieve the targets of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change;

C. whereas the European Environment Agency assessment entitled ‘2015 State of Nature in the EU’ states that the main pressures and threats to terrestrial ecosystems reported by Member States are agriculture and the modification of natural conditions, and are the use of living resources (fishing) and pollution in the case of marine ecosystems; whereas all of these are human activities and have a profound and damaging impact on nature;

D. whereas the 2016 Eurostat biodiversity statistics show an overall decline in all 167 of the EU’s common bird species between 1990 and 2014 (3);
General remarks

1. Welcomes the Action Plan for nature, people and the economy as a step in the right direction with regard to delivering the objectives of the Nature Directives;

2. Notes, however, with concern that the targets of the EU’s 2020 Biodiversity Strategy and the CBD will not be met without immediate, substantial and additional efforts; underlines that the targets of the EU’s 2010 Biodiversity Strategy were not met;

3. Observes that healthy and resilient ecosystems are better able to mitigate the effects of, and adapt to, climate change and hence limit global warming; notes that they are more resistant to extreme weather events and recover from them more easily, providing a wide range of benefits on which people depend;

4. Observes that in Europe, almost one-quarter of wildlife species are now threatened with extinction and most ecosystems have deteriorated to such an extent that they are no longer able to fulfil their valuable functions; notes that this is resulting in enormous social and economic losses for the EU, since the main causes of biodiversity loss, that is to say the deterioration of habitats, the over-exploitation of natural resources, the introduction and propagation of invasive alien species and climate change, are on the increase, cancelling out the positive effects of initiatives intended to prevent this;

5. Notes that the Action Plan aims to ‘accelerate progress toward the EU 2020 goal of halting and reversing the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services’; considers it regrettable however that no other reference has been made to the 2020 Biodiversity Strategy or to the conclusions of its mid-term review;

6. Reiterates the need for additional, substantial and continuous efforts to be made in order to achieve the 2020 targets, and calls on the Commission and the Member States to give this greater political priority;

7. Stresses the need to ensure that Union nature legislation is fully and faithfully implemented;

8. Stresses that substantial progress in cutting greenhouse gas emissions, air pollution and other pollutants, and in improving energy and material efficiency, must be complemented by further actions by Member States to fully apply agreed policies to better protect biodiversity, natural resources, and public health;

9. Highlights the need to further integrate policies and knowledge in order to achieve the aim of living well, within the limits of our planet, which is the long-term vision of the 7th Environment Action Programme;

10. Regrets the Action Plan’s limited time frame and calls on the Commission to commence work on the next biodiversity strategy without delay for the period post-2020;

Involvement of all actors

11. Welcomes the four priority areas identified in the Action Plan and emphasises the need for the active involvement of all relevant actors at national, regional and local level so that the concrete actions to be taken can effectively tackle the shortcomings in the implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directives;

12. Recalls that the European Court of Auditors stated in its Special Report No 1/2017 that coordination between the responsible authorities and other stakeholders in the Member States was not sufficiently developed;

13. Calls on the Commission to provide effective support to national and regional actors in implementing nature legislation and in improving environmental inspections, including through competence and capacity building and better allocation of resources;
14. Welcomes the fact that the Commission intends to update and further develop guidance documents in all EU official languages in order to promote greater understanding of the legislation on the ground and to help public authorities apply it correctly, and calls on the Commission in this regard to involve and consult all stakeholders in this process;

15. Emphasises the role of civil society in ensuring better implementation of Union nature legislation, and the importance of the provisions of the Aarhus Convention in this regard;

16. Calls on the Commission to come forward with a new legislative proposal on minimum standards for access to judicial review, and a revision of the Aarhus Regulation implementing the Convention as regards Union action in order to take account of the recent recommendation from the Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee;

17. Welcomes the fact that, without jeopardising the conservation objectives and requirements laid down in the Nature Directives, flexible approaches to implementation that take into account specific national circumstances help reduce and progressively eliminate unnecessary conflicts and problems which have arisen between nature protection and socioeconomic activities, and also address the practical challenges resulting from the application of the annexes to the directives;

18. Calls on the Commission to clarify the role of the Committee of the Regions with regard to raising awareness and promoting local involvement and exchanges of knowledge;

Protected species and habitats

19. Underlines that Member States must ensure that there is no deterioration of Natura 2000 areas and must implement conservation measures in order to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of protected species and habitats;

20. Calls for the Nature Directives to be fully implemented in order to ensure that conservation actions that are taken are in line with the latest technical and scientific progress;

21. Regrets the fact that the Action Plan does not set out a priority strategy and concrete actions with a view to improving: pollinator protection, particularly with regard to efforts to tackle health risks and parasitic species (especially Varroa), coordination of research work, harmonisation of analysis methods, and sharing of scientific data on pollinators at European level, as requested in an earlier European Parliament resolution;

22. Urges the Commission once again to come forward with an EU strategy to protect and conserve threatened pollinators that comprehensively addresses in a cross-cutting way the fundamental issue of the depressing mortality rates of pollinators in Europe, particularly bees, which provide inestimable environmental and economic services;

23. Proposes that measures against Varroa should be mandatory at EU level, that bee-keeper training in bee protection methods should be supported, and that local and regional authorities, as well as farmers and all other citizens, should be encouraged to promote the development of plant species, especially flowering plants, in rural and urban areas in order to increase the availability of melliferous plants;

24. Recalls that the illegal killing of birds and particularly of migratory species in the Mediterranean, as well as of birds of prey in some Member States, remains a cause for concern; stresses the need for a plan coordinated at European level, on the basis of scientific data, to manage migratory bird species passing through more than one Member State;

25. Calls for the Invasive Alien Species (IAS) Regulation to be fully and effectively implemented and for the EU budget for this to be adequately financed; stresses that the inclusion of a species on the List of Invasive Alien Species of Union concern must be based on a standardised and harmonised risk assessment; considers that the management of IAS is an urgent priority, especially in Natura 2000 sites; welcomes the online platform, European Alien Species Information Network (EASIN), which facilitates access to data on alien species;
26. Stresses that protecting our shared natural environment in Europe is essential for both our economies and well-being, that the Natura 2000 network is estimated to have an economic value of EUR 200-300 billion annually and can generate income for local communities through tourism and recreation, and that healthy ecosystems provide essential services such as fresh water, carbon storage, pollinating insects, and protection against floods, avalanches and coastal erosion (1); points out therefore that investing in the Natura 2000 network makes sound economic sense;

27. Recalls that the Natura 2000 network marine sites are significantly less well established than the terrestrial sites; calls on the Member States concerned to address this and on the Commission to facilitate the necessary cooperation with third countries to improve environmental protection in marine areas;

28. Welcomes the action aimed at integrating ecosystem services into decision-making; regrets, however, the absence of a concrete No Net Loss of Biodiversity Initiative in the Action Plan;

**Links with other policy areas**

29. Stresses the urgent need to take action to deal with the main causes of biodiversity loss, namely habitat destruction and degradation arising primarily from excessive consumption of land, pollution, intensive farming, use of synthetic chemical pesticides, the spread of alien species and climate change, and also stresses the need to ensure coherence among the EU's various policies;

30. Highlights that the ‘Fitness Check’ stresses the need to improve coherence with the common agricultural policy (CAP), and underlines the worrying decline in species and habitats linked to agriculture; calls on the Commission to carry out an evaluation of the impact of the CAP on biodiversity;

31. Reiterates that one of the six key priorities for rural development in the EU is the restoration, preservation and enhancement of ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry, including in Natura 2000 areas; recalls the numerous efforts made by those involved in agriculture, particularly in connection with the implementation of the greening measures introduced when the CAP was revised in 2013;

32. Reaffirms its call on the Commission and on the Member States to ensure that the funds under the CAP are redirected from subsidising activities associated with biodiversity decline to financing environmentally sustainable agricultural practices and maintaining connected biodiversity;

33. Calls on the Commission and the Member States furthermore, in cooperation with land owners and users, to investigate the possibility of 'green and blue services' (landscape, nature and water management) in return for payment based on market rates;

34. Notes that species that are designated as requiring special protection in the Habitats Directive have in some regions of Europe attained good conservation status and could thus endanger other wild species and domestic animals, thereby disturbing the natural balance of the ecosystem; calls on the Commission to develop an assessment procedure to enable the protection status of species in particular regions to be amended as soon as the desired conservation status is reached;

35. Recalls that the coexistence of people and large carnivores, particularly wolves, can have negative impacts in certain regions on the sustainable development of ecosystems and inhabited rural areas, particularly with regard to traditional agriculture and sustainable tourism, and on other socio-economic activities; calls on the Commission and the Member States to take concrete measures to address these issues, so as not to endanger the sustainable development of rural areas, while recognising the available flexibility within the Habitats Directive;

36. Calls on the Commission to support measures such as training for farmers regarding the protection of livestock against large carnivores and sharing best practices on livestock protection across Member States;

37. Regrets that the CAP has not been developed to protect the disappearing traditional agricultural practice of pastoralism, which is an important historical tool for habitat management and nature conservation; calls for the Action Plan to support a development framework for pastoralism in the Natura 2000 network;

38. Calls on the Commission to consider especially adaptive harvest management as a best practice tool to sustainably manage those waterbird populations that are sufficiently abundant within the EU and to conserve those which are in decline;

39. Underlines that significant biodiversity losses occur in marine areas and believes that the common fisheries policy (CFP) should promote biodiversity and sustainable consumption and production patterns; calls for an evaluation of the impact of the CFP on biodiversity;

**Funding**

40. Welcomes the European Court of Auditors report on the Natura 2000 network and concurs with its assessment that EU funds have not been mobilised sufficiently to support the management of the network;

41. Underlines that the funding of the Natura 2000 areas is mainly the responsibility of the Member States and emphasises the fact that a lack of funding is likely to have contributed the most to the gaps in the implementation of the Nature Directives, as stated in the ‘Fitness Check’;

42. Underlines that the possibility of establishing new financial mechanisms for biodiversity conservation with a view to achieving the 2020 targets is unlikely given the time frame of the current multiannual financial framework (MFF); calls for maximum use to be made of existing means, including L’Instrument Financier pour l’Environnement (LIFE), the CAP and structural funds;

43. Welcomes the upcoming Commission proposal to increase the nature and biodiversity envelope by 10 % under the LIFE programme;

44. States that more preparatory work is needed in view of the next MFF in terms of both reviewing and forecasting, in order to ensure adequate financing for nature conservation, biodiversity, and sustainable agriculture in Natura 2000 sites; considers that a comprehensive review of past spending, highlighting lessons learnt in terms of the performance of past measures, would be key in this regard;

45. Calls for new financial mechanisms for biodiversity conservation to be included in the next MFF; calls on the Commission to ensure that future financial instruments for agriculture, rural and regional development contain dedicated envelopes for biodiversity and management of the Natura 2000 network, which are co-managed by national and regional environmental authorities;

46. Calls on the Commission to tailor funding schemes more effectively to the Natura 2000 objectives and to establish cross-cutting Natura 2000 performance indicators for all relevant EU funds; calls on the Commission to also establish a tracking mechanism for Natura 2000 spending in order to improve transparency, accountability and effectiveness, and to integrate these into the next MFF;

47. Reiterates that the Natura 2000 programme is customarily funded through co-financing; calls on the Member States to increase their Natura 2000 funding substantially, in order for co-financing to be set at more attractive rates and to improve uptake of the fund as a result, and for measures to be taken to reduce administrative burdens on applicants and project beneficiaries;

48. Highlights the potential of public-private financing to develop ecosystem services, green infrastructure and other natural capital related areas and welcomes the fact that the Natural Capital Financing Facility (NCFF) will continue to support biodiversity-related projects for the 2017-2019 implementation period;

49. Calls on the Commission to promote and propose means for the funding and the development of transboundary management plans for large carnivore species, and also calls for a detailed examination of the role of large carnivores and the possible introduction of adjustment measures to ensure that biodiversity, the agricultural landscape and the centuries-old practice of letting stock graze in mountain regions are maintained;
Green infrastructure

50. Welcomes the commitment made in the Action Plan to provide guidance to support the development of green infrastructure for better connectivity of Natura 2000 areas, but reiterates its call for a genuine proposal for the development of a Trans-European Network for Green Infrastructure (TEN-G);

51. States that it is important for the competent authorities in the Member States, with the involvement of all relevant stakeholders, to make better use of integrated spatial planning processes, to improve a horizontal understanding of TEN-G with sector-specific knowledge, and to enable the financing of increased connectivity, and green infrastructure in general, through rural development and regional development funds; notes that these criteria should guide the post-2020 MFF for planning infrastructure works; observes that the concept of green infrastructure also contributes to the establishment of a sustainable economy by maintaining the benefits of ecosystems while mitigating the adverse effects of transport and energy infrastructures;

52. Observes that it is necessary to study the role of green infrastructure in mitigating the effects of natural disasters linked to meteorological and climatic changes, in particular extreme meteorological and climatic conditions that are the cause of some of the most devastating and deadly natural disasters in Europe and the world;

53. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission.
The situation of the rule of law and democracy in Poland

European Parliament resolution of 15 November 2017 on the situation of the rule of law and democracy in Poland (2017/2931(RSP))

(2018/C 356/07)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to the EU Treaties and in particular to Articles 2, 3, 4, 6 and 7 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU),

— having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,

— having regard to the Constitution of the Republic of Poland,

— having regard to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the related case law of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR),

— having regard to the Commission communication of 11 March 2014 on a new EU framework to strengthen the rule of law (COM(2014)0158),

— having regard to its resolution of 13 April 2016 on the situation in Poland (1),

— having regard to its resolution of 14 September 2016 on recent developments in Poland and their impact on fundamental rights as laid down in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2),

— having regard to the Commission’s Rule of Law Recommendation of 21 December 2016 (3) complementing its recommendation of 27 July 2016, taking into account the latest developments in Poland in the light of the appointment of a new President of the Constitutional Tribunal,

— having regard to the Commission’s third Rule of Law Recommendation of 26 July 2017 (4), in which it expresses its grave concerns regarding the planned reform of the judiciary in Poland, which in the Commission’s assessment amplifies the systemic threat to the rule of law in Poland already identified in the rule of law procedure initiated by the Commission in January 2016,

— having regard to the Polish Government’s response of 20 February 2017 rejecting the notion that there existed a systemic threat to the rule of law in Poland, and to the reported reply of the Polish Government of 29 August 2017 rejecting the Commission’s objections to reforms of the judiciary and challenging its competence to assess the justice system,

— having regard to the infringement procedures launched by the Commission against Poland, including the procedure of 29 July 2017 and the reasoned opinion of 12 September 2017 concerning the Law on the Ordinary Courts Organisation, which stated that Polish Law is incompatible with EU law, notably with Article 157 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), Directive 2006/54/EC on gender equality in employment, and Article 19(1) of the TEU read in connection with Article 47 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights,

(2) Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0344.
— having regard to the exchanges of views held in its Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs with the Commission’s First Vice-President, Frans Timmermans, on 22 March, 31 August and 6 November 2017,

— having regard to the exchanges of views held at the meetings of the General Affairs Council of 16 May 2017 and 25 September 2017 on the rule of law in Poland,

— having regard to the opinion of 14 October 2016 of the Venice Commission on the Act on the Constitutional Tribunal, and to the statement of 24 January 2017 by the president of the Venice Commission expressing his deep concern over the ‘worsening situation’ in Poland,

— having regard to the removal on 18 May 2017 from the Constitutional Tribunal’s website and its online legal database of the three verdicts which concerned the following judgments: 9 March 2016, K 47/15 (declaring that the changes adopted by the Polish Parliament to the Act on the Constitutional Tribunal are unconstitutional), 11 August 2016, K 39/16 (contesting the legality of the main provisions of the second act amending the functioning of the Constitutional Tribunal) and 7 November 2016, K 44/16 (on the legality of the appointment of the chair and vice-chair of the Constitutional Tribunal),

— having regard to the adoption in June and July 2017 by the Polish Parliament of four laws reforming the judiciary, namely: the law amending the law on the National School of Judiciary and Public Prosecution; the law on Ordinary Courts Organisation and certain other laws (law on the National School of Judiciary); the law amending the law on the National Council for the Judiciary and certain other laws (law on the National Council for the Judiciary); the law amending the law on the Ordinary Courts Organisation (‘law on Ordinary Courts Organisation’); and the law on the Supreme Court, which raised serious concerns regarding violation of the separation of powers and the end of the independence of the judiciary,

— having regard to the letter from the President of the European Parliament of 18 July 2017 expressing the concerns of the great majority of political group leaders in Parliament regarding the laws adopted reforming the judiciary,

— having regard to the decision of the Polish President of 27 July 2017 to veto two controversial laws which had been passed by the Polish Parliament earlier that month and which seriously threatened judicial independence in Poland,

— having regard to the two proposals by the Polish President regarding the National Council for the Judiciary and the Supreme Court, which raise concerns as to whether they are in line with the Polish Constitution, and which do not address the problems related to the separation of powers or the independence of the judiciary,

— having regard to the decision of the Polish Constitutional Tribunal of 24 October 2017 ruling that the rules for electing the Presidents of the Supreme Court and of the General Assembly of the Judges of the Supreme Court are unconstitutional,

— having regard to the temporary order issued by the Court of Justice of the EU on 27 July 2017 in Case C-441/17 to stop large-scale logging in the Białowieża forest, which was not implemented by the Polish Government, and to the fears that continued logging would cause ‘serious and irreparable damage’ to the forest while the court works on the case,

— having regard to the interim orders of 8 June 2017 issued by the European Court of Human Rights to halt summary returns to Belarus; having regard to the proposals made in January 2017 for amendments to the Law on Foreigners by Poland’s Minister of the Interior, which raise concerns regarding their compatibility with European and international law,

— having regard to the Law on Public Assemblies, as amended in December 2016, which allows for excessive limitations on the right of assembly, including prioritisation of so-called ‘regular/cyclical assemblies’ devoted to patriotic, religious and historic events and the possibility for the authorities to ban counter-demonstrations,
having regard to the Law on the National Institute for Freedom — Centre for Civil Society Development of 15 September 2017, which places access to public funding for civil society organisations, including from EU funds, under the control of the government, thus raising concerns regarding the adequate funding of NGOs, including among others women’s rights organisations,

having regard to the reports by international NGOs on the rule of law and fundamental rights in Poland, including the Amnesty International report of 19 October 2017 entitled ‘Poland: On the streets to defend human rights’ and the Human Rights Watch report of 24 October 2017 entitled ‘Eroding Checks and Balances — Rule of Law and Human Rights Under Attack in Poland’,

having regard to the OSCE/ODIHR opinions of 5 May 2017 on draft amendments to the act on the National Council of the Judiciary and certain other acts of Poland; of 22 August 2017 on the Draft Act of Poland on the National Freedom Institute — Centre for the Development of Civil Society; and of 30 August 2017 on certain provisions of the Draft Act on the Supreme Court of Poland, which pointed out that the proposed provisions were inherently incompatible with international standards and OSCE commitments,

having regard to the concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Poland, adopted by the UN Human Rights Committee on 31 October 2016, which urged Poland to take steps to protect the independence of the Constitutional Tribunal and the judiciary, and to define more precisely the offence of terrorism, in order to safeguard against abuse,

having regard to Canada’s intervention of 9 May 2017 at the UN Human Rights Council in the context of Poland’s Universal Periodic Review, and to the letter of 23 October 2017 addressed by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to Poland,

having regard to the preliminary observations on the official visit to Poland of 27 October 2017 by the UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, which expressed concern over the state of the independence of the judiciary in Poland,

having regard to Resolution 2188 (2017) of 11 October 2017 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, ‘New threats to the rule of law in Council of Europe member States: selected examples’,

having regard to the repeated mass protests in opposition to government policies and legislation, including the ‘Black Protest’ of October 2016 which prevented a change to the current abortion law, the ‘Freedom March’ of 6 May 2017, and the protests in July 2017 following the adoption of laws reforming the judiciary,

having regard to the law limiting access to the emergency contraceptive pill for women and girls of June 2017; having regard to the WHO factsheet of June 2017, which deems the emergency contraceptive pill safe and recommends its availability as part of necessary reproductive healthcare; having regard to the Commission implementing decision of 7 January 2015 amending the marketing authorisation granted by Decision C(2009)4049 for ‘ellaOne — ulipristal acetate’, a medicinal product for human use,

having regard to Rule 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas the EU is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities; whereas these values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail; whereas adherence to these values was approved by the Polish people in the referendum held in 2003;

B. whereas Article 9 of the Polish Constitution states that the Republic of Poland shall respect international law binding upon it;
C. whereas the EU operates on the basis of the presumption of mutual trust, i.e. that Member States will act in accordance with democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights, as enshrined in the ECHR and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights;

D. whereas the rule of law is one of the common values on which the EU is founded, and whereas the Commission, together with Parliament and the Council, is responsible under the Treaties for guaranteeing respect for the rule of law as a fundamental value of the Union and making sure that EU law, values and principles are respected;

E. whereas those principles include: legality, which implies a transparent, accountable, democratic and pluralistic process for enacting laws; legal certainty; prohibition of arbitrariness of the executive powers; independent and impartial courts; effective judicial review including full respect for fundamental rights; and equality before the law;

F. whereas the independence of the judiciary is enshrined in Article 47 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Article 6 of the ECHR, and is an essential requirement of the democratic principle of the separation of powers, which is also reflected in Article 10 of the Polish Constitution;

G. whereas freedom of association should be protected; whereas a vibrant civil society and pluralistic media play a vital role in promoting an open and pluralistic society, public participation in the democratic process, and strengthening the accountability of governments; whereas NGOs should be adequately funded;

H. whereas the Polish Government’s refusal to implement the order of the Court of Justice of the EU on logging in the Bialowieza forest and its refusal to respect the interim orders by the ECtHR on returns to Belarus are visible symbols of Poland not following the EU Treaties;

I. whereas dozens of protesters have faced proceedings under the Code of Petty Offences and in some cases under the Criminal Code; whereas over 300 people are reported to have been summoned by the police in relation to their participation in protests in October 2017;

J. whereas, according to the Charter of the Fundamental Rights, the ECHR and the case law of the ECtHR, women’s sexual and reproductive health is related to multiple human rights, including the right to life and dignity, freedom from inhuman and degrading treatment, the right of access to healthcare, the right to privacy, the right to education and the prohibition of discrimination, as is also reflected in the Polish Constitution;

K. whereas the denial of access to sexual and reproductive health and rights services, including safe and legal abortion, is a violation of women’s fundamental rights; whereas the UN Human Rights Committee has called on Poland to refrain from adopting any legislative reform that would amount to a retrogression of already restrictive legislation on women’s access to safe and legal abortion; whereas the ECtHR has ruled against Poland in several cases owing to Poland’s restrictive interpretation of this right;

1. Stresses that it is fundamentally important to uphold the common European values listed in Article 2 of the TEU and in the Polish Constitution, and to guarantee fundamental rights as laid down in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union;

2. Reiterates its position expressed in its resolutions of 13 April 2016 and of 14 September 2016; reiterates, in particular, its concern over the rapid legislative developments taking place in many areas without proper consultations or the possibility of an independent and legitimate constitutional review, thus risking the systematic undermining of fundamental human rights, democratic checks and balances and the rule of law; reiterates, in particular, its concern regarding such changes in the areas of public media, criminal law, police law, civil service law, the law on counter-terrorism, NGO law, asylum law, freedom of assembly and women’s rights;
3. Regrets strongly and with growing concern the fact that no compromise solution has been found to the fundamental problem of the proper functioning of the Constitutional Tribunal (its independence and legitimacy, and the publication and implementation of all its judgments), which seriously undermines the Polish Constitution and democracy and the rule of law in Poland; points out with deep regret that the Polish Government refuses to take into account the constructive criticism coming from the Polish public and from national, international and EU institutions, and that no actions have been announced to address these concerns;

4. Is deeply concerned at the redrafted legislation relating to the Polish judiciary, as regards specifically its potential to structurally undermine judicial independence and weaken the rule of law in Poland;

5. Notes that on 27 July 2017 President Duda vetoed two controversial laws which had been passed by the Polish Parliament as being incompatible with the Polish Constitution, claiming that they seriously threatened judicial independence in Poland; calls for an extensive debate at national level with all relevant stakeholders regarding judicial reform, which should uphold the rule of law and comply with EU law and European standards of judicial independence; calls on the Polish President not to sign new laws unless they fully guarantee the independence of the judiciary;

6. Supports the Rule of Law Recommendations issued by the Commission, as well as the infringement proceedings taken out by it against Poland for breaches of EU law; acknowledges the Commission’s determination to monitor, as guardian of the Treaties, the situation in Poland and the follow-up to its recommendations by the Polish authorities, while continuing to offer full support to Poland in finding adequate solutions to strengthen the rule of law;

7. Urges the Polish Parliament and Government to implement fully all recommendations of the Commission and the Venice Commission, and to refrain from conducting any reform which would put at risk respect for the rule of law, and in particular the independence of the judiciary; calls in this respect for postponement of the adoption of any laws until a proper assessment has been made by the Commission and the Venice Commission;

8. Calls on the Polish Government to comply with the temporary order of the Court of Justice of the EU of 27 July 2017 in Case C-441/17 and to immediately suspend large-scale logging in the Bialowieza forest, which risks causing serious and irreversible damage to this UNESCO World Heritage site; calls on the Polish Government to halt summary returns to Belarus so as to comply with the binding interim orders of the ECHR of 8 June 2017, and to ensure that anyone who expresses an intention to seek asylum or international protection at Poland’s borders enjoys full access to the Polish asylum procedure in line with international obligations and EU law;

9. Calls on the Polish Government to respect the right of freedom of assembly by removing from the current law on assembly the provisions prioritising government-approved ‘cyclical’ assemblies; urges the authorities to refrain from applying criminal sanctions to people who participate in peaceful assemblies or counter-demonstrations and to drop criminal charges against peaceful protesters;

10. Calls on the Polish Government to repeal the law on establishing a National Institute for Freedom — Centre for the Development of Civil Society, which hinders access to state funding from critical civil society groups, and to ensure that the distribution of public funds to civil society is carried out in a fair, impartial and transparent manner, ensuring pluralistic representation;

11. Expresses its concern at the media reports of police surveillance of opposition and civil society leaders, and urges the Polish authorities to investigate these reports and to fully respect the privacy of all citizens;

12. Calls on the Polish Government to take a firm stand on women’s and girls’ rights by providing free and accessible contraception without discrimination, making emergency contraception available without medical prescription; calls, in this context, for the law limiting women’s and girls’ access to the emergency contraceptive pill to be repealed;
13. Strongly criticises any legislative proposal that would prohibit abortion in cases of severe or fatal foetal impairment; stresses that universal access to healthcare, including sexual and reproductive healthcare and the associated rights, is a fundamental human right; strongly reaffirms its support for women's rights organisations, as they have recently been the target of legal prosecution;

14. Calls on the Polish Government to comply with all provisions relating to the rule of law and fundamental rights enshrined in the Treaties, the Charter of Fundamental Rights, the ECHR and international human rights standards, and to engage directly in dialogue with the Commission;

15. Calls the Commission to keep Parliament regularly and closely informed, in a transparent fashion, of progress made and action taken;

16. Believes that the current situation in Poland represents a clear risk of a serious breach of the values referred to in Article 2 of the TEU; instructs its Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs to draw up a specific report in accordance with Rule 83(1)(a) of its Rules of Procedure, with a view to holding a plenary vote on a reasoned proposal calling on the Council to act pursuant to Article 7(1) of the TEU;

17. Reiterates the need for a regular process of monitoring and dialogue involving all Member States in order to safeguard the EU's fundamental values of democracy, fundamental rights and the rule of law, involving the Council, the Commission and Parliament, as put forward in its resolution of 25 October 2016 with recommendations to the Commission on the establishment of an EU mechanism on democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights (DRF Pact);

18. Calls on the Polish Government to take appropriate action on and strongly condemn the xenophobic and fascist march that took place in Warsaw on Saturday, 11 November 2017;

19. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission and the Council, the President, Government and Parliament of Poland, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Council of Europe and the OSCE.

Freedom of expression in Sudan, notably the case of Mohamed Zine al-Abidine

European Parliament resolution of 16 November 2017 on freedom of expression in Sudan, notably the case of Mohamed Zine al-Abidine (2017/2961(RSP))

(2018/C 356/08)

The European Parliament,
— having regard to its previous resolutions on the situation in Sudan, in particular those of 13 June 2012 (1), 10 October 2013 (2), 18 December 2014 (3) and 6 October 2016 (4),
— having regard to its resolution of 16 March 2017 on EU priorities for the UN Human Rights Council sessions in 2017 (5),
— having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,
— having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
— having regard to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights,
— having regard to the Cotonou Agreement,
— having regard to the Sudanese Press and Publications Act of 2009,
— having regard to the Sudanese Freedom of Information Law of 2015,
— having regard to the Kampala declaration of the Pan-African Conference on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information of 26 March 2017,
— having regard to the joint statement of the EU, Norway, the US and Canada on political detentions and newspapers' censorship in Sudan of 7 December 2016,
— having regard to the EU Guidelines on Freedom of Expression Online and Offline,
— having regard to the statement of the United Nations Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Sudan, Aristide Nononsi, following his mission to Sudan of 11-21 May 2017,
— having regard to the visit by Commissioner Styijnides to Sudan of 22-23 October 2017,
— having regard to the declaration by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) on behalf of the EU on the occasion of the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists (2 November 2017),
— having regard to Reporters Without Borders' 2017 World Press Freedom Index,
— having regard to Rules 135(5) and 123(4) of its Rules of Procedure,
A. whereas an article by Mohamed Zine al-Abidine published on 23 February 2012 in the Al-Tayar newspaper criticised the alleged corruption in the family of Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir;

(1) OJ C 332 E, 15.11.2013, p. 49.
(2) OJ C 181, 19.5.2016, p. 87.
B. whereas the Sudanese National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) filed charges against Mohamed Zine al-Abidine and his editor-in-chief, Osman Mirgani; 

C. whereas on 23 October 2017 a Sudanese court sentenced Mohamed Zine al-Abidine to a suspended jail term with a five-year probation period on charges of having violated the journalism code of ethics; 

D. whereas the editor-in-chief of Al-Tayar, Osman Mirgani, was sentenced to pay a fine of 10,000 Sudanese pounds or serve a six-month prison sentence on the same charges, and was released after the fine was paid by the Sudanese Journalists Union; 

E. whereas the lawyer representing both Mohamed Zine al-Abidine and Osman Mirgani has stated his intention to appeal the verdict against them; 

F. whereas it has been reported that the NISS questions and detains journalists and has filed multiple lawsuits against Sudanese journalists and arbitrarily confiscated entire issues of newspapers, such as Al-Tayar, Al-Jareeda Al-Watan, Al-Youm Al-Tali, Al-Ayam and Akhir Lahza, containing articles critical of the government; 

G. whereas in 2016 there were at least 44 cases of confiscated publications affecting 12 newspapers, including five issues of Al-Jareeda in a single week; whereas on 14 August 2016 the National Council for Press and Publications indefinitely suspended the publication of the Elaf, Al-Mustagilla, Al-Watan and Awal Al-Nahar newspapers; 

H. whereas the existence of free, independent and impartial media constitutes one of the essential foundations of a democratic society; 

I. whereas on 8 January 2017 Sudan signed the Declaration on Media Freedom in the Arab World, becoming its fourth signatory after Palestine, Tunisia and Jordan; whereas the state minister for media affairs noted the government’s commitment to respect press freedom in Sudan; 

J. whereas Reporters Without Borders ranks Sudan among the least free countries, 174th of 180, in its 2017 World Press Freedom Index, owing to ‘harassment of the media, censorship, confiscation of newspaper issues, media closures, and Internet cuts’; 

K. whereas the UN report of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Sudan noted in July 2017 that the censorship by the NISS of the Al-Jareeda newspaper contravened the Interim National Constitution of Sudan; 

L. whereas Sudan has signed but not ratified the 2005 revised version of the Cotonou Agreement; 

M. whereas VP/HR Federica Mogherini issued a statement on the 14 November 2017 on the visit of Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir to Uganda, in which she reminded all parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court to abide by and implement their obligations under international law; 

N. whereas human, civil and political rights continue to be repressed in Sudan; 

1. Expresses its deep concern at the sentencing of Mohamed Zine al-Abidine by the Press Court in Khartoum on 23 October 2017 to a suspended jail term with a five-year probation period, and calls on the Sudanese authorities to immediately review all charges against him; 

2. Is deeply worried about freedom of expression in Sudan, the ongoing censorship and seizures of newspapers, and the increased restrictions on journalists from freely expressing their opinion in Sudan; notes that holding government policies and politicians to account in the public domain should not result in repression of the free press; further notes with concern the long-term financial restrictions placed on newspapers as a result of routine seizures and suspensions of operations;
3. Deplores the fact that numerous reports have emerged regarding repeated violations of media freedom and continued harassment of journalists by the NISS, and urges the Sudanese authorities to bring the powers and methods of the NISS into line with international standards;

4. Believes that free, independent and impartial media constitute one of the essential foundations of a democratic society, where open debates play a crucial role; calls for the EU to intensify its efforts to promote freedom of expression through its external policies and instruments;

5. Urges the Sudanese authorities to put an immediate end to all forms of harassment, intimidation and attacks against journalists and defenders of freedom of online and offline expression, and to undertake democratic reforms as a means to ensure the protection and promotion of human rights in the country, including freedom of expression, in accordance with its obligations under the Interim National Constitution of Sudan and its international commitments, including the Cotonou Agreement;

6. Emphasises that the state, in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, has the primary responsibility for the promotion and protection of all human rights; calls on the Sudanese authorities to restore and respect human rights and fundamental freedoms under international law, including freedom of expression;

7. Recognises the importance of Commissioner Stylianides’ recent mission and of conveying the EU’s widely-known concerns to the Sudanese authorities, including as regards respect for fundamental freedoms;

8. Calls for the EU and its Member States to provide support to civil society organisations by means of technical assistance and capacity-building programmes, so as to improve their human rights advocacy and rule-of-law capabilities and enable them to contribute more effectively to the improvement of human rights in Sudan;

9. Notes with concern the proposed Press and Printing Act of 2017, which includes further controversial restrictions on online publications and provisions for lengthier suspensions of newspapers and journalists; encourages the Government of Sudan to amend the Press and Publication Act of 2009 in order to provide more protection to journalists and newspaper publishers;

10. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Co-Presidents of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, the African Union Commission, the Pan-African Parliament and the Sudanese Government.
The European Parliament,

| having regard to its previous resolutions on Somalia, |
| having regard to its resolution of 18 May 2017 on the situation in the Dadaab refugee camp (1), |
| having regard to the statement by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) of 15 October 2017 on the attacks in Mogadishu, Somalia, and the statement of the Spokesperson of the VP/HR of 30 October 2017 on the attack in Somalia, |
| having regard to the Council conclusions of 3 April 2017 on Somalia, |
| having regard to the EU intervention of 27 September 2017 on the 36th Session of the Human Rights Council on the Interactive Dialogue with the Independent Expert on Somalia, |
| having regard to UN Security Council resolutions 2372 (2017), adopted on 30 August 2017, and 2383 (2017), adopted on 7 November 2017, |
| having regard to the UN Secretary General reports to the UN Security Council of 9 May and 5 September 2017 on Somalia, |
| having regard to the UN Security Council statement of 15 October 2017 on the terrorist attack in Mogadishu, |
| having regard to the statement of the African Union (AU) Commission Chairperson on 15 October 2017 on the attack in Mogadishu, |
| having regard to statements by the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) condemning the terrorist attacks on 14 and 28 October 2017, |
| having regard to the final communiqué of the international conference on Somalia, held in London on 11 May 2017, |
| having regard to the EU-African Union Joint Communiqué on the Implementation of the Paris Agreement of 1 June 2017, |
| having regard to the AMISOM statement of 8 November 2017 announcing its intention to initiate a phased withdrawal of troops from Somalia starting in December 2017, with the intention of a full withdrawal by 2020, |
| having regard to the Cotonou Partnership Agreement between the ACP and the EU, |
| having regard to the mandate of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights to promote and protect human and peoples’ rights under the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, |
| having regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, |

having regard to the Organisation of African Unity Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism, adopted in 1999,

having regard to Rules 135(5) and 123(4) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas on 14 October 2017 a massive truck bomb rocked the centre of Mogadishu, killing at least 358 people, injuring 228 others and a further 56 are still missing; whereas the attack in the heart of Mogadishu was one of the most lethal terrorist operations anywhere in the world in recent years; whereas over 30 people were killed on 28 October 2017, when two bombs detonated outside a hotel near the presidential palace in Mogadishu;

B. whereas, although no group has claimed responsibility for these cowardly attacks, they bear the hallmarks of Al-Shabaab, which now appears not to want to undermine any popular support by associating itself with such huge losses of civilian life; whereas Somali citizens have repeatedly denounced the violence of Al-Shabaab, and have united in response to the October 2017 bombings, marching in their thousands through Mogadishu in defiance of Al-Shabaab;

C. whereas there has been a series of deadly terrorist attacks in Mogadishu and throughout the country in recent months, including car bombings, random shootings, targeted executions and abductions, highlighting the continued threat of violent extremism facing the country;

D. whereas a majority of the attacks have mainly been attributed to the terrorist actions of Al-Shabaab, although Daesh is also known to be active in the country;

E. whereas the president of Somalia, Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, after taking power in February 2017 in an election seen as a key milestone marking the battered East African country’s gradual return to stability and prosperity, has pledged to rid Somalia of Al-Shabaab;

F. whereas in light of the spate of attacks throughout 2017, not least the horrific bombing of 14 October 2017, it is not at all clear that Somali security forces, following AMISOM’s intended departure in 2018, will be sufficiently capable of combatting terrorism without external aid;

G. whereas AMISOM forces have on several occasions been accused of severe human rights abuses, including indiscriminate killings and some cases of sexual exploitation and abuse; whereas the redeployment of foreign troops in Somali territory outside UN/AU mandates represents a significant cause for concern given previous allegations of human rights abuses by AMISOM forces;

H. whereas, in addition to violent extremism, drought, clan conflict and forced evictions have resulted in hundreds of thousands of people being displaced in the past year alone, many into government-controlled urban centres; whereas many live in unsafe settlements, where women and girls in particular face abuse and sexual violence;

I. whereas the threat of famine still looms large in Somalia, with approximately 400,000 Somali children suffering from acute malnutrition and with 3 million people living in crisis or emergency food security conditions; whereas there are some 1.1 million internally displaced persons in Somalia, with over 900,000 Somali refugees in the region;

J. whereas there are 420,000 Somali refugees in camps in Kenya, with 350,000 in the Dadaab camp, and whereas the governments of Somalia and Kenya, and the UNHCR, have agreed to facilitate the voluntary return of 10,000 refugees to areas in Somalia that are not under Al-Shabaab control; whereas returnees face problems of re-integration and have little prospect of finding work; whereas many Dadaab refugees are of Somali descent, but have never known life outside the camp and are effectively stateless, meaning that they cannot be sent to Somalia;
K. whereas the EU has since 2016 progressively increased its annual humanitarian support to Somalia, in particular in response to the severe drought affecting the country, allocating EUR 120 million to humanitarian partners in 2017 and releasing emergency aid of EUR 100 000 to help efforts to respond rapidly to medical needs in Mogadishu following the attack on 14 October 2017; whereas the EU also initially mobilised two ships of the EU Naval Operation ATALANTA, along with emergency aid flights, to deliver emergency medical supplies to Mogadishu hospitals;

L. whereas the EU has provided EUR 486 million through the European Development Fund (2014-2020), focusing on the implementation of the ‘Compact’ and, in particular, on state- and peacebuilding, food security, resilience and education; whereas the EU is also committed to supporting AMISOM through the African Peace Facility;

M. whereas in December 2016 the World Bank pledged to step up the fight against extreme poverty, announcing that developed countries had pledged a record USD 75 billion for grants and soft loans to the International Development Association (IDA); whereas, however, Somalia is not eligible for IDA funding as it owes the bank and the IMF over USD 300 million as part of a USD 5 billion debt mountain owed to multilateral and bilateral creditors;

N. whereas while children continue to be killed, arbitrarily detained and recruited by Al-Shabaab, they are also being recruited into the Somali armed forces, despite the fact that Somalia ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in January 2015 and endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration in November 2015, committing itself to taking concrete steps to protect students and educational institutions;

O. whereas, in the absence of a functioning civilian judiciary, the Somali Government relies on military courts to try and convict civilians, which does not guarantee the rights of civilian defendants; whereas broad powers of investigation are granted to the National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA), which currently does not have a law enforcement mandate, resulting in significant violations of the due process rights of detainees held by NISA;

P. whereas, according to Transparency International, Somalia is the most corrupt country in the world for the 10th year running; whereas the Somali Government still faces numerous challenges, such as corruption and lack of widespread support from civilians, which has inevitably led to a lack of trust in state institutions and to subsequent support drifting to radical Islamist and terrorist groups;

1. Expresses its deepest sympathy with the victims of the recent terrorist attacks in Somalia, and with their families, and deeply regrets the loss of lives; at the same time, strongly condemns the perpetrators of these attacks, which have been attributed to the Al-Shabaab insurgent group;

2. Recalls that lasting stability and peace can only be achieved through social inclusion, sustainable development and good governance, based on democratic principles and the rule of law, in which peoples' dignity and rights are fully respected;

3. Welcomes the Commission’s rapid emergency response following the 14 October 2017 terrorist attack; calls for the EU and its international partners to fulfil their commitments to Somalia, in the first instance through measures to establish food security, with a view to avoiding the structural problems that lead to famine, to fostering security and the reconciliation of communal grievances, to improving the management of public finances and to assisting in the completion of the constitutional review needed to achieve long-term stability;

4. Deplores the fact that, despite repeated warnings from humanitarian groups, aid agencies and the European Parliament, Somalia continues to teeter on the brink of famine; recalls that the death toll in the 2011 famine was exacerbated by insecurity and the actions of extremist militants from Al-Shabaab to hinder food aid deliveries to areas of south-central Somalia that at the time were under its control; calls on all parties to work with humanitarian agencies, fully respecting humanitarian principles to allow full and unhindered access to those who continue to suffer and who are in need, in particular those in rural areas;
5. Welcomes the electoral process organised in February 2017, which led to the election of a new president, and expresses its hope that the election will foster political stability, encourage the adoption of necessary reforms and move the federal project forward in close coordination and collaboration with the Federal Member States (FMS); stresses the importance of fighting the endemic corruption in the country and of providing options for the country's youth in order to reduce the risk of their recruitment by Al-Shabaab;

6. Welcomes the decision of the Somali National Leadership Forum to promote the establishment and registration of political parties, in advance of the 2020 elections and on the basis of the principle of one-person, one-vote, as well as the attempt to rebuild the state institutions and the adoption of important new laws on political parties and on the creation of an independent National Human Rights Commission; points out that efforts must be undertaken to increase women's representation;

7. Underlines the importance of the contribution made by the country's diaspora and civil society to re-establishing not only governance, but also social and economic development, highlighting the importance of the representation and participation of women in decision making; welcomes, in this context, the increase in the number of women members of the Somali Parliament (to 24%) and Cabinet, keeping in mind the need for greater efforts to improve gender balance, both in the EU and in Somalia;

8. Takes note of the Nairobi Declaration of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) on durable solutions for Somali refugees and the reintegration of returnees in Somalia; welcomes the commitment to achieve a comprehensive regional approach, while at the same time maintaining protection and promoting self-reliance in the countries of asylum, which is to be undertaken with the support of the international community and to be consistent with international responsibility-sharing as outlined in the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) of the New York Declaration;

9. Calls for the Commission to step up consultation efforts with actors in the region, including the local populations, regional government and NGOs, with a view to focusing on locally identified problems and needs, fostering a conducive climate and increasing the capacity for the return of refugees to their home countries;

10. Expresses concern about NISA's broad remit and its use of military courts to prosecute alleged terrorism-related crimes, whereby it has repeatedly flouted due process and imposed the death penalty without accountability;

11. Calls on the Somali Government and the EU, as part of its rule-of-law activities in Somalia, to ensure that NISA is regulated with effective oversight mechanisms, and to strengthen the technical expertise of Somalia's Criminal Investigation Department (CID) so that it can carry out thorough and effective investigations respectful of citizens' rights;

12. Welcomes, in particular, the political agreement that Somalia's leaders reached on 16 April 2017 to integrate regional and federal forces in a coherent National Security Architecture capable of gradually taking on lead responsibility for providing security, and the swift establishment of the National Security Council and National Security Office;

13. Acknowledges AMISOM's role in enabling security and stability, allowing Somalia to establish political institutions and extend state authority, in anticipation of a transfer of security responsibility to Somali institutions and forces; welcomes the African Union's investigation into allegations of sexual violence by AMISOM troops; calls for full implementation of the recommendations of the UN Secretary General reports on Somalia, and, in line with UN Security Council resolution 2272 (2016), urges the AU and troop-contributing countries to ensure that allegations are properly and thoroughly investigated and that those responsible are brought to justice; underlines the importance of the possibility of extending AMISOM's mandate beyond May 2018, warning that a premature transfer of responsibilities to Somali troops could be detrimental to long-term stability;

14. Underlines the need to fight impunity and to ensure accountability for crimes against humanity and war crimes carried out in Somalia; takes note of the Somali President's offer of amnesty for certain crimes to those who renounce terrorism and violence and want to leave Al-Shabaab and other terrorist groups, and encourages the development of amnesty legislation;
15. Deplores the recruitment of child soldiers by Al-Shabaab militants and the use of children by security forces as soldiers and as informants, including the use of captured or deserting child soldiers; recalls that the Government of Somalia has committed to rehabilitate former child soldiers and bring those responsible for their recruitment to justice; calls on international donors, including the EU, to prioritise the provision of rehabilitation services, education and safe schooling as a key element to breaking the deadly cycle of violence; urges the authorities to treat children suspected of association with Al-Shabaab primarily as victims and to consider the best interests of the child, following international protection standards as guiding principles.

16. Raises serious concern that natural resources, in particular charcoal, remain a significant source of financing for terrorists and a cause of serious environmental degradation in Somalia; calls on the Commission to examine how traceability and due diligence schemes can be widened to include all natural resources used to fuel terrorist activity and violence; calls, in this context, on all parties to ensure compliance with the UN Security Council resolution banning the export of Somali charcoal.

17. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the African Union, the President, the Prime Minister and the Parliament of Somalia, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the United Nations Security Council, the United Nations Human Rights Council, and the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly.
The European Parliament,

— having regard to its previous resolutions on Madagascar, particularly those of 7 May 2009 (1), of 11 February 2010 (2) and of 9 June 2011 (3), and to the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly fact-finding mission to Madagascar of 10-11 July 2010,

— having regard to the information provided by the WHO on 2 November 2017 on the recent plague outbreak,

— having regard to the Concluding Observations of 22 August 2017 of the UN Human Rights Committee on the fourth periodic report of Madagascar,

— having regard to the statement by United Nations Special Rapporteur John H. Knox of October 2016 on the conclusion of his mission to Madagascar,

— having regard to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Extraordinary Summit on Madagascar of 20 May 2011 and the roadmap proposed by the SADC mediation team after the lifting of sanctions on Madagascar by the EU, the African Union and the SADC,

— having regard to the Report of the Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment of 26 April 2017 on his visit to Madagascar,

— having regard to Articles 8 and 9 of the revised Cotonou Agreement,

— having regard to the Constitution of Madagascar,

— having regard to the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders and the EU Human Rights Guidelines on Freedom of Expression Online and Offline,

— having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

— having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) signed by Madagascar in 1969 and ratified in 1971,

— having regard to the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG),

— having regard to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights,

— having regard to the 120th session of the Human Rights Committee, which took place in Geneva and reviewed the fourth periodic report of Madagascar on its implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights on 10 and 11 July 2017,

— having regard to Rules 135(5) and 123(4) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas after a five-year period of political turmoil in the course of which donors suspended development aid programmes, Madagascar held credible and democratic parliamentary elections in October 2013 and presidential elections in December 2013, leading to the election of Hery Rajaonarimampianina as President; whereas the political situation has remained volatile, although the resumption of relations with donor countries has removed all restrictions on cooperating with the new government;

B. whereas a new code of communication has emerged, which has been strongly criticised by Malagasy journalists insofar as it refers to the penal code regarding rulings on press offences, potentially leading to criminalisation of the profession; whereas the situation has calmed down but does not seem to be moving in the right direction;

C. whereas, in principle, a presidential election is due to be held next year, although no firm date has yet been set; whereas the Malagasy President has declared himself in favour of a constitutional reform to permit him to stay in power during the electoral period and shown willingness to distort proposed amendments to the electoral law drafted by the national independent electoral commission, experts, civil society and the opposition; whereas these declarations have been contested by his political opponents and parts of civil society, who are concerned that this may be an attempt to delay the election and remain in power beyond his constitutional mandate; whereas this is likely to increase tensions in an already fragile political context;

D. whereas Amnesty International’s Regional Director for Southern Africa stated on 10 July 2017 that Madagascar’s human rights record is in sharp decline as a result of the blatant disregard for the rule of law; whereas more than 50% of all prisoners are held in preventive imprisonment without trial, and violations such as extrajudicial executions by the police and the imprisonment of human rights defenders are occurring because of the lack of free and fair access to justice;

E. whereas Amnesty International has also documented reports of law enforcement officials seeking revenge after incidents of mob justice; whereas in February 2017 police officers allegedly burnt down five villages in Antsakabaray after two of their colleagues were allegedly killed by villagers, and an elderly woman died from burns during the attack as she was unable to escape; whereas the police are now investigating the fire attack, despite being implicated in it;

F. whereas journalists and human rights defenders face intimidation and harassment from the authorities in an attempt to silence them and obstruct their investigative or human rights work; whereas since the 2013 elections, many media outlets have been closed down and censored in ‘respect for the rule of law’ and the imperative ‘sanitation of the audiovisual landscape’ advanced by the Ministry of Communication;

G. whereas in 2013, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) adopted an action plan for Madagascar which required that the country strengthen its enforcement efforts and place an embargo on the export of any stockpiles of wood; whereas since then, the CITES Secretariat and the CITES Standing Committee have repeatedly stated that Madagascar has failed to comply with the action plan; whereas, according to the CITES Secretariat, widespread impunity prevails for illegal logging and infractions of environmental laws; whereas, on the other hand, individuals opposing illegal logging have been convicted by the courts, which are at serious risk of corruption;

H. whereas Madagascar is one of the most environmentally exceptional locations on earth, but the poorest non-conflict country in the world, with 92% of people living on less than USD 2 per day, and is ranked 154th out of 188 in the Human Development Index;

I. whereas the illegal trafficking of timber and animal species poses a significant threat to Madagascar’s environment and biodiversity, as well as to the environmental rights of its people; whereas the environmental impact of, and lack of transparency in the management of, extractive industries often harms local communities and their sustainable development; whereas trafficking networks have alleged links to organised crime, which threatens democratic
governance in the country; whereas according to the Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment, illegal logging and trafficking of precious woods, and mining concessions, are closely linked to violence against the local population;

J. whereas the environmental activist Clovis Razafimialala, who has denounced the illegal trafficking and exploitation of rosewood and other timber, has been detained since 16 September 2016 on trumped-up charges of rebellion, destruction of public documents and goods, and arson, in spite of a blatant absence of proof; whereas the environmental and human rights defender Raleva was arrested on 27 September 2017 for 'use of a false title' while questioning the operations of a gold-mining company, after mining had been banned due to environmental degradation; whereas Raleva received a two-year suspended sentence on 26 October 2017; whereas Augustin Sarovy, director of an NGO combating rosewood trafficking, was forced to flee to Europe after receiving death threats;

K. whereas Fernand Cello, a radio director known for his inquiries into sensitive subjects such as illegal sapphire mining, was prosecuted on 6 May 2017 for 'forgery and use of forgeries'; whereas Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF — Reporters Without Borders) denounced the harsh treatment of the director of Radio Jupiter by the authorities in the region based on false allegations by people who had been implicated in his investigations;

L. whereas Claudine Razaimamonjy's arrest on the initiative of the Bianco (Bureau Indépendant Anti-Corruption — Independent Anti-Corruption Bureau) for misappropriation of public funds in several communes became an affair of state, as she is a close ally and advisor to the Head of State Hery Rajaonarimampianina; whereas before her arrest the gendarmerie made a request to bring in Ms Jacqueline Raharimanantsoa Saholintaina, Ms Sylvie Randriantsara Linah and Ms Claudine Razaimamonjy for questioning; whereas it turns out, in fact, that these three women are one and the same person, Claudine Razaimamonjy, who never answered the summons to come in for questioning;

M. whereas the 'Claudine case' provoked an open conflict between the government and the judiciary, the Minister of Justice having personally called publicly for the release of Claudine Razaimamonjy to avoid an extension of her police custody; whereas the magistrates' union declared that it was offended by the position taken and the direct involvement of the government in the case, pleading the separation of powers and stressing that this affair had no connection with politics; whereas this year, magistrates have gone on strike three times to condemn the repeated intimidations and governmental interferences with their activities and to reaffirm their independence;

N. whereas Madagascar has been subject to epidemic plagues every year since the 1980s, but the latest outbreak, which started in August 2017, has been particularly violent, affecting major cities and non-endemic areas; whereas more than 1 800 cases and 127 deaths have been reported; whereas according to the WHO, the unusual nature and fast spread this year is due to a deterioration in the health system linked to the socio-political crisis that has hit the country in recent years; whereas the WHO estimates that the risk of potential further spread of the plague outbreak at national level remains high;

O. whereas the predominance of customary laws in the country has favoured harmful traditional practices, including arranged, forced and early marriages; whereas women and girls continue to suffer sexual or other physical violence, while reporting rates are low and prosecutions rare; whereas abortion is still forbidden in the country by a law which dates back to 1920; whereas about ten women a day die in childbirth; whereas the ban on abortion may lead to clandestine and hazardous termination of pregnancies by people who are not medically qualified;

1. Welcomes the re-establishment of the rule of law with the elections of October and December 2013; reminds the authorities of Madagascar, and first and foremost its President, of their responsibility to uphold and protect the rights of their citizens throughout the country, including the prevention of all abuses and crimes, and to exercise their mission to govern in strict respect of the rule of law; urges them to take all necessary measures to guarantee the exercise of their citizens' fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression;
2. Hopes that the upcoming elections will take place in a peaceful and serene climate so that they are democratic and transparent; insists that constitutional order and political stability must be preserved and that only dialogue and consensus building among all political actors can guarantee timely and credible elections in 2018; calls on the international community to take all possible steps to ensure a fair and free electoral process for the 2018 presidential elections;

3. Expresses its concern about the prevalence of mob justice and the involvement of law enforcement officers in cases of extrajudicial killing; calls for an independent and impartial investigation into the burning down of five villages in Antsakabary, which guarantees the safety of the victims from any reprisal attacks should they submit evidence on this matter; calls on the Malagasy authorities to systematically conduct impartial investigations into extrajudicial executions, to prosecute the perpetrators, and to ensure that the families of victims receive adequate compensation;

4. Calls on the Malagasy authorities to respect their obligations stemming from CITES, including by greatly strengthening the effective enforcement of the laws against illegal logging and trafficking;

5. Welcomes the ongoing revision of the mining code and calls on the government to ensure that the revised code meets international requirements, such as prior assessment and consultation with most people affected, access to remedies and minimisation of environmental harm; calls on the government to review the mining permits issued by the transitional government and to suspend those permits not in accordance with the MECIE decree;

6. Denounces the arbitrary detention of journalists, human rights defenders and environmental activists on the basis of fabricated charges; calls for a definitive end to harassment and intimidation against them, disapproves of the measures taken against the media prior to the last elections and calls for the full restoration of all individual and collective liberties; calls on the Malagasy Government to repeal the restrictive elements in the Communication Code;

7. Calls on the Government of Madagascar to let justice follow its normal and independent course in the ‘Claudine case’ and in all cases of active and passive corruption; insists that politics should not interfere with the judiciary and that the Bianco be allowed to freely conduct its corruption investigations; insists on the strict respect of the principle of separation of powers and stresses that the independence and impartiality of the judiciary must be guaranteed in all circumstances; requests that the Malagasy authorities redouble their efforts to tackle corruption and impunity in the country and ensure that all cases of corruption are brought to justice;

8. Expresses its concern about the rise of activities of foreign preachers who force pupils to convert to an extremist form of Islam;

9. Stresses that the EU and its Member States must invest in providing support and protection to human rights defenders, as key actors in sustainable development, including by means of urgent grants under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) emergency fund for human rights defenders at risk;

10. Urges transnational companies to respect human rights and the principle of due diligence as set out in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights;

11. Calls on the EU to pay attention to ensuring that the preparations for the forthcoming presidential elections are inclusive, transparent and accepted by all, including by means of a two-year package of support for election arrangements;

12. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Commission, the Council, the ACP-EU Council of Ministers, the Government of Madagascar, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Southern African Development Community and the Commission of the African Union.
The European Parliament,

— having regard to the draft Council decision (15470/2016),

— having regard to the draft Partnership Agreement on Relations and Cooperation between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and New Zealand, of the other part (1)

— having regard to the request for consent submitted by the Council in accordance with Article 37 of the Treaty on European Union and Article 207, Article 212(1), Article 218(6), second subparagraph, point (a), and Article 218(8), second subparagraph, of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (C8-0027/2017),

— having regard to the Joint Declaration on Relations and Cooperation between the European Union and New Zealand (2), adopted in Lisbon in 2007,

— having regard to its resolution on New Zealand of 25 February 2016 on the opening of FTA negotiations with Australia and New Zealand (3),

— having regard to the Agreement between the European Union and New Zealand establishing a framework for the participation of New Zealand in European Union crisis management operations, signed in 2012 (4),

— having regard to the Agreement on scientific and technological cooperation between the European Community and the Government of New Zealand (5), which came into force in 2009,

— having regard to the 22nd EU-New Zealand interparliamentary meeting (IPM), held in Brussels on 23 March 2017,

— having regard to its legislative resolution of 16 November 2017 on the draft decision (6),

— having regard to Rule 99(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

— having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (A8-0333/2017),

A. whereas New Zealand enjoys a close and historic partnership with the European Union and its Member States:

B. whereas the European Union shares common values and principles with New Zealand, including respect for democratic principles, human rights, fundamental freedoms, the rule of law, including international law, and peace and security;

C. whereas the European Union remains New Zealand's third largest trading partner and both sides maintain a wide range of economic and commercial interests;

D. whereas the first resident EU Ambassador to New Zealand took office in September 2016, marking the full transition to an autonomous European Union Delegation in New Zealand;

E. whereas New Zealand enjoys good relations with a number of the EU’s closest partners, particularly with Australia and the United States; in this regard, notes the 2010 Wellington Declaration establishing a strategic partnership framework between New Zealand and the United States, as well as the Closer Economic Relations (CER) Agreement signed with Australia in 1983;

F. whereas New Zealand, a member of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), is a valued development partner and a key aid provider in terms of official development assistance (ODA) as a percentage of GNI, contributing to sustainable development and poverty reduction in developing countries for a fairer, more secure and more prosperous planet;

G. whereas New Zealand is a member of the ‘Five Eyes’ intelligence alliance with the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia; whereas other EU Member States (France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Sweden, Denmark and Spain) are part of the looser arrangement known as the ‘Fourteen Eyes’;

H. whereas New Zealand has a special focus on developing relations in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly with China, Southeast Asia and Japan, and contributes to the regional stability of Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific;

I. whereas an integrated Asia-Pacific region where New Zealand plays a prominent role contributes to a global value- and rule-based system and thus to the Union’s own security;

J. whereas New Zealand is a founding member of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) and has a strategic partnership with ASEAN;

K. whereas New Zealand has concluded bilateral free trade agreements with Australia, Singapore, Thailand, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia and South Korea, as well as the multilateral trade agreements of the Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership Agreement with Singapore, Chile and Brunei, the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement and the New Zealand Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Free Trade Agreement; whereas China and New Zealand are seeking to upgrade their trade agreements;

L. whereas New Zealand is also a party to, and has ratified, the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) deal and is an active party in the negotiations for the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP);

M. whereas New Zealand was a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for a two-year term from 2015 to 2016, during which time, with strong leadership and vision, it held the UNSC presidency on two occasions;

N. whereas New Zealand is a long-standing member of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and is a member of the newly established Shanghai-based Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB);
O. whereas New Zealand has contributed to UN peacekeeping operations, including in Bosnia, Kosovo, Sierra Leone and Afghanistan; whereas in Afghanistan it led a reconstruction team in Bamyan Province, as well as training missions to help develop the Afghan National Army, in addition to contributing to the EUPOL Mission until 2012 to assist in the restoration of law and order;

P. whereas New Zealand has been conducting a non-combat training mission in Iraq since 2015 with the aim of training Iraqi security forces personnel, as part of the fight against IS/Daesh;

Q. whereas New Zealand was the first country in the world to adopt universal suffrage in 1893;

R. whereas New Zealand is a proponent of green production, particularly food, and has been promoting comprehensive global climate agreements within the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the implementation of the COP21 Paris agreement and effective mitigation action by all developed countries and major emitting developing countries, including through pioneering the establishment of a national emissions trading scheme;

S. whereas New Zealand and the European Union cooperate in the promotion of sustainable development, resilience and mitigation to address the impact of climate change in the Asia-Pacific region, in particular by fostering the systematic use of renewable energy;

T. whereas the European Union and New Zealand work together to promote sustainable development and to mitigate the impacts of climate change in the Pacific region, with a particular focus on the role played by renewable energy sources;

U. whereas New Zealand contributes to the International Fund for Ireland, an organisation which works to promote economic and social advancement and to encourage and facilitate community dialogue and reconciliation;

1. Welcomes the conclusion of the Partnership Agreement on Relations and Cooperation (PARC), which will provide a forward-looking political framework within which EU-New Zealand relations and cooperation on sustainable development and a comprehensive range of issues will be developed even further for years to come in order to match new ambitions and aspirations;

2. Supports the launch of the EU-New Zealand free trade agreement negotiations, which must be conducted in a spirit of reciprocity and mutual benefit, taking into account the sensitivity of certain agricultural and other products; stresses that this is important to strengthen the political dialogue and improve cooperation on economic growth, job creation, trade and investment;

3. Appreciates Prime Minister Bill English’s gesture of highlighting and reaffirming the commitment to special relations with Europe by making his first official foreign visit to the European Union, the European Parliament, London and Berlin in January 2017, only one month after his appointment as Prime Minister;

4. Recognises the strong and historic bilateral relationships between New Zealand and EU Member States, including cultural, economic and people-to-people ties;

5. Underlines the European Union’s cooperation with New Zealand on peace, security, regional stability in the Asia-Pacific region, agriculture, sustainable development, fisheries and maritime affairs, transport, humanitarian aid, sanitary measures, energy, the environment and climate change;

6. Underlines the European Union’s cooperation with New Zealand on strengthening environmental and ocean governance, which is necessary to achieve the conservation and sustainable use of resources;

7. Takes note of the EU-New Zealand science and technology cooperation roadmap on research and innovation; encourages further investment and new opportunities in scientific, academic and technology cooperation;
8. Welcomes the PARC agreement’s articles on counterterrorism cooperation, particularly the commitments on exchanging information on terrorist groups and networks and exchanging views on preventing, countering and fighting terrorism and its propaganda, radicalisation and cybercrime, while ensuring the protection of human rights and respecting the rule of law;

9. Highlights New Zealand’s participation in EU crisis management operations to promote international peace and security and its contribution to EUNAVFOR Atalanta anti-piracy operations off the Horn of Africa, to EUPOL Afghanistan, and to EUFOR Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina;

10. Commends New Zealand’s long-standing commitment in the international coalition against terrorism; recalls that New Zealand can play a significant role in the fight against international terrorism in the Asia-Pacific region; is pleased that the country is already providing support to governments and NGOs in Southeast Asian countries against violent extremism and radicalisation;

11. Recognises New Zealand’s role in co-sponsoring the UNSC Syria and Middle East Peace Process resolutions at the end of 2016 while it was a member of the UNSC;

12. Welcomes New Zealand’s long-standing commitment to the International Criminal Court (ICC) and commends its efforts in favour of, and constructive contribution to, the development and effectiveness of the ICC as a means to strengthen peace and international justice;

13. Welcomes New Zealand’s ratification of the COP21 climate agreement and positively notes that more than 80% of its electricity comes from renewable energy sources;

14. Takes note of the EU-New Zealand Pacific Energy Partnership; calls on both parties to increase cooperation on sustainable energy in line with the UN initiative ‘Sustainable Energy for All’;

15. Recognises New Zealand’s contribution to the protection, conservation and sustainable use of marine resources and to marine research;

16. Believes New Zealand is an important partner in the cooperation on and protection of the environment in the Pacific region and in Antarctica;

17. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the European External Action Service, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and the Government and Parliament of New Zealand.
The EU-Africa Strategy: a boost for development

(2018/C 356/12)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to Article 21 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) and Article 208 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),


— having regard to the joint statement of 7 June 2017 by Parliament, the Council and the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, and the Commission on the New European Consensus on Development — Our World, Our Dignity, Our Future,

— having regard to the United Nations Summit on Sustainable Development and the outcome document adopted by the UN General Assembly on 25 September 2015, entitled ‘Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’, and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),

— having regard to the Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems that were developed in the Committee on World Food Security (CFS-RAI) in order to contribute to the attainment of SDGs one and two,

— having regard to the Addis Ababa Agenda on Financing for Development of 2015,

— having regard to the Paris Agreement on climate change of 2015,

— having regard to the Africa Action Summit which took place on 16 November 2016, consolidating the African dimension of COP 22,

— having regard to the Commission Communication of 26 February 2016 on the EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking (COM(2016)0087),

— having regard to the Partnership agreement between the members of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States of the one part, and the European Community and its Member States, of the other part, signed in Cotonou on 23 June 2000 (1) (the Cotonou Agreement), and to its revisions of 2005 and 2010,

— having regard to the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES) adopted by African and European Heads of State and of Government at the Lisbon Summit of 9 December 2007, and the two action plans adopted in Accra in October 2007 (for the period 2008-2010) and Tripoli in November 2010 (for the period 2011-2013),

— having regard to the conclusions of the 4th EU-Africa Summit held in Brussels on 2 and 3 April 2014, the roadmap for the format of the meetings (Cairo format) and the areas of cooperation between the two continents for the period 2014-2017 and the EU-Africa declaration on migration and mobility,

— having regard to the Agenda 2063 of the African Union (AU) adopted in May 2014,

— having regard to the report on the draft recommendations on the institutional reform of the African Union, prepared by H.E. Paul Kagamé, with the title 'The Imperative to Strengthen our Union',

— having regard to the 3rd Civil Society Intercontinental Forum which took place in Tunis from 11 to 13 July 2017, calling for greater engagement of civil society organisations and for individuals from civil society to be placed at the centre of the EU-Africa strategy,

— having regard to the joint communication from the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of 7 June 2017 entitled 'A Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU’s external action' (JOIN(2017)0021),


— having regard to the joint communication from the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of 22 November 2016 entitled 'A renewed partnership with the countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP)' (JOIN(2016)0052),

— having regard to the various communications from the Commission on relations between the EU and Africa, particularly that of 27 June 2007 entitled 'From Cairo to Lisbon — The EU-Africa Strategic Partnership' (COM(2007)0357), that of 17 October 2008 entitled 'One year after Lisbon: The Africa-EU partnership at work' (COM(2008)0617) and that of 10 November 2010 on the consolidation of EU Africa relations: 1.5 billion inhabitants, 80 countries, two continents, one future (COM(2010)0634),

— having regard to the joint communication to the European Parliament and the Council from the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of 4 May 2017 entitled 'For a renewed impetus of the Africa-EU partnership' (JOIN(2017)0017), and the Council conclusions of 19 June 2017 on the subject,

— having regard to its previous resolutions on relations between the Union and Africa and the ACP countries, and particularly that of 4 October 2016 on the future of ACP-EU relations beyond 2020 (2),

— having regard to its resolution of 13 September 2016 on the EU Trust Fund for Africa: the implications for development and humanitarian aid (3),

— having regard to its resolution of 7 June 2016 on the EU 2015 Report on policy coherence for development (4),

— having regard to its resolution of 22 November 2016 on increasing the effectiveness of development cooperation (5),

— having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,

— having regard to the report of the Committee on Development and the opinions of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Committee on International Trade and the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (A8-0334/2017),

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(2) Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0371.
A. whereas the ties between the European Union and African countries are historic and their destinies are intimately linked; whereas the EU is Africa’s main partner in the fields of economic activity and trade as well as development, humanitarian aid and security;

B. whereas there is a need to provide the Africa-EU partnership with a new vision that reflects the evolution of the political, economic, environmental and social situations of both continents; whereas there is a need to adapt to new players on the international scene — including China — and to move towards an enhanced, modernised and more political partnership, with a focus on defending our key common interests;

C. whereas relations between the EU and Africa must be guided by the principles of mutual interest and understanding and by shared common values within the framework of a reciprocal partnership;

D. whereas relations between the EU and the continent of Africa are based on various legal instruments and political strategies and whereas it is important to step up synergies and coherence between them in order to make the partnership more effective and sustainable;

E. whereas the Cotonou Agreement with the EU, to which 79 ACP States are parties, including 48 in sub-Saharan Africa, governs the main partnership between the EU and Africa; whereas the EU has also established relations with African countries that are not parties to the Cotonou Agreement; whereas the EU-ACP partnership was established at a time when ACP countries had not yet formed their current regional or continental cooperation structures; whereas the emergence of the AU in 2003 and of the JAES in 2007 makes it essential to streamline the various policy frameworks between the EU and Africa; whereas the objective to ‘treat Africa as one’ is clearly stated in the preamble of the JAES;

F. whereas the EU is engaged with the African countries in a political and institutional dialogue advanced through the EU-Africa summits, the intergovernmental organisation the ‘Union for the Mediterranean’ (UfM) and the ACP-EU cooperation bodies, including at parliamentary level via the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, the EU Delegation to the UfM Parliamentary Assembly and with the Pan-African Parliament;

G. whereas the 11th European Development Fund (EDF) has a budget of EUR 30.5 billion, of which EUR 900 million are reserved for the African Peace Facility, and whereas EUR 1.4 billion of the EDF will be used for the EU Trust Fund for Africa; whereas more than EUR 5 billion have been spent on the needs of African countries in the context of the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI), and whereas EUR 845 million have been allocated to the Pan-African Programme under the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) to implement the JAES;

H. whereas the next AU-EU Summit, which will take place in Abidjan on 29 and 30 November 2017 on the topic of ‘Investing in Youth’, is an opportunity to create, support and develop economic conditions of true equality between partners wishing to defend key common interests;

I. whereas the new JAES must be included in the future post-Cotonou agreement;

J. whereas the EU is a long-standing partner and a major guarantor of the security of the continent of Africa, which is a subject of the utmost importance; whereas the security and sustainable growth of the European continent closely and immediately depend on the stability and development of the African continent and vice versa;

K. whereas constant support for the effective implementation of the African Peace and Security Architecture and the commitment of the EU, the AU and other international players present in Africa are essential for the development and stability of the African continent;

L. whereas migration features prominently in the EU global strategy on foreign and security policy and constitutes a priority topic in the EU’s external relations, including its relations with Africa; whereas Africa and Europe have a shared interest and responsibility when it comes to migration and mobility, including in the fight against human
trafficking and smuggling, and whereas managing migration calls for global solutions based on solidarity, the sharing of responsibility, respect for migrant rights and international law, as well as the effective use of development cooperation instruments;

M. whereas more than 218 million people live in extreme poverty in Africa; whereas the share of the population living in extreme poverty in sub-Saharan Africa has fallen from 56% in 1990 to 43% in 2012; whereas 33 of the 47 least developed countries are in Africa, which makes the EU-Africa partnership a vital tool for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the attainment of the sustainable development goals, particularly the eradication of poverty;

N. whereas, in Africa, infrastructure requirements are estimated at EUR 75 billion annually, the value of the consumer market is likely to reach USD 1 000 billion in 2020, foreign direct investment is set to increase steadily to an estimated USD 144 billion in 2020, and the population is currently 1 billion;

O. whereas exports from Africa are still dominated by unprocessed products, and whereas a high proportion of these exports are covered by trade preference arrangements; whereas free market access for most African products increases the capacities of African countries and enhances their competitiveness and participation in global markets when accompanied, among other things, by policies aimed at lasting sustainable industrialisation and rural productivity as key paths for development;

P. whereas demographic trends will have to be taken into account, bearing in mind that by 2050, according to some estimates, Africa could have a population of 2.5 billion, most of them young people, while Europe is expected to have a significantly older population; whereas it is therefore crucial to generate millions of jobs and to help with and support the empowerment of women and young people, particularly by means of education, access to healthcare and training on the African continent;

**Intensifying the political dialogue between the EU and Africa: a precondition for a renewed strategic partnership**

1. Takes note of the new communication entitled ‘For a Renewed Impetus of the Africa-EU Partnership’ which aims to lend fresh impetus to the Africa-EU partnership in order to broaden and intensify it, gearing it to prosperity and stability on the two continents in accordance with the commitments undertaken by subscribing to the SDGs, the New European Consensus for Development, which serves as a set of guidelines for European development policy, the EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy and Agenda 2063;

2. Recalls that Africa is a key strategic partner for the EU and considers it vital to intensify relations between the EU and the AU via a revised and broadened dialogue, which includes the principles of transparency and good governance, in order to establish a ‘win-win’ situation, and equal and sustainable cooperation to respond to shared challenges and secure common benefits, while ensuring the principle of ownership and taking into account the specific circumstances and level of development of each partner country;

3. Invites the future partnership to focus on the priority areas identified by both the AU and the EU, such as:

   — economic development (via trade, Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), enhanced regional integration, economic diversification, sustainable industrialisation and the creation of quality jobs),

   — good governance, including human rights,

   — human development via public services covering basic needs, such as education, health, access to water and sanitation, gender equality, science, technology and innovation,
4. Recalls that budget support is the best way to carry out appropriation, providing governments with the means to determine their needs and priorities; recalls that general or sector-specific budget support enables development policies to be supported and ensures maximised take-up;

5. Welcomes the fact that the main topic of the 5th AU-EU Summit, which will take place in Côte d’Ivoire in November 2017, is youth, given its importance for the future of both continents;

6. Recalls the importance and effectiveness of ACP-EU cooperation and the results achieved in the field of development; stresses that this legally binding framework must be maintained after 2020; stresses the need to step up this cooperation, while developing its regional dimension, including by means of increased cooperation with the AU, the regional economic communities and other regional organisations; calls for a more strategic, pragmatic, comprehensive and structured approach to political dialogue within the framework of negotiations for the post-Cotonou agreement;

7. Calls for the parliamentary dimension of the ACP-EU to be stepped up; stresses that the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly is a unique platform for interaction and plays a key role in strengthening democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights;

8. Stresses that the European neighbourhood policy (ENP) review provides opportunities for improving the coordination of neighbourhood policy and policy on other African states through the creation of extended cooperation frameworks on regional issues such as security, energy, and even migration;

9. Reaffirms the need to adopt, within the Africa-EU partnership, an approach coordinated among the EU Member States themselves, and between the EU and its Member States, as provided for by Article 210 TFEU; recalls, likewise, that respect for the EU principle of policy coherence for development is necessary in European and African policies and initiatives alike in order to attain the SDGs;

10. Calls for the principle of policy coherence for development to be fully incorporated into the EU’s trade relationship with Africa, which entails the inclusion of enforceable Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD) clauses in all EU trade agreements with African countries, in line with the commitment undertaken by the Commission in the ‘Trade for All’ strategy;

11. Reiterates the importance of the Member States fulfilling their commitment to directing 0.7% of their GDP to official development assistance to strengthen cooperation with Africa;

12. Endorses the stated desire to intensify alliances between the EU and Africa to tackle global governance issues; stresses, in this context, the need to step up the dialogue with the AU and the importance of ensuring its financial autonomy, in accordance with the Kigali Decision on Financing, by reducing its dependence on external financing; takes note of the proposals put forward in the report drawn up by Paul Kagame which aims at strengthening the AU in order to give impetus to the process of political African integration;

13. Stresses the role played by civil society — including NGOs, faith-based organisations, youth and women’s rights organisations, the private sector, trade unions, parliamentary assemblies, local authorities and the diaspora, each one of them with its own specific features — in consolidating the political dialogue between the EU and Africa to ensure a people-focused partnership;
14. Stresses the need to increase the participation of civil society in the Africa-EU Partnership, promoting the reinforcement of its capacities, especially by transferring expertise and ensuring its involvement in the design and implementation of relevant reforms and policies; considers that the engagement of civil society organisations (CSOs) is essential for public accountability; supports the various platforms established to make civil society a key actor in the partnership, particularly the Joint Annual Forum (JAF), whose aim is to implement the EU-Africa roadmap; regrets, nonetheless, the fact that the JAF has never been held and calls for the EU and the AU to immediately put in place the financial and political means needed to ensure the meaningful participation of all stakeholders in the partnership, including in the framework of this 5th AU-EU Summit;

Building more resilient states and societies for the benefit of all people, particularly young people, in order to attain the SDGs

15. Considers it necessary to make resilience — in all its five dimensions — a major component of the new EU-Africa strategy;

Political resilience

16. Emphasises the need to promote good governance, democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights, but also to undertake efforts to combat corruption on both continents, as they are indispensable elements of sustainable development;

17. Calls, therefore, for a frank and inclusive dialogue, based on mutual respect, making these values and principles a major component of cooperation, particularly by extending the conditionality of development aid to their strict respect;

18. Stresses that addressing governance challenges in both continents with greater determination is of paramount importance for building fairer, more stable and more secure societies; underlines the need to continue to uphold and promote human rights and governance on the basis of existing international legal instruments, laws, principles and mechanisms, including those of African regional governance bodies such as the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights and its protocols, the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights and the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights, so as to strengthen ownership;

19. Recalls the importance of the role of the International Criminal Court in tackling impunity and in upholding the values of peace, security, equality, fairness, justice and compensation that it serves as a vehicle for; calls for the European Union and African states to continue supporting the Rome Statute and the International Criminal Court; urges all signatories of the Rome Statute to ratify it as soon as possible;

20. Supports the organisation of a joint high-level AU-EU conference on electoral processes, democracy and governance in Africa and Europe, and calls for the European Parliament, the Pan African Parliament, the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly and the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (PA-UfM) to be fully involved in it; calls for the links between the different assemblies to be strengthened with a view to fostering synergies and the consistency of joint measures;

Security resilience

21. Reiterates the close interlinkage between security and development; points out the need to better integrate security concerns and development aims to address the specific problems of fragile states and to foster more resilient states and societies; notes that this should be done through specific instruments and additional funding;

22. Calls for stronger cooperation between the EU and Africa in the field of security and justice in respect of the international legal framework in order to take a holistic approach to tackling problems and to better combat organised crime, human trafficking and smuggling particularly in relation to children, and terrorism; considers that EU action should be in synergy with the strategies adopted by African countries, particularly those related to peace and security expressed in Agenda 2063;
23. Stresses the need for cooperation between the EU, AU, regional organisations and other relevant political players in Africa in the field of security in order to increase the capacities of developing countries, to reform their security sectors, to support activities in the field of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants;

24. Recalls that terrorism is a global threat affecting regional peace and stability, sustainable development and internal security, which needs to be tackled in a coordinated effort by national governments, regional and international organisations, and European Agencies; calls for enhanced cooperation within the EU-Africa Strategy aimed at preventing impunity, promoting the rule of law and the expansion of police and judicial capacities in order to facilitate the exchange of information and best practices, and preventing, countering, and combating the financing of terrorism as well as prosecuting it; notes that anti-terrorism strategy should also include measures for promoting interfaith dialogue and preventing radicalisation in Africa and Europe, especially among young people, which leads to violent extremism;

25. Reiterates the importance of the various EU missions and operations deployed in Africa; welcomes the creation of the Group of Five Sahel joint force; calls for European peace and security actions to be stepped up in cooperation with African and international partners and for support for the full operationalisation of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA); calls for an initial EU contribution to the AU Peace Fund for activities under the 'mediation and diplomacy' window;

Environmental resilience

26. Recalls that Africa is particularly vulnerable to the impact of climate change; considers it essential for the EU to develop a strategic approach to building climate resilience and to support African countries, in particular the least developed countries (LDCs), in their efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to adapt; stresses the importance of climate change as a risk multiplier for conflict, drought, famine and migration, as exemplified in the recent outbreak of famine in South Sudan, Nigeria and Somalia; recalls, in this context, that it is vital to promote and respect the commitment given in Paris in 2015 to allocate USD 100 billion to developing countries by 2020; calls for new kinds of EU-Africa collaboration to lower the barriers to funding and technology transfer;

27. Stresses that Africa has a rich and diverse natural environment; calls for the protection of biodiversity to be put at the core of the AU-EU political agenda; calls for the EU-Africa strategy to work in conjunction with the priorities of the EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking and to protect natural heritage and, in particular, nature parks;

28. Encourages greater investment in the fields of renewable energy and the circular economy in order to further stimulate actions which contribute to respect for the environment and create job opportunities; recalls that ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all is crucial for the satisfaction of basic human needs, is essential for virtually all kinds of economic activity and is a key driver of development; calls for continued EU support for the Africa Renewable Energy Initiative (AREI) and welcomes the Commission’s proposal to launch a new EU-Africa Research and Innovation Partnership on climate change and sustainable energy;

29. Calls on the Africa-EU partnership to focus on agriculture and food security in a long-term perspective and to promote synergies between food security and climate measures; urges the EU, in this context, to scale up its assistance to sustainable agriculture, agro-forestry and agro-ecological practices respecting traditional land use, and ensuring access to land, water and open source seeds; calls, in addition, on the EU to support small-scale producers/farmers and pastoralists to attain food security through building up and investing in infrastructure in line with the Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems of the CFS, and to support the establishment of cooperatives; underlines also the capacity and experience that CSOs have gained at community level in relation to sustainable agriculture;
30. Welcomes the EU initiatives demanding better management of, and more transparent trade in, natural resources; believes that the sustainable management of and trade in natural resources, such as minerals, timber and wildlife, would allow resource-rich countries and their populations to further benefit from them; recalls the need, under EU legislation on conflict minerals, to introduce accompanying measures following an integrated approach that encourages the application of international standards on due diligence, as defined by the OECD Guidance; calls for a joint EU-Africa charter on sustainable management of natural resources to be drawn up;

Economic resilience

31. Considers that a stable regulatory and institutional environment and a healthy economy are essential elements for ensuring competitiveness, investments, job creation, a higher standard of living and sustainable growth; stresses, in this context, the need to increase the online accessibility of corporate law information; recalls that economic growth without an impartial state does not systematically guarantee social development or progress and insists on the need to assure the redistribution of wealth, the provision of services for citizens and to improve equal opportunities;

32. Calls for increased cooperation between the European and African private sectors and for the concentration of investment, particularly by means of public-private partnerships, based on a strict ethical code and on the principles of social responsibility, in key sectors such as:

— sustainable energy including electricity access for all,

— basic infrastructure, notably in the transport sector, including maritime transport,

— sustainable use of natural resources,

— sustainable agriculture,

— the ‘blue economy’ — including the maritime industry,

— research, science, technology and innovation, both around subjects of common interest and around those which particularly affect one of the continents, such as poverty-related and neglected diseases,

— digitalisation as a key factor in ensuring the development of the African economy, but also in connecting people;

33. Stresses the fact that regional integration drives economic development and is a necessity in a globalised world; calls for support for South-South Cooperation which reflects the gradual transformation of the African continent; supports the establishment of a continental free trade area in Africa as well as the goal of increasing intra-African trade to 50% by 2050; recalls also the development prospects offered by Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) and trade agreements between the EU and African countries, which allow the promotion of sustainable development, human rights and fair and ethical trade; stresses the need to provide for development-supportive rules of origin, effective safeguard clauses, asymmetrical liberalisation schedules, protection for infant industries, and the simplification and transparency of customs procedures; recalls that EPAs are intended to help the ACP countries to expand their markets, to encourage trade in goods and to boost investment and that they anticipate a slow, gradual and asymmetric opening up of trade in goods between the EU and the ACP countries;

34. Calls for transparency in trade agreements and for the full participation of all relevant stakeholders, including the civil societies of the countries concerned, through formal consultations, in future negotiations and in the implementation of agreements currently under negotiation;

35. Calls for the EU and its Member States to better coordinate their aid for trade programmes and to boost synergies with their Africa investment policies; calls, furthermore, for an increase in their financial commitments to Aid For Trade as well as technical assistance and capacity-building initiatives, which are essential for African countries, in particular in LDCs;
36. Considers that the private sector, from micro to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), to cooperatives and multinational companies, plays a decisive role in job creation and the development process, and that it helps to finance the latter; stresses the specific role of SMEs and small family-run establishments, and calls for support for individual initiative; welcomes in this regard the establishment of the European Fund for Sustainable Development, which should aim to support the private sector in African countries, particularly local business and SMEs in fragile countries, and thus promote investment and the creation of sustainable jobs, particularly for women and young people;

37. Recalls the obligations that the private sector is required to fulfil under the United Nations and OECD Guidelines, and reiterates its call on EU and AU Member States to constructively participate in the UN intergovernmental working group on transnational corporations and other business enterprises with respect to human rights to work towards the setting-up of an international binding treaty, based on the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, on the way corporations comply with human rights obligations and obligations with respect to social, labour and environmental standards;

38. Underlines the necessity of creating decent jobs and of linking them to investment, both of which should be done within the framework of the Africa-EU partnership; calls for compliance with ILO standards in this regard; stresses the importance of interaction between social, economic and institutional persons and calls for the role of social partners to be strengthened by boosting the effectiveness of social dialogue at all relevant levels, which is conducive to collective bargaining;

39. Deplores the fact that, each year, some USD 50 billion is drained out of Africa in the form of illicit financial flows, which exceeds the total annual amount of Official Development Assistance (ODA) and undermines efforts in the field of domestic revenue mobilisation; calls, therefore, on both parties to:

— create effective tools to combat tax evasion, tax fraud and corruption, including public transparency on ultimate beneficial ownership of legal entities, trusts and similar arrangements,

— promote the UN-supported Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI),

— support initiatives to increase the efficiency and transparency of public financial management systems;

40. Calls, moreover, for the effective implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Debt and Human Rights and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Principles on Promoting Responsible Sovereign Lending and Borrowing; welcomes the UN’s work towards an international sovereign debt workout mechanism;

41. Calls for greater financial inclusion in Africa, including that of women, through the development of electronic banking in order to fight against the polarisation of African society; recalls that remittances make up a larger flow of money to developing countries than the total of ODA and can significantly contribute to achieving the 2030 Agenda; calls, therefore, on the EU to further support the AU’s efforts in improving remittance mechanisms;

Social resilience

42. Recognises the importance of demographic dynamics in Africa, which necessitate a long-term strategic vision for developing sustainable, inclusive and participatory societies; stresses, equally, the need to ensure non-discrimination against vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples; recognises that the increasing population in Africa is both a challenge for the local economy and an opportunity for the continent; calls, therefore, on the EU to show commitment in promoting appropriate public policies and investments in education and health, including sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), to ensure that young people are equipped to make informed decisions about their SRH, gender equality and children’s rights without which social, economic and environmental resilience cannot be reached;
43. Emphasises that the urbanisation rate in Africa is on the rise and poses social, economic and environmental challenges; calls for solutions to relieve this urban pressure and to alleviate the problems of uncontrolled urbanisation;

44. Calls for the EU and the AU to strengthen African national education systems, including the capacity of its administrative structure, by investing at least 20% of their national budgets in education and by scaling up the EU’s support for the global partnership for education (GPE) and the Education Cannot Wait (ECW) fund;

45. Stresses the need for universal, inclusive, equitable and long-term access to high-quality education at all levels, from early childhood onwards and for all, with a special focus on girls, and including in emergency and crisis situations;

46. Stresses the need to invest in human capital and for young people to be connected to global realities and to have skills which meet the current and future needs of the job market by strengthening educational and vocational learning systems — both formal and informal — self-employment and entrepreneurship;

47. Considers it important to support African countries in establishing effective public health systems and ensuring affordable access to quality health services for all, while, in particular, breaking down the barriers faced by women and other vulnerable groups, including children, people with disabilities and LGBTI people;

48. Calls for the introduction of minimum universal coverage by setting up horizontal national health systems; underlines the need to train an additional one million skilled health professionals than originally planned on the basis of current trends to meet the minimum WHO standard by 2030;

49. Stresses that infectious diseases pose a significant threat to social resilience; calls on the Commission to step up scientific and medical cooperation efforts between the two continents, such as the European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership, EDCTP2, and to invest in science, technology and innovation (STI) to tackle the still huge burden of poverty-related and neglected diseases (PRNDs) through its development cooperation;

50. Recalls the need for greater investment in access to maternal healthcare and sexual and reproductive health in order to reduce maternal and infant mortality and to tackle traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation and forced and/or child marriage;

51. Emphasises the importance of gender equality and women’s empowerment in EU-Africa cooperation; stresses the positive role and participation of women in the political and economic spheres, as well as in conflict prevention and building sustainable peace;

52. Notes that culture is both an enabler and an important component of development and may facilitate social inclusion, freedom of expression, identity building, civil empowerment and conflict prevention while strengthening economic growth; calls, therefore, on the EU and the AU to promote intercultural political dialogue and cultural diversity and to support strategies protecting culture and heritage; stresses that democracy is a universal value which can be part of any culture; acknowledges, equally, the role of sport as a source and driver of social inclusion and gender equality;

Establishing a strategy for mobility and migration which contribute to the development of the two continents

53. Recalls that migration and mobility between and within Europe and Africa have an economic, social, environmental and political impact, and that this challenge must be tackled in a coordinated and holistic manner between the two continents and in cooperation with countries of origin, transit and destination, maximising synergies and making use of the relevant EU policies, instruments and tools, based on solidarity, responsibility sharing, respect and human dignity; recalls, in this context, that it is desirable to step up the Africa-EU dialogue in advance of the negotiations on the two global compacts on migration and refugees, respectively, to be drawn up by 2018 under the auspices of the United Nations in order to identify shared priorities, where possible;
54. Recalls the need to enhance the positive impact of migration and mobility so that these phenomena are seen as reciprocal development tools for the two continents; stresses that this requires a carefully designed, balanced, evidence-based and sustainable policy response with a long-term strategy which takes into account demographic perspectives and the root causes of migration;

55. Recognises that violent conflicts, persecution, inequality, infringements of human rights, weak governance, corruption, terrorism, repressive regimes, natural disasters, climate change, unemployment and chronic poverty have led to population movements and an increase in migration to Europe in recent years; recalls, nevertheless, that more than 85% of African people leaving their country remain within the continent itself;

56. Supports the various initiatives adopted at European level to tackle the underlying causes of irregular migration: migration partnerships, trust funds for Africa and the European Fund for Sustainable Development; calls for their implementation to be ensured and continued in a flexible, efficient, coherent and transparent manner while enhancing possible synergies among different instruments, programmes and activities, both in internal and external action; highlights the need for increased cooperation in the field of border management;

57. Reiterates its call for the promotion of legal migration, in line with the recommendations of the Valletta Action Plan; stresses, further, that development aid should not be made conditional on cooperation in migration matters;

58. Calls on the Member States to offer their resettlement places to a significant number of refugees; calls, in this context, for the establishment of a European resettlement framework which can easily be acted upon by Member States; calls, in addition, for the EU and its Member States to cooperate with and provide assistance to African countries that are faced with movements of refugees or prolonged crises, with a view to increasing their asylum capacities and protection systems;

59. Urges Member States to step up their financial contribution to trust funds and other instruments aiming to foster inclusive and sustainable growth and stimulate job creation thus contributing to addressing the root causes of migration; also asks for a stronger scrutiny role of the European Parliament to ensure that migration partnerships and funding tools are compatible with EU legal basis, principles and commitments;

60. Calls for the EU and the AU to promote exchanges between students, teachers, entrepreneurs and researchers between the two continents; welcomes the Commission’s proposal to launch an African Youth Facility, expanding the scope of Erasmus+, and an EU vocational education and training facility; calls for a discussion on the recognition by the EU of certificates and diplomas issued by African schools and universities; notes that ensuring circular migration is essential for sustainable development; and for preventing a brain drain from Africa;

61. Recognises the special position of the diaspora in both the receiving countries and the countries of origin in sending considerable funds and as a development partner at national and regional levels; expresses its wish that the diaspora might act as a source of information tailored to respond to the real needs of the people, addressing the dangers linked to irregular migration, as well as the challenges linked to integration in host countries;

62. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Commission of the African Union, the ACP Council, the Pan-African Parliament and the Bureau of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly.
Activities of the European Ombudsman in 2016


(2018/C 356/13)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to the annual report on the European Ombudsman’s activities in 2016,

— having regard to Article 15 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),

— having regard to Articles 24 and 228 of the TFEU,

— having regard to Article 11 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,

— having regard to Article 41 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,

— having regard to Article 42 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,

— having regard to Article 43 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,

— having regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,

— having regard to Decision 94/262/ECSC, EC, Euratom of the European Parliament of 9 March 1994 on the regulations and general conditions governing the performance of the Ombudsman’s duties (1),

— having regard to the European Code of Good Administrative Behaviour (2), as adopted by the European Parliament on 6 September 2001,

— having regard to the Framework Agreement on Cooperation concluded between the European Parliament and the European Ombudsman on 15 March 2006, which entered into force on 1 April 2006,

— having regard to its previous resolutions on the European Ombudsman’s activities,

— having regard to Rule 220(1) of its Rules of Procedure,

— having regard to the report of the Committee on Petitions (A8-0328/2017).

A. whereas the annual report on the activities of the European Ombudsman 2016 was formally submitted to the President of Parliament on 17 May 2017 and the Ombudsman, Emily O’Reilly, presented the report to the Committee on Petitions in Brussels on 30 May 2017;

B. whereas Articles 24 and 228 of the TFEU empower the European Ombudsman to receive complaints concerning instances of maladministration in the activities of the Union institutions, bodies, offices or agencies, with the exception of the Court of Justice of the European Union acting in its judicial role;

C. whereas Article 15 of the TFEU states that ‘in order to promote good governance and ensure the participation of civil society, the Union’s institutions, bodies, offices and agencies shall conduct their work as openly as possible’ and that ‘any citizen of the Union, and any natural or legal person residing or having its registered office in a Member State, shall

have a right of access to documents of the Union's institutions, bodies, offices and agencies'; whereas ensuring that high-
quality services are provided to EU citizens and that the EU administration is responsive to their needs and concerns is
crucial in protecting citizens' rights and fundamental freedoms;

D. whereas Article 41(1) of the Charter of Fundamental Rights states that 'every person has the right to have his or her
affairs handled impartially, fairly and within a reasonable time by the institutions, bodies, offices and agencies of the
Union';

E. whereas Article 43 of the Charter states that 'any citizen of the Union and any natural or legal person residing or having
its registered office in a Member State has the right to refer to the European Ombudsman cases of maladministration in
the activities of the institutions, bodies, offices or agencies of the Union, with the exception of the Court of Justice of the
European Union acting in its judicial role';

F. whereas the main priority of the European Ombudsman is to ensure that citizens' rights are fully respected and the right
to good administration of EU institutions, bodies, offices or agencies reflects the highest standards;

G. whereas in 2016 15 797 citizens called on the Ombudsman's services for help, of whom 12 646 were given advice
through the Interactive Guide on the Ombudsman's website, while of the remaining requests 1 271 were forwarded
elsewhere for information and 1 880 were handled by the Ombudsman as complaints;

H. whereas of the total number of 1 880 complaints processed by the Ombudsman in 2016, 711 fell within and 1 169 fell
outside the scope of the Ombudsman's mandate;

I. whereas in 2016 the Ombudsman opened 245 inquiries, of which 235 were complaint-based and 10 were own-
initiative inquiries, while closing 291 inquiries (278 complaint-based and 13 own-initiative inquiries); whereas most of
the inquiries concerned the Commission (58.8 %), followed by the EU agencies (12.3 %), Parliament (6.5 %), the
European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO) (5.7 %), the European External Action Service (EEAS) (4.5 %), the European
Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) (0.8 %) and other institutions (11.4 %);

J. whereas the Ombudsman receives a large number of complaints from individuals and organisations about the EU
administration every year, and whereas the top three concerns in the inquiries closed by the Ombudsman in 2016 were:
transparency and public access to information and documents (29.6 %); good management of EU personnel issues
(28.2 %); and culture of service (25.1 %); whereas other concerns include proper use of discretion including in
infringement procedures, sound financial management of EU grants and contracts, and respect for procedural and
fundamental rights; whereas the relevance of these issues highlights the pivotal role of the Ombudsman in ensuring that
decision-making processes and administration at EU level are fully transparent and impartial, with a view to protecting
citizens' rights and strengthening their confidence and public trust;

K. whereas in its strategic work in 2016, the Ombudsman's office closed 5 strategic inquiries and opened 4 new ones on,
among other subjects, possible conflicts of interest of special advisors and delays in chemical testing, and in addition it
opened 10 new strategic initiatives;

L. whereas the Ombudsman launched a wide strategic inquiry into how the Commission appoints and carries out conflict
of interest assessments for its special advisers, who often work for private sector clients and the EU concurrently;

M. whereas the Ombudsman inquired about the Code of Conduct for Board Members of the European Investment Bank
(EIB), noting that it does not provide for the obligation to file a declaration of interests or a financial interest disclosure;

N. whereas the financial crisis has brought about an economic and social crisis, thus undermining the credibility of the EU
institutions;
O. whereas the Ombudsman has found that the failure of the 2009-2014 Commission to deal with a former Commissioner’s breach of the Code of Conduct for Commissioners and to properly investigate the compatibility of the Commissioner’s private sector work contract with the EU Treaty obligations constitutes maladministration; whereas cases of maladministration concerning the post-mandate activities of Commissioners, including the Commission’s President, increase citizens’ mistrust towards the Commission;

P. whereas the Ombudsman also cooperates with other international organisations, such as the UN, and is part of the EU framework under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) tasked with protecting, promoting and monitoring the implementation of the Convention at the level of the EU institutions;

Q. whereas according to the Flash Eurobarometer on European Union Citizenship of March 2016, 9 out of 10 EU citizens (87 %) are familiar with their status as citizens of the Union and their right to make a complaint to Parliament, to the Commission or to the Ombudsman;

1. Approves the annual report for 2016 presented by the European Ombudsman, and commends its clear and easy-to-read presentation setting out the most important facts and figures concerning the Ombudsman’s work in 2016;

2. Congratulates Emily O’Reilly for her excellent work in improving the quality and accessibility of the Ombudsman’s services and for her collaborative cooperation and positive engagement with Parliament, in particular the Committee on Petitions, and with other EU institutions, bodies, offices and agencies;

3. Acknowledges the role of strategic inquiries and initiatives, and supports those conducted by the Ombudsman pursuing strategically important topics on her own initiative that are in the public interest of the European citizens; commends the Ombudsman’s efforts to make better use of her strategic work in allowing complaint-based cases with similar content to be dealt with collectively;

4. Welcomes the Ombudsman’s determination to respond promptly and efficiently to the needs and concerns of EU citizens, and supports the new working methods and streamlined case handling procedure introduced in 2016, which enable greater flexibility and efficiency and greater impact on a larger number of citizens;

5. Agrees that the current and unprecedented challenges facing the EU, such as unemployment, economic and social inequalities, the migration crisis and Brexit, compel all institutions, bodies, offices and agencies of the Union, including the Ombudsman, to work harder and with more determination in order to ensure the highest levels of social justice, accountability and transparency at EU level;

6. Stresses the need to improve social dialogue;

7. Stresses that trust between citizens and the institutions is of paramount importance in the current economic climate;

8. Notes that the Ombudsman’s office has achieved the second highest rate of compliance with its decisions and/or recommendations so far; recommends that the Ombudsman stay alert, identify reasons for non-compliance with its recommendations and inform Parliament of any recurrent cases of non-compliance on the part of the EU administration;

9. Notes the decreasing number of inquiries concerning the EU institutions conducted by the Ombudsman in 2016 (245 in 2016, 261 in 2015); urges the EU institutions, bodies, offices and agencies to respond and react within a reasonable timeframe to the critical remarks of the Ombudsman and to improve their rate of compliance with the Ombudsman’s recommendations and/or decisions;

10. Notes that in 2016, most of the cases handled by the Ombudsman were closed within 12 months and that the average time needed to close an inquiry was 10 months, with only 30 % of cases being closed after 12 or more months; urges the Ombudsman to further improve her working methods and to reduce the time taken to handle complaints, especially in cases still open after 12 months, without compromising her work efficiency;
11. Notes that transparency-related inquiries, in particular concerning issues related to the transparency of decision-making processes, lobbying transparency, and access to EU documents, again account for the greatest proportion of the cases handled by the Ombudsman, followed by other problems related to a range of issues, from the violation of fundamental rights and ethical issues, to EU contracts and grants;

12. Emphasises the essential role of transparency, good administration and institutional checks and balances in the work of the EU institutions; regrets that inquiries related to transparency and access to information and documents consistently constitute more than 20% of all inquiries submitted to the Ombudsman and have remained an important concern among EU citizens over the years; calls on the EU institutions to publish information and documents proactively so as to increase transparency and reduce maladministration;

13. Believes that maximum transparency of and access to documents held by the EU institutions must be the rule; recalls the case-law of the Court of Justice of the EU (CJEU) which stipulates that citizens of the Union have a right of public access to documents of the Union's institutions, bodies and other agencies and that possible derogations from and exceptions to this right should always be weighed against the principles of transparency and democracy, as a pre-condition of the exercise of their democratic rights; considers that a revision of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 is needed in order to facilitate the Ombudsman's work in scrutinising the granting of access to documents by Parliament, the Council and the Commission;

14. Invites the Commission to improve transparency and access to documents and information with regard to the EU Pilot procedures in relation to petitions received and to the EU Pilot and infringement procedures that have already been closed; underlines the importance of regular follow-up with Parliament by the Commission; encourages the continuation of the Ombudsman's strategic inquiry into the Commission's transparency in handling infringement complaints under the EU Pilot procedures, and urges the Ombudsman to be determined and vigilant in continuing to investigate the matter in 2017; considers that unreasonable delays in the handling of initiated infringement and EU Pilot procedures could also fall into the domain of maladministration;

15. Commends the Ombudsman's determination to achieve the highest level of transparency in the EU decision-making process; stresses the need to monitor the implementation of the Ombudsman's recommendations for transparency in trilogues; calls on the Council and the Commission to publish relevant information regarding the decisions made in trilogues; reiterates, further, the need for full and enhanced transparency in trade agreements and negotiations, and calls on the Ombudsman to make continued efforts to monitor transparency in the negotiations for all EU trade agreements with third countries, while keeping in mind that this should not undermine the negotiating position of the EU;

16. Reiterates the importance of transparency on the part of all EU institutions in the negotiations between the EU and the UK on the latter’s withdrawal from the Union without jeopardising the negotiating position of the parties; calls on the Ombudsman to monitor adherence to transparency throughout the withdrawal negotiations;

17. Calls for greater transparency in the EU's economic and financial decision-making process, in particular in the area of the banking supervision performed by the European Central Bank; supports, furthermore, the Ombudsman's recommendations to increase the transparency of the EIB and the Eurogroup and to strengthen their internal ethics rules, while recognising her recent efforts in this regard and the fact that Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 does not apply to the Eurogroup as it is not an institution or body within the meaning of the Treaties; calls for compliance with the Ombudsman's recommendations on the EIB Complaints Mechanism Review (EIB-CM) and underlines the importance of an independent complaints mechanism; invites the Ombudsman to play a more active role in ensuring that the new EIB-CM remains credible and efficient while respecting the principles of operational independence, transparency, accessibility, timeliness and adequate resources;

18. Expresses its full support for the Ombudsman's ultimate goal, which is to help strengthen the structures and institutions of accountability and transparency at EU level and to improve the quality of democracy in Europe;
19. Notes the Ombudsman’s findings of maladministration with regard to the Code of Conduct for Commissioners; stresses the importance of high moral and ethical standards within the EU administration, and takes note of the Commission’s decision to extend the cooling-off period to two years for former Commissioners and three years for former Commission Presidents, but strongly believes that stricter rules on ethics need to apply in all the EU institutions, including to both EU politicians and staff, with the aim of securing respect for the duty to behave with integrity and discretion and full independence from the private sector; calls on the Commission to guarantee proactive publication and full transparency with regard to the post-term-of-office occupation of former Commissioners; supports the Ombudsman’s recommendations for further revision of the Code in accordance with the Treaty obligations, by making the rules more explicit and easy to implement so as to ensure credibility, impartiality and a lack of conflict of interest on a case-by-case basis; encourages the Ombudsman to continue to oversee and assess the level of independence of the Commission’s Ad Hoc Ethical Committee;

20. Takes note of the Commission’s steps in response to the Ombudsman’s recommendations on how the EU staff rules governing the so-called ‘reoving door’ phenomenon have been implemented, and looks forward to the Ombudsman’s follow-up inquiry assessing how the new rules work in practice;

21. Calls on the Ombudsman to continue her work to ensure the timely publication of the names of all EU officials involved in ‘reoving door’ cases and to guarantee full transparency with regard to all related information;

22. Supports the Ombudsman’s commitment to improve EU lobbying transparency, and calls on the Commission to fully comply with the Ombudsman’s suggestions for improving the EU Transparency Register by making it a mandatory central transparency hub for all EU institutions and agencies; underlines that clear action should be taken and coherent and effective work schedules developed to this end; stresses the importance of greater transparency, including with regard to information on funding, interest groups and financial interests;

23. Welcomes the Ombudsman’s strategic inquiry into how the Commission carries out conflict of interest assessments for its special advisers; calls on the Commission to fully implement the Ombudsman’s recommendations on the procedure for appointing special advisers, assessing any potential conflict of interest before and after their appointment and providing public access and information with regard to documents and meetings;

24. Supports the Ombudsman’s strategic inquiry on the Commission’s expert groups; urges the Ombudsman to ensure that conflict of interest management and a balanced and equal representation of all stakeholders, including societal stakeholders, are improved in the new Commission rules, including the listing of all experts in the EU Transparency register;

25. Notes the Commission’s position regarding transparency of its meetings with tobacco lobbyists and the transparency measures implemented by its Directorate-General for Health; reiterates its call on the Commission to change its practice and make its work fully transparent by publishing data online concerning all meetings with lobbyists or with their legal representatives, as well as the minutes of those meetings, in line with its obligations under the UN Framework Convention for Tobacco Control (FCTC);

26. Welcomes the Ombudsman’s practical recommendations for public officials’ interaction with lobbyists; urges the Ombudsman to increase awareness of these recommendations among staff members in all the EU institutions through educational training, seminars and related support measures and calls on all the EU institutions to implement the Ombudsman’s Code of Good Administrative Behaviour and the transparency measures under the UN Framework Convention for Tobacco Control (FCTC); reiterates its call for an effective upgrade of the Code of Good Administrative Behaviour through adoption of a binding regulation on the matter during the current legislative term;

27. Commends the Ombudsman’s strategic inquiry on access to documents relating to Council preparatory bodies, including its Committees, working parties and the Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER), when discussing draft EU legislative acts; encourages the Ombudsman to call on the Council to improve transparency with regard to its meetings with stakeholders and the decisions adopted, comply with access to document requirements, and provide this access in a timely manner and without delays;
28. Commends the Ombudsman’s work in dealing with issues of general public interest, such as fundamental rights, the safety and efficiency of medicine, the protection of the environment and health, and safeguarding against environmental risks; calls on the Ombudsman to follow up on her proposals to the European Chemicals Agency on disincentives relating to animal testing when new cosmetic products are registered on the market, and to the EPSO on the application of the principle of force majeure and the transparency of EPSO competitions.

29. Acknowledges the Ombudsman’s experience in dealing with cases of maladministration in the EU institutions linked to sexual harassment and abuse in the workplace, as was the case in relation to complaint 1283/2012/AN; invites the Ombudsman, in light of its resolution of 26 October 2017 on combating sexual harassment and abuse and of its decision to create a task force of independent experts to examine the situation of sexual harassment and abuse in Parliament, also to examine the situation of sexual harassment and abuse in the EU institutions, bodies, offices and agencies, and to provide recommendations and best practices for preventing new cases in the EU institutions.

30. Supports the Ombudsman’s role in shaping a proactive and transparent policy on the clinical trials carried out by the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and in particular the Ombudsman’s recommendations on the approval of Humira, one of the world’s best-selling drugs, which is used to treat Crohn’s disease; urges the Ombudsman to continue monitoring the EMA to ensure that it meets the highest standards of transparency and access to information on clinical trials, namely standards that are in the public interest and of value to doctors, patients and researchers.

31. Invites the Ombudsman to further inquire into the practices within EU agencies, with a particular focus on the European Food Safety Authority and the European Chemicals Agency with regard to the Monsanto Papers and the possible implications in terms of secrecy and conflict of interest.

32. Welcomes the Ombudsman’s inquiries following complaints by persons with disabilities, and encourages her work as an active participant in the EU Framework for the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and her contribution to the implementation of the European Disability Strategy; reaffirms its full support for the full implementation of the Convention at EU level.

33. Calls on the Ombudsman to ensure that the Commission takes into account the Ombudsman’s proposals and recommendations on the future revision of the European Citizens’ Initiative (ECI) instrument with a view to ensuring that the procedures and conditions required for the ECI are genuinely clear, simple, easily applicable and proportionate.

34. Calls on the Ombudsman to ensure that the Commission will help to create an infrastructure providing legal advice on European citizens’ initiatives and a legal framework that protects ECI members.

35. Recalls that whistle-blowers are crucial figures in unveiling cases of maladministration, and supports measures to encourage whistle-blowing effectively and improve the protection of whistle-blowers against retaliation, and calls on the Ombudsman to further assess the implementation of the new internal whistle-blowing rules in the EU institutions; encourages follow-up of the Ombudsman’s 2015 inquiries relating to the EU institutions’ internal whistle-blowing rules; welcomes the Ombudsman’s own rules in this field and encourages other EU institutions to use them as guidance; reiterates its call for horizontal EU legislation on the protection of whistle-blowers which sets out appropriate channels and procedures for reporting all forms of maladministration, as well as adequate guarantees and legal safeguards at all levels for the individuals involved.

36. Proposes a review of the European Ombudsman’s Statute to empower her to investigate alleged non-compliance with Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 regarding public access to documents from EU institutions and bodies and to take decisions on the release of the relevant documents.

37. Welcomes the Ombudsman’s initiative to identify best practices in the EU administration and bring them to greater public attention with the Ombudsman’s Award for Good Administration.
38. Encourages the Ombudsman to continue collaboration with national ombudsmen through the European Network of Ombudsmen; supports the idea of holding the annual conference of the European Network of Ombudsmen in Brussels for the first time in 2016 and the Commission's commitment to work more effectively with the Network;

39. Is open to the idea of holding future annual conferences of the European Network of Ombudsmen on Parliament premises, given the direct links between the Committee on Petitions and the Ombudsman;

40. Recalls that the European Network of Ombudsmen could play an important role in defending EU citizens' rights in the negotiations on the UK's withdrawal from the EU;

41. Commends the Ombudsman for holding meetings with individual national ombudsmen and with civil society and business organisations; urges the Ombudsman to replicate those meetings in all Member States and further raise awareness of what the Ombudsman's Office can do for European citizens and businesses;

42. Instructs its President to forward this resolution and the report of the Committee on Petitions to the Council, the Commission, the European Ombudsman, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, and the Member States' ombudsmen or similar competent bodies.
The European Parliament,

— having regard to the Commission communication of 3 February 2017 entitled ‘The EU Environmental Implementation Review: Common challenges and how to combine efforts to deliver better results’ (COM(2017)0063), and the accompanying 28 Country reports,

— having regard to the Commission communication of 27 May 2016 entitled ‘Delivering the benefits of EU environmental policies through a regular Environmental Implementation Review’ (COM(2016)0316),

— having regard to Decision No 1386/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 November 2013 on a General Union Environment Action Programme to 2020, ‘Living well, within the limits of our planet’ (1) (’7th EAP’),

— having regard to the resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly on 25 September 2015 entitled ‘Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’ (A/RES/70/1),

— having regard to the Commission communication of 22 November 2016 entitled ‘Next steps for a sustainable European future — European action for sustainability’ (COM(2016)0739),

— having regard to the Commission communication of 22 May 2017 entitled ‘2017 European Semester: Country-specific recommendations’ (COM(2017)0500),

— having regard to the Commission report of 2 December 2015 entitled ‘Closing the loop — An EU action plan for the Circular Economy’ (COM(2015)0614),

— having regard to the Commission report of 26 January 2017 on the implementation of the Circular Economy Action Plan (COM(2017)0033),

— having regard to the questions to the Council (O-000065/2017 — B8-0606/2017) and to the Commission (O-000066/2017 — B8-0607/2017) on the EU Environmental Implementation Review (EIR),

— having regard to the motion for a resolution of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety,

— having regard to Rules 128(5) and 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas the EU has strong environmental legislation, but the weak and defective implementation thereof is a long-standing problem; whereas these implementation gaps threaten sustainable development, have adverse trans-boundary impacts on the environment and human health and entail important socio-economic costs; whereas, moreover, the implementation gaps undermine the EU’s credibility;

B. whereas 70 % of EU environmental law is implemented by regional and local authorities;

C. whereas the EU Environmental Implementation Review (EIR) and the 28 Country reports have shown once again that implementation of environmental law in the EU is not homogeneous, but varies dramatically between Member States as well as between the different environmental areas; notes, however, that there are common problem areas in which implementation is poor throughout the EU and that these often concern the greatest environmental health threats;

D. whereas the biennial reporting exercise is very important in showing the real situation as regards implementation in the Member States, but regular monitoring would also be important;

E. whereas the EIR addresses important components of EU environmental legislation, but needs to be further expanded to enable the provision of more systematic solutions to the challenges posed by sustainable environmental development;

F. whereas the EIR should be a cross-sectoral instrument, able to evaluate environmental impacts in other areas such as agriculture, fisheries, industry, transport, forestry, and regional policies in general;

G. whereas the Commission should aim to achieve better comparability of the data used in assessing Member States’ performances; whereas the differences between the data collected in different Member States represent an important obstacle to their comparability and, ultimately, to the assessment itself;

H. whereas it is important to involve all competent authorities in the EIR, in a manner consistent with the institutional reality of the Member States; whereas, in particular, it is important to emphasise that in some Member States regions have full competence in the field of environmental legislation;

I. whereas the EIR is a tool fully complementary to other instruments focusing on better implementation such as IMPEL (the European Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law) and the ‘Make it Work’ project;

J. whereas the EIR should be seen as an instrument for political discussion, particularly at ministerial level, and not only as a technical tool;

**Importance and context of EIR**

1. Welcomes the Commission's initiative to introduce an EIR and recognises its enormous potential, if the correct political importance is given to it and it is fully transparent; points out that the EIR has the potential to put implementation problems high on the political agenda, to serve as an early warning mechanism for decision-makers and, ultimately, to improve the implementation of EU environmental legislation and policy;

2. Recalls that Parliament has, on several occasions, called for a more proactive role to be played by the Commission in monitoring, guiding and supporting the implementation of environmental legislation and policy, e.g. with reference to the Nature Directives; considers that the Commission should act decisively in cases of breach, actively making use of all legislative measures at its disposal;

3. Supports the cross-sectoral, multi-stakeholder, holistic approach taken by the Commission, which is key to making changes on the ground; welcomes the fact that the EIR identifies the root causes of poor implementation and suggests measures to tackle these challenges in a constructive manner;

4. Considers that the EIR should be one of the tools used to create greater coherence with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to evaluate the progress made by Member States and the Union towards the achievement of the environmentally relevant SDGs; calls, in this regard, on the Commission to further identify how the implementation of EU environmental legislation also furthers that of the relevant SDGs and the meeting of specific SDG indicators and targets by Member States;
5. Recognises that the EIR can also serve as a prevention tool and could thus lower the number of infringement procedures; stresses, however, that the EIR should not replace or delay necessary action on infringement by the Commission;

**How to improve the EIR and deliver better results**

6. Welcomes the fact that the EIR covers the majority of the thematic objectives of the 7th Environmental Action Programme (7th EAP); regrets, however, that important areas such as climate change, energy efficiency measures and energy savings and chemicals and industrial emissions, as well as certain systemic and environmental challenges linked to energy, transport, product and regional policies have not been covered, and calls on the Commission to ensure that they are included in future versions; points out that existing data already published by the European Environment Agency could have allowed at least a preliminary analysis of the implementation of climate change legislation, energy efficiency measures and energy savings at both EU and Member State level;

7. Regrets, furthermore, the failure to address key issues such as hormone and medicine residues in waste water, surface water and groundwater and their effects on drinking water, human health, biodiversity and the (aquatic) environment, and calls on the Commission to ensure that they are included in future versions;

8. Highlights the fact that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, at global level, and the 7th EAP, at EU level, create a framework for progressive environmental policies;

9. Considers that a stronger link between the EIR and the European Semester would be beneficial to the coherence of the Union action;

10. Underlines that the limited availability of data can result in implementation gaps and difficulties for the review of implementation;

11. Stresses the importance of harmonising data and reporting cycles in order to streamline future review processes; calls on the Commission to increase data comparability and to include in future EIRs a specific section assessing the quality of reporting and the data provided by Member States under the different directives; underlines the importance of sale electronic data sharing in order to facilitate reporting by the Member States;

12. Stresses the importance of supporting qualitative assessment with quantitative targets; considers, in this context, that better cooperation with the European Environment Agency would help to develop appropriate indicators;

13. Stresses that the EIR should take into account and assess any serious problems and possible conflicting goals between environmental policies and other sectoral policies, highlighting any misalignments where they are found, and drawing up proposals to correct them;

14. Believes that there should be less margin for discretion on the part of Member States in order to find solutions for better implementation;

**How to improve implementation of environmental legislation**

15. Underlines that the lack of integration of environmental concerns into other policy areas is one of the root causes of implementation gaps in environmental legislation and policy;

16. Underlines that the implementation of environmental law could be improved by better integration of environmental legislation into other policy areas and by the full application of the precautionary principle;

17. Believes that lack of administrative capacity and lack of governance, which are two of the main causes of defective implementation, derive partly from a lack of adequate funding and partly from an inefficient use of the available funds by Member States, and calls on the Member States to make improvements in these areas;
18. Believes that, for the sake of good and robust governance and improved effectiveness, partnership between and transparency of public authorities at all levels, a clear division of responsibilities, the provision of adequate resources, capacity building and better coordination mechanisms are imperative;

19. Takes the view that the use of market instruments by Member States, such as a fiscal policy based on the ‘polluter pays’ principle, represents an effective and efficient tool for achieving the goal of full implementation of environmental policy;

20. Strongly supports the emphasis given in the EIR to the exchange of best practices and peer-to-peer review, and considers that this could help Member States facing difficulties in implementing environmental legislation to find innovative solutions; is convinced, in this context, that guidelines from the Commission would be helpful;

21. Considers that the EIR should include clear and strict timeframes set by the Commission to ensure implementation of environmental law in the Member States;

22. Believes that the EIR can also be used as a tool for providing information to the public, raising awareness, increasing the involvement of civil society and enhancing public engagement and education on environment policy, with benefits for Member States and citizens; calls on the Commission, in this context, to develop a toolbox of measures to assess the progress made in terms of environmental performance by Member States, including best practice benchmarking and scoreboard reports, which should be regularly updated and published to ensure that they are publicly available;

23. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to bolster compliance assurance, including by means of improving and stepping up efforts in implementing the Environmental Liability Directive;

24. Stresses that NGOs and the wider public can also play an important role in promoting better implementation, thereby upholding the rule of law if effective access to justice is available;

25. Calls on the Commission to put forward a legislative proposal on environmental inspections in order to accelerate the implementation of environmental laws and standards;

26. Calls on the Commission, in the context of good governance and compliance assurance, to put forward a new legislative proposal on minimum standards for access to judicial review, and to propose the revision of the Aarhus Regulation implementing the Convention in relation to Union action in order to take account of the recent recommendation by the Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee;

**Role of the Member States and EU institutions in EIR follow-up**

27. Calls on the Commission, the competent authorities in the Member States and relevant stakeholders to fully engage in the EIR without delay; stresses the important role of regional and local authorities; calls on the Member States to fully involve local and regional authorities and to encourage them to further engage in the IMPEL network and promote involvement of local and regional experts in order to improve the sharing of data, knowledge and best practices as a matter of urgency;

28. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to improve data collection and the availability of information, the dissemination of good practices and the involvement of citizens, and to consider involving local authorities to a greater extent in the process of defining environmental policy;

29. Calls on the competent authorities at the relevant level in the Member States to ensure the organisation of open and inclusive dialogues on implementation, with adequate provision of information to and the engagement of the public and civil society actors, and calls on the Commission to engage in these dialogues and to keep Parliament informed;
30. Welcomes the Commission’s policy proposals on the dedicated framework for the structured implementation dialogue, but considers it imperative to ensure that this process is transparent and involves relevant NGOs and key stakeholders;

31. Welcomes the discussion between the Commission, the Member States and stakeholders in the Expert Group ‘Greening the European Semester’, but considers that the involvement of a specific environmental implementation Expert Group could facilitate a structured dialogue on implementation in addition to the bilateral country dialogues;

32. Urges that the issue of implementation should feature as a recurring item in trio-presidency priorities and programmes, that it be discussed at the Environment Council at least once a year, perhaps through a dedicated Implementation Council, and that this be complemented by another forum in which Parliament and the Committee of the Regions would also be involved; calls for joint Council meetings to address the implementation of cross-sectoral, horizontal issues and common challenges, as well as emerging issues with possible cross-border impacts;

33. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.
Combating inequalities as a lever to boost job creation and growth

European Parliament resolution of 16 November 2017 on combating inequalities as a lever to boost job creation and growth (2016/2269(INI))

The European Parliament,

— having regard to Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union,

— having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), in particular Article 9 thereof,

— having regard to the revised European Social Charter,

— having regard to the Commission publication of 2015 entitled ‘EU Employment and Social Situation — Quarterly Review September 2015’,

— having regard to the Commission communication of 5 March 2014 entitled ‘Taking stock of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth’ (COM(2014)0130),

— having regard to the Commission publication of 2012 entitled ‘Employment and Social Developments in Europe 2012’,

— having regard to the Commission’s Social Investment Package of 20 February 2013, including recommendation 2013/112/EU entitled ‘Investing in Children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage’,

— having regard to the Commission communication of 16 December 2010 entitled ‘The European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion: A European framework for social and territorial cohesion’ (COM(2010)0758),


— having regard to its resolution of 14 June 2017 on the need for an EU strategy to end and prevent the gender pension gap (**),

— having regard to its resolution of 14 March 2017 on equality between women and men in the European Union in 2014-2015 (**),

— having regard to its resolution of 19 January 2017 on a European Pillar of Social Rights (***),

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— having regard to its recommendation to the Council of 7 July 2016 on the 71st session of the United Nations General Assembly (1),

— having regard to its resolution of 14 April 2016 on meeting the antipoverty target in the light of increasing household costs (2),

— having regard to its resolution of 24 November 2015 on reducing inequalities with a special focus on child poverty (3),

— having regard to its resolution of 16 January 2014 on an EU homelessness strategy (4),

— having regard to its resolution of 4 July 2013 on the impact of the crisis on access to care for vulnerable groups (5),

— having regard to its resolution of 12 June 2013 on the Commission communication 'Towards Social Investment for Growth and Cohesion — including implementing the European Social Fund 2014-2020' (6),

— having regard to its resolution of 15 November 2011 on the European Platform against poverty and social exclusion (7),

— having regard to its resolution of 8 March 2011 on the face of female poverty in the European Union (8),

— having regard to its resolution of 8 March 2011 on reducing health inequalities in the EU (9),

— having regard to its resolution of 20 October 2010 on the role of minimum income in combating poverty and promoting an inclusive society in Europe (10),

— having regard to its resolution of 9 October 2008 on promoting social inclusion and combating poverty, including child poverty, in the EU (11),

— having regard to the question for oral answer O-000047/2016 — B8-0369/2016 on tackling inequalities in order to boost inclusive and sustainable economic growth in the EU,

— having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee of 10 December 2013 on ‘European minimum income and poverty indicators’ (12),

— having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee of 15 June 2011 on the ‘European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion: a European framework for Social and Territorial Cohesion’ (13),

(2) Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0136.
(9) OJ C 199 E, 7.7.2012, p. 25.
(10) OJ C 70 E, 8.3.2012, p. 8.
(11) OJ C 9 E, 15.1.2010, p. 11.
— having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee of 30 September 2009 entitled ‘Work and poverty: towards the necessary holistic approach’ (1),

— having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions of 31 March 2011 on the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion (2),

— having regard to the annual report of 10 March 2015 by the Social Protection Committee entitled ‘Social situation in the European Union (2014)’ (3),


— having regard to the Eurofound report ‘Third European Quality of Life Survey — Quality of life in Europe: Impacts of the crisis’,

— having regard to the Eurofound report ‘Third European Quality of Life Survey — Quality of life in Europe: Social inequalities’,

— having regard to the Eurofound report ‘Income inequalities and employment — patterns in Europe before and after the Great Recession’,

— having regard to the Eurofound overview report ‘Sixth European Working Conditions Survey’,

— having regard to the Eurofound report ‘Social mobility in the EU’,

— having regard to the Eurofound report ‘New forms of employment’,

— having regard to Eurofound’s topical update, ‘Pay inequalities experienced by posted workers: Challenges to the “equal treatment” principle’, which provides a detailed overview of governments’ and social partners’ positions across Europe as regards the principle of equal remuneration for equal work,

— having regard to the Eurofound report ‘Developments in working life in Europe: EurWORK annual review 2016’, and specifically to its chapter ‘Pay inequalities — Evidence, debate and policies’,

— having regard to the Eurofound report ‘Occupational change and wage inequality: European Jobs Monitor 2017’,

— having regard to the Eurofound report ‘Women, men and working conditions in Europe’,

— having regard to the Commission publication ‘European Economic Forecast Spring 2016’ (5),

— having regard to the UN’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and specifically to its Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No 10, ‘Reduce inequalities within and among countries’,

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(2) OJ C 166, 7.6.2011, p. 18.
(3) http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=13608&langId=en
having regard to the UN report ‘World Social Situation 2007: The Employment Imperative’,

having regard to the OECD report of 21 May 2015 entitled ‘In It Together: Why Less Inequality Benefits All’,

having regard to the OECD report of 19 December 2011 entitled ‘Divided We Stand: Why Inequality Keeps Rising’,


having regard to the IMF staff discussion note of 17 February 2014 entitled ‘Redistribution, Inequality and Growth’ (1),

having regard to the IMF staff discussion note of 8 April 2011 entitled ‘Inequality and Unsustainable Growth: Two Sides of the Same Coin?’ (2),

having regard to the ILO publication of 3 June 2013 ‘World of Work Report 2013: Repairing the economic and social fabric’ and its chapter ‘Snapshot of the United States’,


having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,

having regard to the report of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and the opinion of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and the position in the form of amendments of the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality (A8-0340/2017),

A. whereas equality and fairness are an integral part of European values and a cornerstone for the European social model, the EU and its Member States; whereas the objectives of both the Member States and the EU include the promotion of employment, with a view to lasting high employment and combating exclusion;

B. whereas inequality can undermine social trust and erode support for democratic institutions; whereas measures to combat inequality must be enhanced in economic, social and regional terms in order to promote harmonious development across the Union;

C. whereas inequality refers both to the income gap between individuals and to individuals’ loss of opportunities impeding the potential improvement of their abilities and skills and curbing their development and, consequently, their potential contribution to society;

D. whereas the root cause of shrinking demand is the economic and financial crisis that has been rampant in the euro area for over a decade;

(1) Authors: Jonathan D. Ostry, Andrew Berg and Charalambos G. Tsangarides.

(2) Authors: Andrew Berg and Jonathan D. Ostry.
E. whereas inequality and unemployment curtail effective demand, frustrate innovation, and can lead to increased financial fragility; whereas high and rising inequality hinders not only progress towards eradicating poverty, but also efforts to enhance social inclusion and social cohesion;

F. whereas combating inequalities can be a lever to boost job creation and growth and at the same time reduce poverty; whereas 47.5% of all unemployed persons in the EU were at risk of poverty in 2015 (1);

G. whereas inequality undermines growth and quality job creation (2), according to international institutions such as the IMF (3) or the OECD (4), which have also stated that excessively high and rising inequality have direct social costs, hamper social mobility and can also inhibit sustainable growth, today and in the future;

H. whereas one of the five Europe 2020 targets aims to reduce by at least 20 million the number of people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion, from 115.9 million in 2008 to no more than 95.9 million by 2020; whereas in 2015 there were 117.6 million people at risk of poverty and social exclusion, exceeding the 2008 figure by 1.7 million; whereas 32.2 million persons with disabilities were at risk of poverty and social exclusion in the EU in 2012; whereas in 2013 26.5 million children in the EU-28 were at risk of falling into poverty or social exclusion; whereas the proportion of the population at risk of poverty or exclusion is still unacceptably high at 23.7%, with figures remaining very high in some Member States; whereas, moreover, energy poverty remains so high that for the 11% of the EU population affected it leads to a cycle of economic disadvantage (5);

I. whereas the increase in inequality arising from the crisis has affected women in particular, exacerbating poverty among women and increasingly excluding them from the labour market; whereas women’s participation in the labour market should be increased through the efficient implementation of the existing and complementary legislation on equality between women and men and the improvement of the current policy framework with a view to enhancing work-life balance;

J. whereas there is a positive correlation between enhanced equality between women and men and stronger economic growth, inclusiveness, job creation and business prosperity; whereas reducing occupational inequality is a means not only to achieve equal treatment but also to ensure labour market efficiency and competitiveness;

K. whereas the OECD has highlighted that ‘lowering inequality by 1 Gini point would translate into an increase in cumulative growth of 0.8% in the following five years’ (6).

L. whereas according to Eurofound, ‘atypical work’ refers to employment relationships not conforming to the standard or typical model of full-time, regular, open-ended employment with a single employer over a long time-span; whereas according to the ILO, ‘non-standard forms of employment’ is an umbrella term for different employment arrangements

that deviate from standard employment, including temporary employment, part-time and on-call work, temporary agency work and other multi-party employment relationships, as well as disguised employment and dependent self-employment:

M. whereas increased inequality is associated with decreased social mobility, reduced human capabilities and limits on fundamental rights and freedoms; whereas the Eurofound report of 2017 on social mobility in the EU (1) provides evidence that social background continues to determine life chances in many of the Member States;

N. whereas growth in the Member State economies depends on multiple factors; whereas increasing inequality could have a negative impact on growth; whereas the IMF has identified at global level an inverse relationship between the income share accruing to the top 20% and economic growth, whereby if the income share of the top 20% increases by one percentage point, GDP growth is actually 0.08 percentage points lower in the following five years; whereas, conversely, a similar increase in the income share of the bottom 20% is associated with higher growth of 0.38 percentage points;

O. whereas inequality is a multifaceted phenomenon which is not restricted to monetary issues but also concerns differences in the opportunities available to people depending on, for example, their gender, ethnic origin, disability, sexual preferences, geographical location or age; whereas multiple inequalities in access to work and within work create a risk for individuals' health and wellbeing, and financial opportunities and might therefore lead to low productivity;

P. whereas unequal coverage in the area of social protection is analysed in Eurofound’s report on ‘New Forms of Employment’ (2), which includes a focus on the most problematic of these forms from a social protection perspective, namely casual work, providing examples of legislation that specifically excludes casual workers, and of other legislation which aims to include them, typically by compensating on the basis of income thresholds; whereas voucher work and strategic employee sharing are examples of non-standard work that aim to address the inadequacies of social protection in occasional or part-time work;

Q. whereas societies with greater income inequalities have higher rates of poor health and violence, lower maths and literacy scores, higher obesity rates, and higher imprisonment and homicide rates (3); whereas more equal societies incur less welfare expenditure for the state;

R. whereas inequalities throughout the life cycle are reflected in inequalities in old age such as lower healthy life expectancy, old-age poverty, and a gender pension gap of almost 40%; whereas European strategies for the eradication of poverty are necessary for achieving sustainable development for all;

S. whereas economic security is an important factor for human fulfilment;

T. whereas on 5 October 2015 the Council adopted conclusions on ‘the 2015 Pension Adequacy Report: current and future income adequacy in old age in the EU’, considering it ‘essential that public pension or other social protection schemes contain appropriate safeguards for women and men whose employment opportunities do or did not allow

(3) ‘Inequality and mental illness’, R. Wilkinson and K. Pickett, Department of Health Sciences, University of York, UK; published online 25 May 2017; S2213-0366(17)30206-7.
them to build up sufficient pension entitlements' and further stating that 'such safeguards notably include minimum pensions or other minimum income provisions for older people' (1);

U. whereas the lack of sufficient funding for public education is a major cause of future social disparities and increasing inequality;

V. whereas between 2005 and 2015 the Gini coefficient for the EU increased from 30.6 to 31 and the income inequality between the top and bottom 20% of the population increased from 4.7 to 5.2; whereas the proportion of people at risk of monetary poverty is closely linked to income inequality and monetary poverty has increased steadily since 2005; whereas between 2008 and 2014 several Member States witnessed rising inequality in terms of household disposable income (2);

W. whereas disparities between and within Member States' economic growth are leading to economic imbalances within the Union; whereas these highly unequal economic trends have generated excessive unemployment and poverty pockets;

X. whereas the global evolution of inequalities is consistent with a steady increase in inequality in developed countries since the 1980s, with inequality rising, according to the OECD (3), regardless of the economic cycle (with specific exceptions), thus increasing the Gini coefficient by three points, from 0.29 to 0.32, between 1980 and 2013, signifying a 10% increase in the last decades;

Y. whereas although the level of inequality can be determined by many factors, it is institutions and authors of political interventions that are responsible for addressing them specially at structural level; whereas there is an investment gap in the EU and public and private investment are key elements in reducing inequality by boosting employment; whereas structural deficiencies need to be properly addressed; whereas the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) is expected to be updated in order to help address the investment gap;

Z. whereas trends in inequality do not necessarily coincide with trends in absolute and extreme forms of poverty such as homelessness;

AA. whereas providing adequate support and funding around sustainable and permanent housing is essential for access to employment, education and health and for strengthening integration and local acceptance; whereas safeguarding the liveability of neighbourhoods and fighting segregation are an important part of supporting integration and reducing inequalities;

AB. whereas according to Eurostat the proportion of the population at risk of poverty in the EU in 2015 was 24.4%, rising to 26.9% for children;

AC. whereas women are disproportionately affected by the crisis, and whereas green jobs have proven to be more crisis-resistant than others;

AD. whereas women are at higher risk of poverty and precariousness;

Establishing European policy coordination for combating inequality

1. Affirms that inequalities threaten the future of the European project, erode its legitimacy and can damage trust in the EU as an engine of social progress, a dimension of the Union which needs to be developed; recalls that current inequalities have negative effects undermining political and social stability; emphasises that fostering upward convergence and improving the life of all European citizens needs to continue to be the driver for further integration;

(2) Eurofound (2017), ‘Income inequalities and employment patterns in Europe before and after the Great Recession’.
2. Believes firmly that the reduction of inequalities must be one of the main priorities at the European level, not only in order to tackle poverty or promote convergence, but also as the precondition for economic recovery, decent job creation, social cohesion and shared prosperity;

3. Highlights that reducing inequalities is essential for promoting fairer and more stable democracies, guaranteeing equal treatment without double standards, marginalising populism, extremism and xenophobia, and ensuring that the European Union is a project embraced by its citizens;

4. Reminds the Commission and the Member States that the European Union must fulfil its commitments under the Treaties in terms of promoting the wellbeing of its peoples, full employment and social progress, social justice and protection, equality between women and men, equality between citizens from different socio-economic backgrounds, solidarity between generations, protection of the rights of the child and social inclusion of all people who are in vulnerable situation or suffer from marginalisation;

5. Asks the Commission and the Member States, in accordance with their respective competences, to evaluate the performance and outcomes of economic policy coordination, taking into account the evolution of social progress and social justice in the EU; observes that the European Semester has not prioritised the achievement of these aims and the reduction of inequalities; urges the Commission to improve the process of policy coordination in order to better monitor, prevent and correct negative trends that could increase inequalities and weaken social progress or negatively affect social justice, putting in place preventive and corrective measures when necessary; believes that specific policies aimed at fighting economic inequalities should be considered and included, where appropriate, in the European Semester;

6. Believes that social measures can be regarded in some cases as alleviating measures and should be complemented with economic policies and socially responsible structural reforms in order to achieve positive, long-lasting and sustainable economic growth and structurally reduce the trend to inequality in the medium and long term;

7. Urges the Commission, within the scope of the European Semester, and without prejudice to national competences, to better assess imbalances in terms of income and wealth distribution, also through individual in-depth review (IDR) reports if these imbalances are detected, as a way to link economic coordination with employment and social performance; calls on the Commission to establish an accurate and up-to-date picture of the differences in income and wealth, social cohesion and social inclusion between and within countries, and to justify its proposals and recommendations for political decisions with solid and detailed data; calls on the Commission to study which should be the most accurate indicators of economic inequality (from among the Gini index, Palma indexes, Theil index, wage share, ratio of minimum wage to GDP per capita or to average wage, etc.), and to monitor the evolution of inequalities, also taking into account the overall competitiveness and productivity of all factors;

8. Notes that regions which suffer from severe and permanent natural or demographic handicaps, such as the northernmost regions with their very low population density, the island, cross-border and mountain regions referred to in Article 174 TFEU, and remote and depopulated regions, have greater difficulty in providing access to public services such as healthcare and education and that, as a result, those services are frequently a greater burden on public finances and recipients need to travel further to obtain them;

9. Reiterates the need to channel investment towards improved territorial cohesion, so as to enhance the industrial fabric of regions with severe and permanent natural or demographic disadvantages, especially regarding broadband access;

10. Urges the Commission to promote ambitious investment in social protection, services and infrastructures by Member States through a more targeted and strategic use of the European Structural and Investment Funds and the European Fund for Strategic Investments, in order to respond to the social and economic needs of Member States and regions;
11. Reiterates its call for the establishment of an authentic European Pillar of Social Rights which promotes upwards convergence, taking into consideration the share of competences laid down in the Treaties and the building of a deeper and fairer social dimension of the EMU;

12. Calls on the Commission to strengthen its efforts to work with Member States to achieve all the Europe 2020 strategy targets, including the reduction of poverty and social exclusion by 20 million, and to align the scope of the Europe 2020 strategy with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, therefore also including the fight against inequality and extreme poverty among its goals; asks the Commission to continue paying close attention to the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy and to take into consideration the Eurostat scoreboard on Europe 2020 headline indicators, also in the European Semester procedure and the Country-Specific Recommendations;

13. Calls on the Commission and on the Member States, recalling that the latter are primarily responsible for their social policies, which must be supported and complemented by European action, to strengthen their efforts for the reduction of inequality between income groups, and to encourage an adequate framework of measures which ensures, among other things, decent working conditions for all, public education, health, pensions, adequate public infrastructure and social services, and encourages equal opportunities; stresses that such a framework should enable a well-functioning ‘social lift’;

14. Underlines that the Union budget should establish the implementation of appropriate policies for reducing inequalities and increased social cohesion;

15. Stresses the primacy of fundamental rights; emphasises that labour law and high social standards have a crucial role to play in rebalancing economies, supporting incomes and encouraging investment capacity; recalls the importance of respecting social rights as enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, including trade union rights and freedoms and collective bargaining rights, and upholding equal treatment of workers;

16. Points out that we cannot ignore the future importance of sectorial policies for reducing inequalities and that, in particular, the need for further development of the internal market and for an investment policy at European and national level (e.g. in major infrastructures, healthcare, education) and the formulation of all aspects of energy policy must take account of the opportunities such policies offer in terms of economic, social and territorial factors, in order to guarantee equal opportunities; calls on the Commission to work with Member States to develop comprehensive strategies for job creation, entrepreneurship and innovation, aiming for strategic investment in green jobs, in the social, health and care sectors, and in the social economy, whose employment potential is untapped;

Measures to boost decent job creation and quality employment

17. Expresses its concern regarding the evolution of inequality in the EU after the crisis, which was largely driven by growing unemployment; is of the opinion that unemployment is a source of inequalities and that policies for the creation of decent jobs and quality employment targeted on the main unemployment pockets could help improve household incomes in the bottom quintile;

18. Calls on the Commission to include in the upcoming revision of the Written Statement Directive provisions that eliminate discrimination based on contractual status and that ensure for every worker the right to fair terms and conditions of employment in line with ILO Decent Work standards;

19. Underlines the fact, moreover, that high levels of unemployment exert downward pressure on wages and can, in some cases, also have a detrimental effect on working and societal conditions; stresses that the fight against unemployment per se is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for reducing inequalities;

20. Calls on the Commission to propose a higher funding level for the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) for the period 2017-2020, including better reaching young people under 30; calls on the Commission to contribute to better implementation of the Youth Guarantee, by focusing more on the most vulnerable young people who often have to cope with complex needs, taking into account the latest findings of the European Court of Auditors' report on use of the YEI and ensuring an accurate and transparent implementation and assessment;
21. Stresses the importance of following more closely young people leaving the Youth Guarantee/Youth Employment Initiative with a view to their lasting and efficient integration into the labour market; calls on the Commission to study the possibility of further flexibility of the YEI, also for well-performing countries in terms of youth policies, integrating schemes for the protection of young people in transition from education or higher education to work, in order to compensate for the exclusion of young people from contributory schemes of social protection in Europe;

22. Stresses that programmes such as the Youth Guarantee and the YEI must not be a substitute for Member States’ own efforts to fight youth unemployment and promote sustainable integration into the labour market; acknowledges that quality and accessible education is the decisive factor for overcoming inequalities; calls, therefore, for increased investment in public education and lifelong learning;

23. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to emphasise the need to promote green jobs and boost employment in rural and declining areas and make such areas more attractive to women;

24. Calls on the Commission, through the ESF and the European Semester procedure, and the Member States, through their National Reform Programmes, to ensure full implementation of the measures at national level outlined in the Council recommendation on the labour market integration of the long-term unemployed;

25. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to complement the Economic and Monetary Union with a fully-fledged European labour market combined with wide social protection coverage; believes that well-functioning labour markets and coordinated and robust welfare systems are vital to the success of the European monetary union and are part of a broader upward convergence process towards economic, social and territorial cohesion; calls on the Commission, in this sense, to present a study on how the EU can support and promote Guaranteed Public Employment Programmes at national level;

26. Calls on the Member States to ensure better alignment of education and training with labour market needs across the EU, creating more opportunities for mobility and improving recruitment and training strategies — particularly by means of ‘on-the-job’ training and targeted investment that will boost job creation and increase demand for employment; recalls that reskilling is an important element which makes it possible to reintegrate people back into the labour market and helps in tackling long-term unemployment and achieving a better match of skills with available jobs; stresses that skills validation and recognition of formal and informal learning are important tools to enable acquired skills to be valued in labour markets; insists that lifelong learning opportunities should be promoted along the whole of the life cycle, including old age, so that they can play out their full potential in fighting inequalities;

27. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to work together on addressing discrimination in recruitment and discriminatory recruitment procedures which prevent people from entering the labour market for reasons of (among others) gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, sex characteristics, ethnicity, disability or age;

**Improving working and living conditions**

28. Expresses its concern over the amount of undeclared work, atypical work contracts and other forms of non-standard employment, which can give rise to precarious working conditions, lower wages, exploitation and poorer social security contributions, as well as rising inequality in some Member States; recalls that adequate social security and social protection need to be provided to protect all workers; calls on the Commission and the Member States to step up their efforts to fight the shadow economy and undeclared work;

29. Considers that the quality of jobs throughout the EU should be improved, especially regarding living wages, job security, access to education and lifelong learning and occupational health and safety; calls on the Commission to support further research in relation to monitoring and improving quality job creation and overall competitiveness in the EU, based on Eurofound’s research;
30. Considers that certain forms of employment, such as zero-hours contracts and unpaid internships, do not permit a decent standard of living; considers it crucial to ensure proper learning and training opportunities and decent working conditions, where applicable, for internships, traineeships and apprenticeships, to establish limits on non-standard forms of work, and to prevent the use of zero-hours contracts, the use of temporary agency workers to replace workers on strike, and the use of fixed-term contracts for permanent tasks;

31. Observes that voluntary part-time work may encourage certain categories of persons to participate in the labour market that are currently under-represented and be useful for work-life balance arrangements;

32. Believes strongly that an accurate common employment classification at the European level could be explored in order to reduce precariousness on the basis of scientifically established facts and data; is convinced that applying the principle of equal pay for equal work done in the same place will help reduce inequalities between workers;

33. Highlights the importance of properly studying the different effects and aspects of increasing automation and the impact of the delay in adapting legislation, which could threaten to exert downward pressure on social protection systems and wages, especially affecting low-skilled and medium-skilled workers; emphasises, in that connection, the importance of keeping social protection and wages at adequate levels;

34. Considers that the New Skills Agenda must provide affordable access for all workers to lifelong learning and ensure adaptation to digitalisation and permanent technological change;

35. Takes due note of the European Economic and Social Committee’s Opinion on a framework directive on adequate minimum income in the European Union, which should lay down common rules and indicators and provide methods for monitoring its implementation; stresses that the tool of reference budgets, which indicate the cost of living in dignity for different housing arrangements, household compositions and ages, could be used to assess the adequacy of minimum income schemes introduced by Member States;

36. Is concerned about the high levels of non-takeup of minimum income schemes where they exist, which point up the many barriers existing, including intrusive procedures and stigma linked to applying under those schemes; believes that income support programmes are vital to avoid unequal economic trends, by supporting individuals before they reach the stage of poverty and social exclusion;

37. Stresses the importance of social dialogue and collective bargaining for determining wages, and the need for these mechanisms to remain in the hands of the social partners in line with their autonomy as enshrined in the Treaties; calls on the Commission to carry out a study on a living wage index in order to estimate the cost of living and the approximate income needed to meet a family’s basic needs for each Member State and region; highlights that for all households, an adequate income level is essential to enable the working poor to achieve financial independence while maintaining housing and food security;

38. Stresses that regarding the long-term financing of the construction of new dwellings, besides the ESI Funds and EFSI, other forms of both private and public funding should be mobilised as a way to step up the activities of national public banks or other agencies in the field of affordable and social housing;

39. Calls on the Commission to improve workers’ occupational health and safety, including by proper enforcement of the Working Time Directive;

40. Recalls that the right of collective bargaining and action is a fundamental right in the EU and that the European institutions must respect it, observe its principles and promote its application (1); believes that the declining bargaining power of workers and trade unions has not contributed to those objectives and could be a cause of low wage growth and the proliferation of insecure work;

(1) In line with Article 51 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.
41. Notes the importance of protecting workers' rights and fostering the bargaining power of employees through structural reforms of labour markets that promote sustainable growth, decent jobs, shared prosperity and social cohesion; stresses the role of dialogue between social partners in addressing inequalities in the labour market; calls on the Member States and the EU to ensure the right to unionise as well as the strength and autonomy of both trade unions and employers' associations when engaging in negotiations at any level;

42. Highlights, in addition, the importance of civil dialogue with representatives of different groups of society, especially of those at higher risk of poverty and social exclusion, when discussing matters relating to inequalities;

43. Calls for the implementation of an anti-discrimination policy that plays a key role in ensuring equal employment opportunities and promoting social inclusion; calls on the Member States to unblock the anti-discrimination directive;

44. Calls on the Member States to take action to ensure that discrimination, harassment and violence based on gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation and sex characteristics (among others) is addressed in the workplace, and that clear reporting and support mechanisms for victims and procedures against perpetrators are in place;

**Strengthening the welfare state and social protection**

45. Highlights that in many countries welfare and social protection systems have come under pressure, being impacted by financial consolidation with repercussions in terms of income inequalities; believes that welfare systems should act as a safety net and also facilitate inclusion in the labour market; emphasises the need for a multidimensional approach to the achievement of greater equality and social cohesion, as reflected in the horizontal social clause (Article 9 TFEU), focusing on the social dimension of union policies and the commitment to apply the principle of social mainstreaming to all Union policies;

46. States that social progress, as defined in the European social progress index, is the capacity of a society to meet the basic human needs of its citizens, to establish the building blocks that allow citizens and communities to enhance and sustain the quality of their lives, and to create the conditions for all individuals to reach their full potential;

47. Encourages the Member States to improve their welfare systems (education, health, housing, pensions and transfers) on a basis of high-level social safeguards, in order to achieve comprehensive protection of people, taking into account the new social risks and vulnerable groups that have appeared as a result of the financial, economic and then social crises with which the Member States have had to cope;

48. Calls on the Member States to boost investment in quality and affordable early childhood education and care services, stressing that such investment appears to pay off, particularly for children from disadvantaged families; calls on the Member States, with the support of the Commission and in line with the Barcelona targets, to take the appropriate measures to ensure universal and affordable access to quality public education from an early age (0-3), since this is key for combating inequalities in the long term;

49. Calls for universal access to affordable housing, protecting vulnerable households against eviction and over-indebtedness, and promoting an effective second chance framework for individuals and families at the European level;

50. Urges Member States to act swiftly on the current migration and refugee crisis and to guarantee that refugees have access to rapid language and culture learning processes, training, quality housing, healthcare, education, labour market and social protection and recognition of formal and non-formal skills and capabilities, and to ensure their inclusion in society;

51. Affirms that universal access to public, solidarity-based and adequate retirement and old age pensions must be granted to all; calls on the Commission to support Member States in strengthening public and occupational pension systems to provide an adequate retirement income above the poverty threshold, and to allow pensioners to maintain their standard of living and to live in dignity and independence; reiterates its call for care credits in pension systems to
compensate for lost contributions of women and men due to childcare and long-term care responsibilities, as a tool to reduce the gender pension gap; highlights that while personal pension schemes can be important tools to improve pension adequacy, statutory solidarity-based pension systems remain the most efficient tool for combating old-age poverty and social exclusion;

52. Highlights that the fundamental rights of people with disabilities should be guaranteed, including the right to decent and barrier-free work, services and basic income security adapted to specific individual needs, decent standards of living and social inclusion, and specific provisions on protection from exploitation and forced labour;

53. Considers that international trade has been an engine for growth but that the benefits are not always well distributed and this can be perceived as a source of inequalities; calls on the Commission and the Member States to promote fairer international trade agreements that respect European labour market regulations and ILO core conventions, while also protecting quality employment and workers' rights and ensuring European and national mechanisms for the compensation of workers and sectors negatively affected by major changes in world trade patterns due to globalisation, including the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund;

54. Calls on the Commission to ensure that EU competition policies enable fair competition and help fight cartels or incompatible state aid, which distort prices and disrupt the functioning of the internal market, with a view to ensuring that consumers are protected;

Combating poverty and social exclusion

55. Considers that the right to equal opportunities should be ensured in the European Union; is concerned that the current inequality of outcomes that affects everyone living in the EU, but especially children and young people, is often aggravated by the non-egalitarian design of education systems and has damaging consequences for young people's wellbeing and development as individuals, thereby contributing to a low sense of self-worth or inclusion in society of European youth, especially those lacking resources and opportunities;

56. Stresses that education has a key role to play in reducing inequalities, and, in that connection, calls on the Member States to step up their efforts and earmark sufficient investment in order to guarantee equal opportunities; affirms the importance of universal access to education and access to student support for young people in higher education; calls on the Commission to support Member States in creating adequate, decent and accessible housing for young people in order to sustain their transitions;

57. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to step up the fight against poverty, especially among children, by setting targets to reduce child poverty, by exploring the coordinated implementation of the Recommendation on Investing in Children, and through the creation of a child guarantee scheme;

58. Stresses, further, that many cultural and sporting activities are powerful tools for cohesion and social integration, and points out that these activities can improve the employment prospects of the least-favoured members of society by teaching them soft skills;

59. Calls on the Member States to achieve the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy as regards reducing poverty and the risk of social exclusion;

60. Considers the rapid increase of homelessness in most EU Member States to be an issue of urgent concern; believes that, in line with the principles outlined in the Social Rights Pillar, the Commission should support Member States in their efforts to curb the rising trend of homelessness with a view to its gradual elimination;

Achieving a real gender balance

61. Notes that the Commission has responded to its call for a better work-life balance for women and men living and working in the EU, through the proposal for a directive on work-life balance for parents and carers to meet the challenges of the next decades; recalls its call for adequate remuneration and social protection, and stresses that the proposals put forward
by the Commission are a good basis on which to increase women's participation in the labour market and boost work-life balance and flexible working arrangements for both women and men, as a means of reducing inequalities in paid and unpaid work:

62. Stresses that further inclusion of women in the labour market, by improving support for female entrepreneurship as well as by closing the gap between women's educational attainment and their position in the labour market and safeguarding equal opportunities between men and women in terms of pay, career advancement and opportunities for working full-time, are all essential factors for the achievement of inclusive and long-term economic growth, eliminating the gender pension gap, combating inequalities and fostering women's financial independence.

63. Calls on the Commission to put forward initiatives, if necessary, to remove any kind of gender pay gap, setting penalties for Work Centres that violate the right to equality by establishing different wages for identical job categories, depending on whether they are occupied mainly by men or by women.

64. Regrets the fact that, despite existing legislation enshrining the principle of equal pay for work of equal value by male and female workers, there is still a gender pay gap and an even greater gender pension gap; calls on the Commission and the Member States and social partners to address the gender gap challenge in pay and pensions;

65. Is concerned at the increase in the poverty rate, particularly among women and the fact that it is single mothers, young women and older women in particular who are affected by poverty: points out that the reduction of poverty levels by 20 million people by 2020 can be achieved through anti-poverty and active labour market policies that are grounded in gender mainstreaming focused primarily on increasing and supporting women's participation in the labour market; notes that poverty continues to be measured on accumulated household income, which assumes that all members of the household earn the same and distribute resources equally; calls for individualised rights and calculations based on individual incomes in order to reveal the true extent of women's poverty;

66. Recalls the important role of quality public services in achieving gender equality as well as tax and benefit systems free from disincentives for second earners to work or work more, as this might improve women's labour market participation;

67. Reiterates its call on the Council to ensure the swift adoption of the directive on gender balance among non-executive directors of listed companies, as an important first step towards equal representation in both public and private sectors;

Modernising tax systems

68. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to correct excessive interpersonal inequalities by supporting and encouraging the most productive forms of investment; recalls that to that end, objective taxation policies are crucial and that many Member States need a deep tax reform; calls on the Commission to monitor, advice, promote and prepare benchmarks in the light of the European Semester;

69. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to undertake real actions against tax avoidance and tax fraud, as an important means of reducing economic inequalities and improving the collection of tax revenues in Member States;

70. Calls on the Commission to encourage reforms of Member States' taxation policies so as to ensure adequate public budgets for health, housing, social, employment, and education services; believes this should also involve tackling corruption in public administration and tackling wealth inequality, including by redistributing the excessive concentration of wealth, since this is vital if inequality is not to be exacerbated in many Member States; highlights additionally that measures are needed in areas such as financialisation of the economy and further coordination, approximation and
harmonisation, where applicable, of tax policy, as well as measures against tax havens, tax fraud and evasion, measures to tackle undeclared work, and measures to optimise the mix of taxes and the respective weight as a share of Member State tax revenue of labour-based and wealth-based tax revenues;

71. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.
Situation in Yemen

European Parliament resolution of 30 November 2017 on the situation in Yemen (2017/2849(RSP))
(2018/C 356/16)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to its previous resolutions on Yemen, in particular those of 15 June 2017 (1) and 25 February 2016 (2) on the humanitarian situation in Yemen, and of 9 July 2015 on the situation in Yemen (3),

— having regard to the statements by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) of 8 October 2016 on the attack in Yemen, of 19 October 2016 on the ceasefire in Yemen and of 21 November 2017 on the situation in Yemen,

— having regard to the statement by the EU Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management, Christos Stylianides, of 11 November 2017 on the humanitarian situation in Yemen,

— having regard to the Council conclusions of 3 April 2017 on the situation in Yemen,

— having regard to its resolution of 28 April 2016 on attacks on hospitals and schools as violations of international humanitarian law (4) and its resolution of 27 February 2014 on the use of armed drones (5),

— having regard to the EU Guidelines on promoting compliance with international humanitarian law,

— having regard to the UN Security Council (UNSC) resolutions on Yemen, in particular Resolutions 2342 (2017), 2266 (2016), 2216 (2015), 2201 (2015) and 2140 (2014),

— having regard to the statements by the UN Special Envoy for Yemen, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, of 30 January, 12 July, 19 August and 26 October 2017 on the situation in Yemen,

— having regard to the statement of then UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Stephen O’Brien to the UNSC of 12 July 2017,

— having regard to the joint statement of the World Food Programme (WFP), the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) of 16 November 2017 calling for the immediate lifting of the humanitarian blockade in Yemen,

— having regard to the UN High-Level Pledging Event for the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen, of 25 April 2017, during which USD 1.1 billion was pledged to bridge a USD 2.1 billion funding gap for 2017,

— having regard to the decision of the UN Human Rights Council of September 2017 to investigate all alleged abuses of human rights in Yemen during the conflict,

(2) Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0066.
having regard to the presidential statements issued by the UN Security Council on 15 June 2017 calling on parties in Yemen to engage constructively in a good-faith effort for conflict resolution, and on 9 August 2017 on the threat of famine in Yemen,

— having regard to Rule 123(2) and (4) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas the various rounds of UN-brokered negotiations have not yet led to a meaningful progress towards a political solution in Yemen; whereas the conflicting parties and their regional and international backers, including Saudi Arabia and Iran, have failed to reach a ceasefire agreement or any type of settlement and the fighting and indiscriminate bombings continue unabated; whereas neither side has achieved a military victory and is unlikely to do so in the future; whereas finding a political solution to the conflict under the auspices of the UN peace initiative in Yemen should be a priority for the EU and the international community as a whole;

B. whereas the humanitarian situation in Yemen continues to be catastrophic; whereas the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) declared the situation in Yemen the ‘largest food security emergency in the world’; whereas, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 20.7 million people in Yemen require assistance, especially food assistance, with 7 million of that number facing a ‘food security emergency’; whereas 2.2 million children are suffering from severe acute malnourishment, with one child dying of preventable causes every ten minutes; whereas there are 2.9 million internally displaced persons and 1 million returnees;

C. whereas, according to the UN, more than 8 000 people, 60 % of whom civilians, have been killed and more than 50 000 injured, including a high number of children, in airstrikes and fighting on the ground since the Saudi-led coalition intervened in Yemen's civil war in March 2015; whereas the fighting, both on the ground and in the air, made it impossible for UN Human Rights Office field monitors to access the area to verify the number of civilian casualties; whereas these figures therefore only reflect the deaths and injuries that the OHCHR has managed to corroborate and confirm;

D. whereas vulnerable groups, women and children are particularly affected by the on-going hostilities and the humanitarian crisis; whereas the number of civilian casualties continues to increase;

E. whereas, according to Save the Children, 130 children die in Yemen every day; whereas at least 1.8 million children have had to drop out of school, in addition to the 1.6 million who were not in school before the conflict began;

F. whereas the World Health Organisation reports that ‘more than half of all health facilities closed due to damage, destruction or lack of funds’ and medical supplies are in severe shortages; whereas 30 000 critical health workers have not been paid in over a year;

G. whereas the destruction of infrastructure and breakdown of public services have fuelled the outbreak of cholera; whereas on 2 November 2017, OCHA announced that nearly 895 000 suspected cases of cholera with nearly 2 200 associated deaths had been reported since 27 April 2017; whereas more than half of the suspected cases involve children; whereas it is difficult to accurately ascertain the true number of cholera cases as there is limited access to many regions and many suspected patients are treated before being completely diagnosed;

H. whereas imports account for almost 90 % of the country's staple foods; whereas the UN Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of the unilateral coercive measures has already stressed in the past that the aerial and naval blockade imposed on Yemen by the coalition forces has been one of the main causes of the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe; whereas this blockade has restricted and disrupted the import and export of food, fuel and medical supplies, as well as humanitarian aid; whereas the unreasonable delay and/or denial of entry to vessels to Yemeni ports amounts to an unlawful unilateral coercive measure (UCM) under international law;
I. whereas the humanitarian situation in Yemen was further exacerbated by the imposition on 6 November 2017 by the Saudi-led coalition of a blockade of the country's land, sea and air borders; whereas the sea port of Aden and the al-Wadea land crossing at the Saudi-Yemeni border have been reopened; whereas, however, the ports of Hodeida and Saleef, as well as the airport of Sana'a, taken by the Houthi rebels in March 2015, through which approximately 80% of imports, including commercial and humanitarian goods, enter Yemen, are still subject to the blockade; whereas aid agencies have warned that, if the blockade is not lifted, Yemen will face the largest famine the world has seen for decades, with millions of victims;

J. whereas UNSC Resolution 2216 explicitly provides for individuals to be classed by the Sanctions Committee as 'obstructing the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Yemen';

K. whereas the coalition-led air strikes in and around Sana'a have intensified in recent weeks, causing civilian casualties and the destruction of infrastructure; whereas dozens of Saudi-led airstrikes have been blamed for indiscriminately killing and wounding civilians in violation of the laws of war, including through the use of internationally banned cluster munitions; whereas Houthi rebels fired ballistic missiles on Riyadh's main civilian international airport on 4 November 2017; whereas dozens more rockets have been fired into Saudi territory this year; whereas the laws of war prohibit deliberate and indiscriminate attacks on civilians; whereas such attacks are considered war crimes and individuals who commit them may be prosecuted for these crimes;

L. whereas the situation in Yemen carries grave risks for the stability of the region, in particular that of the Horn of Africa, the Red Sea and the wider Middle East; whereas Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) has been able to benefit from the deterioration of the political and security situation in Yemen, expanding its presence and increasing the number and scale of its terrorist attacks; whereas AQAP and the so-called Islamic State (ISIS/Daesh) has established its presence in Yemen and has carried out terrorist attacks, killing hundreds of people;

M. whereas there is an international arms embargo in place against the Iranian-backed Houthi/Saleh forces; whereas according to the 18th EU Annual Report on Arms Exports, EU Member States have continued to authorise transfers of arms to Saudi Arabia since the escalation of the conflict, in a violation of Council Common Position 2008/944/CFSP of 8 December 2008 on arms export control; whereas Parliament's resolution of 25 February 2016 on the humanitarian situation in Yemen called on the VP/HR to launch an initiative to impose an EU arms embargo on Saudi Arabia, in line with Common Position 2008/944/CFSP;

N. whereas the education of 2 million children has completely stopped according to the UNICEF; whereas ‘more than 1 700 schools are currently unfit for use due to conflict-related damage, hosting of IDPs, or occupation by armed groups’ according to the OCHA; whereas cases of recruitment and use of children to fight or perform military duties have been documented; whereas thousands of teachers, after not getting paid for over a year, were forced to quit their jobs to find an alternative income; whereas, due to the destruction of crucial infrastructure, the small percentage of schools that are still functioning are hard to reach;

O. whereas journalists are repeatedly blocked from entering Yemen, namely by the Saudi-led coalition, including by banning them from UN aid flights to the Houthi rebel-controlled capital, Sana’a;

P. whereas the decision to add certain individuals to the target lists of drone operations is often made without court warrants or orders; whereas the targeting and subsequent killing of certain individuals are carried out without due process;
Q. whereas, since the start of the conflict, the European Union has allocated EUR 171.7 million in humanitarian aid; whereas EU humanitarian aid gives priority to health, nutrition, food security, protection, shelter, and water and sanitation;

R. whereas despite the High-Level Pledging Event for the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen, held in Geneva in April 2017 — during which various countries and organisations made pledges amounting to USD 1.1 billion — as of 21 November 2017, donors had delivered funds amounting to only 56.9% of the UN's USD 2.3 billion humanitarian appeal for Yemen for 2017;

1. Condemns in the strongest terms the ongoing violence in Yemen and all attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure, which constitute war crimes; expresses grave concern at the alarming deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Yemen; deeply regrets the loss of life caused by the conflict and the extreme suffering of those deprived of humanitarian aid and vital commodities caught up in the fighting being displaced or losing their livelihoods, and expresses its condolences to the families of the victims; reaffirms its commitment to continuing to support Yemen and the Yemeni people;

2. Reiterates its full support for the efforts of the UN Secretary-General and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen to achieve a resumption of negotiations; stresses that only a political, inclusive and negotiated solution to the conflict can restore peace and preserve the unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Yemen; calls on all international and regional actors to engage constructively with Yemeni parties to enable a de-escalation of the conflict and a negotiated settlement; urges Saudi Arabia and Iran to work to end the fighting in Yemen and to improve bilateral relations; calls on Iran to immediately cease providing support to Houthi forces in Yemen, either directly or through proxies;

3. Calls on all parties to the conflict to urgently agree on a cessation of hostilities to be monitored by the UN as a first step towards the resumption of peace talks under UN leadership; urges all parties to engage, in good faith and without preconditions, in a new round of UN-led peace negotiations as soon as possible; regrets the decision of Houthi fighters and their allies to reject Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed as a peace negotiator;

4. Calls on the VP/HR to urgently propose an integrated EU strategy for Yemen and to make a renewed push for a Yemeni peace initiative under the auspices of the UN; restates its support for the efforts of the European External Action Service (EEAS) to facilitate a resumption of negotiations, and urges all parties to the conflict to react in a constructive manner and without attaching preconditions to these efforts; emphasises that the implementation of confidence-building measures, such as the release of political prisoners, immediate steps towards a sustainable ceasefire, a mechanism for a UN-monitored withdrawal of forces, facilitation of humanitarian and commercial access, Track II initiatives involving political, security and civil society actors, is essential to facilitating a return to the right political track;

5. Deplores the closure of Yemen's seaports, airports and land crossings by Saudi Arabia and its coalition partners, which has led to a further deterioration of the situation in the country; considers measures by the coalition to resume operations in the port of Aden and to open the al-Wadea border crossing as a step in the right direction; urges the coalition to ensure immediate resumption of the activities of the ports of Hodeida and Saleef and the opening of land borders for humanitarian relief and the delivery of basic commercial commodities;

6. Stresses that the UN Security Council, with a view both to addressing the humanitarian emergency, and to building confidence between the sides in a way which will be conducive to political negotiations, is encouraging rapid agreement on the deployment of additional UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism monitors, increasing the capacity of all Yemeni ports, and increased access to Sana'a Airport;

7. Calls on all the parties involved to allow immediate and full humanitarian access to the conflict-affected areas in order to be able to reach those in need and calls for the security of aid workers to be ensured; calls on the Council and the UNSC, in implementing UNSC Resolution 2216, to identify individuals obstructing the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Yemen and impose targeted sanctions on them;
8. Condemns the indiscriminate coalition-led airstrikes leading to civilian casualties, including children, and destruction of civilian and medical infrastructure; condemns the similarly indiscriminate attacks by Houthi and allied forces that have resulted in the deaths of civilians and the use of hospitals and schools by these groups as bases from which to stage attacks;

9. Condemns the indiscriminate missile attacks on Saudi cities, notably the main civilian international airport in Riyadh, King Khaled International Airport, on 4 November 2017, by the Houthi/Saleh forces;

10. Urges all parties to grant journalists access into the country, including within all territories and across front lines within the country; notes that Yemen’s block on journalists from entering the country is responsible for the lack of coverage of the crisis, which hinders humanitarian workers’ efforts to draw the attention of the international community and donors to the catastrophic situation; welcomes the recent release of Yahya Abdulraegeeb al-Jubeihi, Abed al-Mahzir and Kamel al-Khozani and urges the immediate and unconditional release of all remaining imprisoned journalists;

11. Calls on all sides to comply with international humanitarian law and international human rights law, to ensure the protection of civilians and to refrain from directly targeting civilian infrastructure, in particular medical facilities and water systems;

12. Recalls that the deliberate targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure, including hospitals and medical personnel, amounts to a grave violation of international humanitarian law; urges the international community to make provisions for the international criminal prosecution of those responsible for violations of international law committed in Yemen; fully supports, in this regard, the decision of the UN Human Rights Council to carry out a comprehensive investigation into the crimes committed in the conflict in Yemen;

13. Fully supports efforts by EU Member States and third countries to establish international mechanisms to gather evidence and to hold those responsible for grave human rights violations and breaches of international humanitarian law to account; stresses that ensuring accountability for violations is indispensable to achieving a long-term settlement of the conflict; welcomes, in this regard, the setting up of a UN Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts with the mandate to monitor and report on the human rights situation in Yemen and carry out a comprehensive examination of all alleged violations and abuses of international human rights law and other appropriate and applicable fields of international law committed by all parties to the conflict since March 2015; deplores the fact that efforts to set up an independent inquiry were blocked;

14. Expresses grave concern that the instability in Yemen has been exploited by terrorist and extremist organisations such as ISIS/Daesh and AQAP; urges the Government of Yemen to assume its responsibilities in the fight against ISIS/Daesh and AQAP; emphasises the need for all parties to the conflict to take resolute action against such groups, whose activities represent a grave threat to a negotiated settlement and the security of the region and beyond; affirms the EU’s commitment to opposing extremist groups and their ideologies and stresses the need for parties in the region to do the same;

15. Calls on the Council to effectively promote compliance with international humanitarian law, as provided for in the relevant EU guidelines; reiterates, in particular, the need for the strict application by all EU Member States of the rules laid down in Common Position 2008/944/CFSP; recalls, in this regard, its resolution on the humanitarian situation in Yemen of 25 February 2016, which calls on the VP/HR to launch an initiative to impose an EU arms embargo against Saudi Arabia, given the serious allegations of breaches of international humanitarian law by Saudi Arabia in Yemen and the fact that the continued licensing of weapons sales to Saudi Arabia would therefore be in breach of Common Position 2008/944/CFSP;

16. Supports the EU’s call on all parties to the conflict to take all necessary steps to prevent and respond to all forms of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence, in situations of armed conflict; strongly condemns the violations of the rights of the child and is concerned by children’s limited access to even basic health care and education; condemns the recruitment and use of child soldiers in hostilities, be it by government forces or by armed opposition groups;
17. Welcomes the commitments made at the High-Level Pledging Event for the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen and stresses the need for coordinated humanitarian action under UN leadership to ease the suffering of the people of Yemen; calls for the immediate mobilisation of the funds pledged to Yemen and for full funding of the UN 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan for Yemen;

18. Welcomes the fact that the EU and its Member States are ready to step up humanitarian assistance to the population across the country in order to respond to rising needs and to mobilise their development assistance to fund projects in crucial sectors;

19. Strongly supports the work of UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Mark Lowcock and his predecessor Stephen O’Brien in seeking to ease the suffering of the Yemeni population;

20. Calls for the EU and its Member States, alongside their humanitarian and political efforts, to support peacebuilding and resilience actions, including by supporting civil society actors and local economic and governance structures, in order to ensure the rapid restoration of basic services and infrastructure, stimulate the local economy and promote peace and social cohesion;

21. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States and the Government of Yemen.
The European Parliament,

— having regard to Articles 2, 9, 10, 19, 168 and 216(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) and Articles 2 and 21 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU),

— having regard to Articles 3, 15, 21, 23, 25 and 26 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,


— having regard to the Code of Conduct between the Council, the Member States and the Commission setting out internal arrangements for the implementation by and representation of the European Union relating to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,

— having regard to the Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 2 October 2015 on the initial report of the European Union (2),

— having regard to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Treaty Series No 5, 1950) and its protocols,

— having regard to the European Social Charter (ETS No 35, 1961, revised 1996; ETS No 163),

— having regard to Council of Europe Recommendation Rec(2002)5 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on the protection of women against violence, and to Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)17 on gender equality standards and mechanisms,


— having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,


(2) UNCRPD/C/EU/CO/1.
— having regard to the Commission proposal of 2 December 2015 for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the approximation of the laws, regulations and administrative provisions of the Member States as regards the accessibility requirements for products and services (COM(2015)0615),


— having regard to the Commission communication of 15 November 2010 entitled ‘European Disability Strategy 2010-2020: A renewed commitment to a barrier-free Europe’ (COM(2010)0636),

— having regard to its resolution of 13 December 2016 on the situation of fundamental rights in the European Union in 2015 (1),


— having regard to its resolution of 7 July 2016 on the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, with special regard to the Concluding Observations of the UN CRPD Committee (3),

— having regard to its resolution of 20 May 2015 on the List of Issues adopted by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in relation to the initial report of the European Union (4),

— having regard to its resolution of 25 October 2011 on mobility and inclusion of people with disabilities and the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 (5),

— having regard to its resolution of 6 May 2009 on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market (6),

— having regard to the study of Parliament’s Directorate-General for Internal Policies of the Union entitled ‘Discrimination Generated by the Intersection of Gender and Disability’,

— having regard to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

— having regard to the Annual Report 2016 of the European Ombudsman,

(2) Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0360.
(5) OJ C 131 E, 8.5.2013, p. 9.
having regard to the 2016 and 2017 Fundamental Rights Reports of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights,

— having regard to the thematic reports of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights,

— having regard to the 2014 Eurostat disability statistics on labour market access, access to education and training, and poverty and income inequalities,

— having regard to the Council Conclusion on ‘A sustainable European Future: The EU response to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’ published on 20 June 2017,

— having regard to the Voluntary European Quality Framework for Social Services (SPC/2010/10/8),

— having regard to the New Urban Agenda (A/RES/71/256),

— having regard to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction,

— having regard to the Council Conclusions on the Gender Action Plan 2016-2020,


— having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,

— having regard to the report of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and the opinions of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, the Committee on Culture and Education, the position in the form of amendments of the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality and the opinion of the Committee on Petitions (A8-0339/2017),

A. whereas, as full citizens (1), all persons with disabilities have equal rights in all fields of life and are entitled to inalienable dignity, equal treatment, independent living, autonomy and full participation in society;

B. whereas there are an estimated 80 million persons with disabilities in the European Union, of whom 46 million are women;

C. whereas the TFEU requires the Union to combat discrimination based on disability when defining and implementing its policies and activities (Article 10) and gives it the power to adopt legislation to address such discrimination (Article 19);

D. whereas Articles 21 and 26 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union explicitly prohibit discrimination on the grounds of disability and provide for equal participation of persons with disabilities in society;

E. whereas the UNCRPD is the first international human rights treaty ratified by the EU and has also been signed by all 28 Member States and ratified by 27; whereas the EU is the world’s biggest development aid donor and one of the most influential stakeholders at international level;

F. whereas the EU is committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within the EU and in development cooperation with partner countries;

(1) In the context of this resolution, ‘full citizen’ should be understood within the meaning of the UNCRPD — that all persons with disabilities should have full enjoyment of all human rights.
G. whereas the UNCRPD states that persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others; whereas Article 9 of the UNCRPD is of particular importance in that regard;

H. whereas the case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union reinforces the fact that the UNCRPD is binding on the EU and its Member States when implementing EU law, as it is in instruments of secondary law (1); whereas it is imperative to enforce existing EU law and policy tools in order to maximise the implementation of the UNCRPD;

I. whereas persons with disabilities represent a diverse group, and whereas women, children, older persons, and individuals with complex support needs, temporary or invisible disabilities face additional barriers and multiple forms of discrimination;

J. whereas persons with disabilities face additional expenses, lower incomes and higher unemployment; whereas benefits related to disability should be regarded as state support aimed at helping people to remove barriers in order to participate fully in society, including through employment;

K. whereas children with disabilities have the right to live in their families or a family environment in line with their best interests; whereas family members often have to reduce or stop professional activities in order to care for family members with a disability;

L. whereas the UNCRPD principles go far beyond discrimination, pointing the way to the full enjoyment of human rights by all persons with disabilities and their families in an inclusive society;

M. whereas there continues to be new and revised legislation without any reference to the UNCRPD and accessibility; whereas accessibility is a prerequisite for participation; whereas the EU, as a party to the UNCRPD, has the duty to ensure the close involvement and active participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organisations in the development and implementation of legislation and policies while respecting diverse concepts of disability;

N. whereas stereotypes, misconceptions and prejudices are part of the root causes of discrimination, including multiple discrimination, stigma, and inequality;

O. whereas persons with disabilities often suffer from a lack of support, protection communication and information about health care services and rights, protection against violence, childcare, and have little or no access to such services and information; whereas health service personnel should be properly trained on the specific needs of persons with disabilities;

P. whereas a considerable proportion of the four million people experiencing homelessness every year have disabilities, having been largely overlooked as a target group of the UNCRPD and the EU Disability Strategy;

Q. whereas, in spite of the numerous international conventions, EU and national legislation and strategies, persons with disabilities are still not fully participating in society and enjoying their rights; whereas the participation of persons with disabilities can only be achieved if they are included in political and public life, where they are often under-represented, in accordance with Article 29 UNCRPD;

R. whereas the Commission’s progress report shows that there is an obvious delay in the implementation of obligations deriving from the UNCRPD at both EU and Member State level; whereas challenges and gaps remain in the framework of the strategy and a long-term perspective is needed for the alignment of EU policies, laws and programmes with the UNCRPD;

S. whereas the model of independent living, as underlined by the UNCRPD, safeguards the highest degree of accessibility possible; whereas access to other services such as accessible transport, cultural and leisure activities are also a component of quality living and can contribute to the integration of persons with disabilities;

T. whereas it is imperative to have inclusive and active labour market access as this is one of the principle means of promoting independence for persons with disabilities; whereas labour market access currently stands at 58.5% compared with 80.5% among persons without disabilities, with some groups facing additional discrimination based on the type of disability, whereas the social economy provides numerous employment opportunities for persons with disabilities;

U. whereas stronger guidelines at European level and adequate resources, as well as training in disability issues could strengthen the effectiveness and independence of equality bodies at national level;

V. whereas one of the four priorities established by the Commission after the Paris Declaration on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education is that of ‘fostering the education of disadvantaged children and young people, by ensuring that our education and training systems address their needs’;

W. whereas the overall cost of keeping persons with disabilities out of the labour market is higher than including them in the workplace; whereas this holds especially true for persons with multiple support needs where family members might be forced to become carers;

X. whereas the number of persons with disabilities in employment might be lower than data indicates, considering many fall into the category of ‘not employable’, or work in the sheltered sector or more protected environments, do not have employee status and are therefore not visible in official data and statistics;

Y. whereas employers must be supported and encouraged to ensure that persons with disabilities are empowered all the way from education to employment; whereas, to this end, awareness-raising among employers is one way to combat discrimination in the recruitment of persons with disabilities;

Z. whereas measures in the workplace are crucial for promoting positive mental health, and for preventing mental ill-health and psychosocial disabilities;

AA. whereas the EU is the largest donor of development aid and has a leading role in disability-inclusive programmes;

AB. whereas employment discrimination is not a stand-alone issue; whereas discrimination in education, vocational training, housing, and lack of access to transport equal discrimination in employment;

AC. whereas 75% of persons with severe disabilities in the EU do not have the opportunity to participate fully in the labour market; whereas underemployment as well as unemployment can be an issue particularly for those with autism spectrum disorders or who are deaf and hard of hearing as well as blind or deafblind;
AD. whereas the SDGs and the Pillar of Social Rights might be potential vehicles of UNCRPD implementation;

AE. whereas the lack of legal capacity constitutes a significant barrier to exercising the right to vote, including in European elections;

AF. whereas 34% of women with a health problem or a disability have experienced physical or sexual violence committed by a partner in their lifetime;

AG. whereas Article 168(7) of the TFEU gives Member States the responsibility to define their health policies and deliver health services, demonstrating the vital importance of consulting and engaging with Member States in order for the European Disability Strategy to be successful;

AH. whereas Article 25 of the UNCRPD reinforces the right of persons with disabilities to enjoy the highest attainable standard of healthcare, without discrimination;

AI. whereas persons with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to deficiencies in healthcare services, engaging in health risk behaviours and higher rates of premature death;

**Key areas for action**

**Accessibility**

1. Recognises the importance of a holistic definition and application of accessibility, and its value as the basis for persons with disabilities to enjoy equal opportunities and genuine social inclusion and participation in society, as recognised in the UNCRPD and in line with UNCRPD General Comment No 2, taking into account the diversity of the needs of persons with disabilities and promoting the steadily growing importance of universal design as a principle of the EU;

2. Reminds the Commission of its obligation to mainstream disability and develop and promote accessibility in all policy areas in both public and private sectors, and recommends setting up units with expertise in accessibility within the hierarchy of the Commission to verify that this duty is being accomplished;

3. Calls on the Commission to set mandatory requirements on the accessibility of public spaces and especially the built environment;

4. Calls on the Member States to fully implement and continuously monitor all accessibility-related legislation, including the Audiovisual Media Services Directive, the Telecoms Package and the Web Accessibility Directive, as well as the relevant transport and passengers’ rights regulations; calls for the EU, in this context, to coordinate and monitor the implementation thereof in addition to promoting the ratification of the UNCRPD internally and externally;

5. Hopes that the EU’s co-legislators will, without delay, adopt the European Accessibility Act; recommends that, in order to fully implement the UNCRPD, the final text should enhance the accessibility of products and services for persons with disabilities and people with functional limitations; stresses that comprehensive European rules on the accessibility of public spaces and the built environment, as well as on access to all modes of transport, are needed;
6. Is concerned that the monitoring of some pieces of legislation, such as the Web Accessibility Directive (1) or the Regulation on Rail Accessibility (TSI-PRM) (2), is through self-assessment by industry and the Member States and is not conducted by an independent entity; recommends, therefore, that the Commission improve its assessment of compliance and considers developing monitoring legislation in order to ensure that the rights of persons with disabilities are respected, including, for example, in the implementation of Regulation (EC) No 261/2004 (3);

7. Recalls that the implementation of all accessibility-related obligations require sufficient funding at EU, national and local level; calls on the EU to ensure that all funding programmes are accessible, that they follow a universal design approach and include a separate budget for accessibility; calls on the Member States to boost public investment in order to ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities to both the physical and the digital environment;

8. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to increase accessibility through supporting the development of ICT and by supporting all initiatives, including start-ups operating in the field of safety of persons with disabilities;

9. Favourites the study and utilisation of the best practices in relation to independent living in the EU;

10. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to take the necessary measures to ensure that the emergency number 112 is fully accessible to all persons with all types of disabilities, and that all aspects of disaster-risk reduction policies and programmes are inclusive of and accessible to all persons with disabilities;

11. Is concerned that the public procurement ex-ante conditionality of buying accessibly before signing a public contract is not sufficiently implemented at national level; recommends, to this end, to set up a portal, along similar lines to green public procurement, containing all the accessibility guidelines;

12. Strongly recommends making the passenger rights complaints procedures fully accessible and disability-friendly and assigning a greater number of and equally strong enforcement responsibilities to the National Enforcement Bodies (NEBs);

13. Emphasises, in particular, that accessibility is a core principle of the UNCRPD, and a precondition for the exercise of other rights enshrined in the Convention; underlines that a consistent number of petitions lodged by European citizens complain about the lack of accessibility or the presence of architectural barriers; stresses that the right to accessibility, as defined in Article 9 of the UNCRPD, must be implemented in a comprehensive manner to ensure that persons with disabilities can access their environment, transportation, public facilities and services, as well as information and communications technologies; calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that accessibility is a high priority and that it is better integrated into all disability policy areas;

14. Notes that the Digital Single Market Strategy should be implemented in such a way as to ensure full access to all of its aspects for persons with disabilities;

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Participation

15. Welcomes the EU Disability Card project; calls on the Commission, together with the Member States, to include all countries in a future long-term initiative with a view to achieving an identical scope to that of the European parking card and to include access to services allowing participation in cultural life and tourism;

16. Is concerned about the continued use of the medical model of disability that focuses on the medical diagnoses of persons with disabilities rather than the environmental barriers they experience; urges the Commission to initiate the revision of this approach, particularly in the field of data collection; calls on the Member States to look at ways to work towards a common definition of disability;

17. Welcomes the progress made in relation to the Marrakesh Treaty; points out that the Court of Justice of the European Union, in its opinion of 14 February 2017, indicated that the EU has exclusive competence with regard to the conclusion of the Marrakesh Treaty, as the body of the obligations of the Marrakesh Treaty falls within an area that is already covered to a large extent by common EU rules; recommends that the EU and the Member States establish an action plan to ensure it is fully implemented; calls on the EU not to ratify the option concerning the economic burden;

18. Is of the opinion that the European Structural and Investment Funds must, particularly in the next programming period, adhere to the UNCRPD and should continue to foster deinstitutionalisation as a matter of priority and that they should, moreover, finance support services to enable persons with disabilities to realise the right to live independently in the community; believes that the Commission should closely monitor the implementation by Member States of the ex ante conditionalities on the transition from institutional to community-based services, which must be concrete and quality-assessed in an ongoing and transparent manner; believes that EU funded project proposals, including those in the framework of the European Fund for Strategic Investments and European Investment Bank lending should respect accessibility rules following a universal design approach; considers that financial instruments alone cannot be relied on to achieve these objectives;

19. Emphasises that there is a need to ensure free access to communication that is adapted to suit the type of disability, and emphasises that this is vitally important when it comes to the civic participation of persons with disabilities;

20. Is concerned by the barriers to participation that persons under guardianship and those living in institutions face across Europe and calls on the Commission to ensure that persons deprived of their legal capacity can exercise all the rights enshrined in European Union treaties and legislation; calls on the Member States to foster participation by accelerating the deinstitutionalisation process and the replacement of substitute decision-making by supported decision-making;

21. Calls on the Commission, as part of its series of regular reports on the implementation of Council Directives 93/109/EC (2) and 94/80/EC (2) to include an assessment of whether they are being interpreted in a manner consistent with Article 29 of the UNCRPD;

22. Highlights the fact that women and girls with disabilities suffer from double discrimination due to the intersection of gender and disability, and may even be exposed to multiple discrimination arising from the intersection of gender and disability with sexual orientation, age, religion or ethnicity in many instances;

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23. Reiterates that women with disabilities are often at a greater disadvantage than their male counterparts and are more often at risk of poverty and social exclusion;

24. Considers that the European Institute for Gender Equality should provide guidance at European and Member State level concerning the specific situation of women and girls with disabilities, and should play an active role in advocacy work to secure equal rights and combat discrimination;

25. Recalls that combating poverty and social exclusion among persons with disabilities is closely linked to the issue of improving conditions for family members who often act as unpaid carers and are not considered employed persons; encourages the Member States, therefore, to present national support strategies for informal carers, who are mostly female relatives of persons with disabilities;

26. Underlines that the number of elderly people is on the increase and that, according to the WHO, disability prevalence is higher among women, who are particularly affected by this phenomenon owing to their longer life expectancy; stresses that, therefore, there will be a proportionate increase in the numbers of women with disabilities;

27. Highlights the value of micro-financial instruments for job creation and growth; calls on the Member States to make such instruments more easily available to women with disabilities;

28. Underlines that, in order to ensure independent living for persons with disabilities, it is necessary to support research and innovation aimed at developing products to help persons with disabilities in their everyday activities;

Equality

29. Highlights that equality and non-discrimination are at the core of the Disability Strategy;

30. Calls on the Commission to address disability in its Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016-2019;

31. Deeply regrets the prolonged deadlock in the European Council on progress towards the anti-discrimination directive and calls on the Member States to contribute to the adoption of the Horizontal anti-Discrimination Directive (¹), moving towards a pragmatic solution, which should extend to the protection against discrimination in all areas of life of persons with disabilities, including the recognition of the denial of reasonable accommodation as a form of discrimination, and of multiple and intersectional discrimination;

32. Is alarmed by existing data on discrimination and abuse of persons with disabilities; remains concerned by cases of under-reporting due to the inaccessibility of complaint and reporting mechanisms, a lack of trust and of awareness of rights; insists that gender-disaggregated data should be collected and recommends, in this respect, the development of a new method for gathering data, particularly regarding cases of denied boarding and refused or unavailable assistance;

33. Calls on the Member States to ensure that all national equality bodies have a mandate in the area of disability, adequate resources and the independence to provide victims of discrimination the necessary assistance, and to guarantee that any extension of their mandate is accompanied by an increase in human resources;

34. Calls for the EU and the Member States to fund training and develop models of good practice by and for persons with disabilities, their organisations, trade unions, employers’ federations, equality bodies, civil servants on the principle of non-discrimination, including multiple and intersectional discrimination and reasonable accommodation;

35. Calls for the EU to develop research programmes addressing equality principles when drawing up the post-Horizon 2020 framework for Research and Development;

**Employment**

36. Highlights that access to the labour market is a holistic issue requiring the implementation of support measures that result in a win-win situation for both the individual and the employer, ensuring social inclusion and which should include accessible recruitment procedures, accessible transport from and to the workplace, career progression, and on-going training, as well as reasonable accommodation and accessible work places; calls on the Commission to update the Compendium of good practice on supported employment for people with disabilities in the EU and EFTA-EEA;

37. Encourages the adoption of positive discrimination measures, including the adoption of minimum percentages for the employment of persons with disabilities in the public and private sectors;

38. Regrets that the denial of reasonable accommodation does not constitute discrimination within the framework of the Employment Equality Directive (1), which has been criticised by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; recalls that the first article of the Directive on equal treatment in employment prohibits any form of discrimination on grounds of disability;

39. Calls on the Member States to ensure that benefit traps do not constitute a barrier to participation in the labour market, and asks for the separation of disability-related benefits from income support taking into account additional care and other needs that persons with disabilities may have, enabling them to live a dignified life and enjoy access to the labour market; calls on the Member States, in this respect, to ensure that disability-related benefits are not waived on grounds of employment;

40. Calls on the Commission to support social enterprises in line with the principles stated in the Bratislava Declaration and the Madrid Declaration on the Social Economy, as an important source of employment opportunities for persons with disabilities;

41. Calls on the Member States, in line with the UNCRPD, to consider removing all legal barriers to employability, including, for example, measures that run contrary to Article 12 of the UNCRPD, preventing persons with disabilities from signing work contracts, opening a bank account and having access to their money, leaving them financially excluded, or national clauses declaring certain categories of persons with disabilities as ‘unable to work’;

42. Highlights the importance of effective reintegration and rehabilitation as well as activation and retention measures in an ageing society, which enable people to return to or stay in work after a disease or physical, mental or emotional disabilities;

43. Recalls that burdening persons with disability and their partners with the cost of their assistance reduces not only their present income, but also their employment prospects and future income in old age;

44. Understands that work-life balance measures, including voluntary flexible and inclusive working arrangements, such as smart working, teleworking and flexible working hours might be beneficial to persons with disabilities and positive for mental health, ensuring security and stability for all, but is concerned that digital working environments might create new barriers if they are not accessible and reasonable accommodation is not provided;

45. Calls on the Commission to include good and bad practices in future reports to enable employers to effectively implement disability legislation;

46. Is concerned that in some Member States, persons with disabilities working in sheltered workshops are not formally recognised as workers under the law, are paid less than the minimum wage and are not entitled to the same social advantages as regular workers;

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47. Is particularly concerned about young persons with disabilities and those who have been unemployed over a longer period of time; calls on the Member States to work towards including young persons with disabilities in the labour market as a matter of priority, for example, by establishing special career advisory hubs in order to give advice to students and unemployed young people on their future careers, or as part of the Youth Guarantee programme;

48. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to further promote diversity as a business case and encourage diversity charters that advocate the added value of persons with disabilities in the workplace;

49. Calls on the EU to ensure that the rights of persons with disabilities and their families are included in the proposed package on work-life balance;

Education and training

50. Is concerned that many children with disabilities remain excluded from quality inclusive education in different EU Member States as a result of, for example, segregation policies, as well as of architectural barriers, which constitute a form of discrimination against children and young persons with disabilities;

51. Emphasises that education and vocational training are essential for the employability of persons with disabilities and that employers should be engaged in the process in order to mainstream the needs of persons with disabilities, also, but not exclusively, by taking into account the possible benefits of new technologies in areas such as job searching, personal development and greater independence;

52. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to remove legal, physical and organisational barriers for all persons with disabilities in order to guarantee inclusive education and lifelong learning systems;

53. Calls for the EU institutions and Member States to ensure reasonable accommodation for trainees and requests that traineeship application procedures be accessible and that specific traineeships are offered for persons with disabilities, including incentive-driven traineeships for employers;

54. Calls for the EU institutions and Member States to ensure that the Erasmus + and other youth programmes, such as the Youth Guarantee and European Solidarity Corps, are fully accessible to persons with disabilities through individualised reasonable accommodation and that information on their accessibility rights is made available to persons with disabilities to encourage their participation; recommends, to this end, that existing tools, such as, for example, those provided in the MappED! inclusive mobility platform be maximised;

55. Regrets that the new skills agenda does not include a specific target for persons with disabilities; stresses that the current underemployment and labour market discrimination of persons with disabilities is also a waste of valuable skills; calls, therefore, on the Commission to take into account the needs of persons with disabilities in all future skill-related initiatives;

56. Urges the Member States to develop effective measures aimed at tackling the segregation and rejection of students with disabilities in schools and learning environments and to develop, in this context, national transition programmes to ensure quality inclusive education and vocational training, both formal and non-formal, including for persons with disabilities requiring a high level of support, based on the UNCRPD Committee recommendations;

57. Highlights the importance of training and re-training educational staff, in particular to support persons with complex needs;

58. Recommends making better use of the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education to maximise its existing mandate;
59. Highlights that preparing teachers and trainers to work with children with disabilities and providing them with adequate support is essential; encourages the Member States to design inclusive education, training and continuous professional development for teachers and trainers, with inputs from a variety of stakeholders, particularly organisations representing persons with disabilities and professionals with disabilities;

60. Calls, given the high number of early school leavers among young persons with disabilities and/or SEN, for further exploration of the opportunities offered by lifelong learning and the provision of attractive alternatives; considers the promotion of lifelong learning programmes for persons with disabilities to be a vital part of the European Disability Strategy;

61. Encourages the exchange of best practices on inclusive education and lifelong learning between teachers, staff, governing bodies, students and pupils with disabilities;

62. Expresses its concerns that, in spite of improvements, persons with disabilities are still at high risk of unemployment and that less than 30% have completed tertiary education or equivalent, compared to around 40% for persons without disabilities; calls, therefore, on the Member States and the Commission to pay special attention to the difficulties young persons with disabilities and/or SEN encounter during their transition from secondary and university education and/or vocational training to employment;

63. Encourages EU public institutions and companies to implement diversity policies and the national Diversity Charters;

64. Underlines that young persons with disabilities participate less in physical activity than their peers without disabilities and that schools play an important role in adopting a healthy lifestyle; stresses, therefore, the importance of fostering greater participation of young persons with disabilities in physical activities; calls on the Member States to swiftly eliminate all existing barriers hindering the participation of persons with disabilities or people with special needs in sports activities;

65. Recalls the need to bridge the digital gap and to ensure that persons with disabilities benefit fully from the Digital Union; stresses, in this context, the importance of improving the digital skills and competences of persons with disabilities, notably through projects financed by the Erasmus+ programme, and calls on the Member States to ensure the protection of vulnerable citizens — including persons with disabilities — online, through efficient measures against hate speech, cyberbullying and all forms of online discrimination and by providing more education in digital and media literacy as part of both non-formal and formal education; calls, in addition, on the Member States to make appropriate technological educational tools available free of charge to children with disabilities, to allow them to fully join in with educational and training activities;

Social protection

66. Calls on the Commission to ensure that the 2030 EU Disability Strategy includes specific actions to promote inclusive social protection systems across the EU, which would guarantee access to benefits and services to persons with disabilities across the life cycle; calls on the Member States to set a social protection floor for persons with disabilities that would guarantee their adequate standard of living;

67. Calls on the co-legislators to give consideration to the inclusion of persons with disabilities as a specific target group in the Social Security Coordination Regulation (1);

68. Urges the Member States to apply the principle of mutual recognition when undertaking their disability assessment and determination, which should follow and must not undermine the UNCRPD human rights-based model of disability, taking into account the environmental and societal barriers a person encounters and including all relevant stakeholders in order to ensure that the living standards of persons of disabilities are not jeopardised by, for example, economic adjustment programmes;

69. Calls on the Commission to ensure that the European Pillar of Social Rights mainstream disability in all aspects;

70. Recommends that the European Social Fund (ESF), the European Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) and future EU social funds be used not only for employment activation measures, but also for social inclusion; stresses the importance of rehabilitation as a means of social inclusion to ensure that persons with disabilities remain active within the community;

71. Recommends that the Member States take specific measures, such as providing financial assistance and respite care, to promote inclusive social protection systems across the EU that guarantee an adequate standard of living, benefits and access to services for all persons with disabilities across the life cycle;

72. Urges the Member States to ensure that deinstitutionalisation never leads to homelessness for persons with disabilities because of a lack of adequate and/or accessible housing for delivering care in the community;

Health

73. Calls on the Member States to fully implement the 2011 Directive on patients’ rights in cross-border healthcare (1); recommends that the Commission include a strong disability component in the transposition of the Directive in order to guarantee access to affordable and quality cross-border border healthcare for persons with disabilities; calls, in this connection, on the Commission to carry out an impact assessment of the Directive with a view to revising it to bring it into line with the UNCRPD and to prepare EU-wide guidance on mainstreaming disability in the work of the National Contact Points with common performance criteria, including disability-specific recommendations; encourages the Member States to provide appropriate education and training for healthcare professionals on the specific needs of patients with disabilities;

74. Is concerned about violations, including human rights violations, in mental health and care services, which have in many cases had a significant impact on the quality of services provided, and points out that those services must be recovery-focused, adequately funded and provided in accordance with a human rights-based model;

75. Calls on the Member States to ensure mental health services that respect legal capacity and that require the person with a disability and not a substitute decision-maker to give informed consent for treatment and hospitalisation, also taking into consideration assisted decision-making measures;

76. Calls on the Commission to ensure eHealth, health and care services are fully accessible and safe to use for all persons with disabilities, including those who have intellectual disabilities and complex needs, and their family members;

77. Points to the urgency of addressing the general lack of access to multidisciplinary specialist care for persons with disabilities and, where it does exist, the long patient waiting times, as a major obstacle to equal access to healthcare prevention and treatment, often resulting in the deterioration of a disabled patient’s condition and an avoidable burden on healthcare systems;

78. Points out that healthcare systems should ensure the detection, reporting and prevention of sexual violence and/or abuse;

79. Urges the Member States to increase the number of multidisciplinary assessment and re-assessment services for adults with disabilities, with a view to developing tailor-made plans which can be implemented by using territorial resources (such as home/day care/residential services) which meet the biopsychosocial requirements identified;

80. Urges the Commission and the Member States to make full use of the European Reference Networks framework to develop, and expand access to, multidisciplinary and specialised healthcare for persons with disabilities in general and, in particular, for those with rare disabilities;

81. Highlights the Commission's lack of attention to disabilities in the Action Plan for the EU health workforce and the EU agenda for effective, accessible and resilient health systems, as they are not specifically dealt with in either of the two texts;

82. Highlights the success of the second Joint Action on Dementia, hoping, meanwhile, that, for the following third-year period, additional funds will be disbursed by the pharmaceutical companies taking part in the Innovative Medicines Initiative;

83. Invites the Commission to present a strategy for assisting persons with serious disabilities following the death of relatives who had been in charge of their daily care (cf. the recently adopted Italian law dopo di noi);

84. Urges the Commission to undertake a thorough analysis of the gaps between the UN's Concluding Observations and its own progress report, specifically in relation to the health priority area of the European Disability Strategy;

85. Calls for local obstetric care provision to be consistently promoted as a public service in the Member States, in order to reduce instances of disability resulting from birth complications and to ensure a safe birth for both mothers and babies, in line with the WHO Safe Childbirth Checklist;

86. Is encouraged by the progress made in the European telemedicine sector, which has the power to fundamentally change the ability of persons with disabilities to access services; believes, furthermore, that the roll-out of 4G technology, the rise of 5G and the spread of the Internet of Things will lead to improvements in healthcare provision for persons with disabilities; calls on the Commission to ensure that the European health technology sector is not burdened by excessive regulation and has adequate access to finance;

External action

87. Calls for the EU’s external action to be fully compliant with the UNCRPD;

88. Calls for the EU to ensure that development cooperation and humanitarian action are fully accessible to and inclusive of persons with disabilities;

89. Calls for the EU to introduce a disability rights marker in official development assistance reporting;

90. Calls on the EU to ensure it plays a key role in ensuring that persons with disabilities are not left behind in development cooperation and humanitarian aid, as committed to in the European Consensus on Development, and to include addressing the multiple discriminations faced by vulnerable persons and marginalised groups;

91. Calls on the Commission to be a leader in achieving disability-inclusive implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in external action, independently of a new European disability strategy, by adopting a clear, transparent and inclusive roadmap to achieving the goals;

92. Regrets that the EU SDGs' indicator on employment is not disaggregated by disability; calls on the EU to encourage the disaggregation of data by type of disability in cooperation with partner countries;

93. Calls on the EU and partners to include persons with disabilities and their representative organisations at all stages of policy development and projects, including on the ground in partner countries with the active participation of organisations of persons with disabilities;
94. Reiterates that women with disabilities often face even bigger challenges and dangers in countries involved in conflict and in conflict zones; highlights, therefore, the need to protect women with disabilities in the EU's external policies; 

**Obligations within the EU institutions**

95. Urges the EU institutions to make accessible the functionality, content, documents, videos and web services of their external and internal websites, including public consultations, and public reports on conformity and compliance with web accessibility guidelines, recommendations and obligations; 

96. Regrets that the INSIGN project which enables independent communication for deaf and hard of hearing persons during their interaction with the EU institutions by connecting them with sign language interpreters and captioners in Member States has not yet been implemented, although the Commission financed the development of the prototype of the service platform, which was successfully tested in 2014 in the European Parliament; 

97. Calls for the EU institutions to make — upon simple request — all of its public meetings accessible, including through the provision of sign language interpretation, speech-to-text captioning and documents provided in braille, as well as through other augmentative and alternative methods of communication and the physical accessibility of their buildings; recognises the difficulties in providing subtitles for all live streams and videos of meetings; calls, however, for the institutions to continue to monitor technological developments in this area in order to improve accessibility in the future; 

98. Advises the European institutions to give priority to interpretation from and into national sign language(s) rather than International Sign, in line with the EU’s multilingualism policy; 

99. Urges the Member States to ensure that their European Parliament elections are accessible and include those currently living in institutions and/or under guardianship; 

100. Recognises the lack of accessible and inclusive election processes for persons with disabilities, especially persons with mental/intellectual disabilities, both at EU and Member State level; urges the European Parliament to ensure that their communication materials on the European Parliament elections are fully accessible; 

101. Calls on the European schools, nurseries and after-school centres to provide quality inclusive and UNCRPD-compliant education to all children of EU staff, including those with complex or high-level support needs; 

102. Calls on the EU to facilitate the provision of reasonable accommodation and other forms of employment support, such as smart working for employees, including for accredited parliamentary assistants with disabilities within the EU institutions; 

103. Calls on the Commission to revise the joint rules, implementing provisions, scope, disability representation, accessibility and practices of its Joint Sickness and Insurance Scheme to bring it into line with the UNCRPD; 

104. Urges all EU institutions, agencies and bodies to establish focal points, and stresses the need for a horizontal interinstitutional coordination mechanism across Directorates-General and EU institutions; calls for the necessary arrangements to achieve this to form part of a UNCRPD implementation strategy; 

105. Urges the institutions to adopt comprehensive recruitment, retention and promotion policies, including temporary positive measures, to increase actively and substantially the number of officials or staff and trainees with disabilities, including psychosocial and intellectual disabilities, in line with Article 5 of Directive 2000/78/EC;
106. Recalls the role of the Disability Intergroup of the European Parliament for the implementation of the European Disability Strategy, in accordance with the UN Convention, as a platform that brings together members of the European and national Parliaments and representatives of organisations and civil society, both at national and local level; notes that the Intergroup is a privileged forum for encouraging discussions and debates in order to ensure the implementation of the strategy;

107. Calls for the European institutions to fully consult and effectively involve staff and Members with disabilities in formulating, implementing and monitoring their internal rules, policies and practices, including the Staff Regulations and reasonable accommodation and accessibility provisions;

Gaps in the progress report vis-à-vis the Concluding Observations

108. Regrets that the EU institutions' websites do not comply with level AAA accessibility standards; calls on the Institutions to comply as soon as possible;

109. Regrets that the EU's and the Member States' transport legislation is still not fully implemented at national level; recommends, to this end, that national enforcement bodies be established in each Member State;

110. Notes the progress made in terms of rail accessibility; calls for the same level of accessibility regulations for all other transport modes, including air travel, to resolve conflicts between safety and accessibility;

111. Notes that the Horizontal Equal Treatment Directive is not addressed in the Commission's Progress Report;

112. Finds it regrettable that little progress has been made with regard to the European Union's ratification of the Optional Protocol to the UNCRPD;

113. Notes that the Commission has so far not undertaken a cross-cutting, comprehensive review of its legislation in order to ensure full harmonisation with the provisions of the UNCRPD;

114. Welcomes the updated list of instruments, including recently adopted instruments, but regrets that the declaration of competences has not been revised and that the list of instruments does not include instruments which do not specifically refer to persons with disabilities, but are nevertheless relevant to persons with disabilities;

115. Regrets that the Commission has not made progress in mainstreaming the rights of women and girls with disabilities in all its gender equality policies and programmes, and in including a gender perspective in its disability strategies;

116. Applauds the EU’s signing of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the Istanbul Convention), and calls upon the Council to swiftly ratify it;

117. Regrets that the current European policies on the rights of the child do not sufficiently include a comprehensive rights-based strategy for boys and girls with disabilities or safeguards to protect their rights, and that the disability strategies do not sufficiently address and mainstream the rights of boys and girls with disabilities; calls on the Commission, in accordance with the UNCRPD and in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), to pay particular attention to children with disabilities; highlights, in particular, the need for role models for women and girls with disabilities;

118. Notes that the EU has not organised a comprehensive campaign to raise awareness about the UNCRPD and to combat prejudice against persons with disabilities;
Towards a comprehensive and effective 2030 Disability Strategy

Horizontal issues

119. Calls on the Commission to ensure that the future Disability Strategy aims at fully implementing the UNCRPD in all areas of EU policy and at mainstreaming accessibility, participation, non-discrimination and equality, encompassing all articles of the UNCRPD and that it include an adequate budget, a timeframe for implementation and a monitoring mechanism, as well as having the same legal value as the current strategy; is aware that the strategy can be a success only if all stakeholders, including civil society, are involved;

120. Stresses that the 2020-2030 strategy should be based on a cross-cutting, comprehensive review of all EU legislation and policy in order to ensure full harmonisation with the provisions of the UNCRPD, and that it should include a revised declaration of competences;

121. Calls on the Commission to encourage measures related to effective reintegration and rehabilitation to reduce or eliminate the effects of a disease or physical, mental or emotional disability on a person's earning capacity;

122. Recommends that the Commission ensure that any future strategy and the consultation process related to it should be transparent, understandable and fully accessible, and include clear indicators and benchmarks;

123. Notes that the EU SDGs' set of indicators are not inclusive of persons with disabilities when it comes to goal 4 (education), goal 5 (gender equality) and goal 8 (decent work and economic growth); calls for the future strategy to use global SDGs' indicators to monitor the implementation of the main EU actions and policies in the field of employment;

124. Stresses the importance of ensuring that the future Disability Strategy is coherent with other EU initiatives and strategies, in order to foster the employment and inclusion of persons with disabilities, in particular women;

125. Recommends that the post-2020 strategy include public procurement and standardisation as horizontal issues to increase the employability of persons with disabilities, as well as to favour the compilation and exchange of good practices among Member States;

126. Urges the Commission to ensure that EU-funded projects are in line with the UNCRPD's human rights approach, by not funding any projects that would create results that are not accessible, that exclude persons with disabilities, or do not respect accessibility standards;

127. Calls on the Commission to propose an accessible assessment tool with ongoing monitoring, including specific indicators and tangible goals;

128. Calls for the EU and the Member States, following the EU's ratification of the Istanbul Convention, to adopt specific measures addressing violence against women and girls with disabilities; urges the Commission to draft a comprehensive European strategy to fight violence against women, with particular emphasis on women and girls with disabilities;

129. Recognises that women with disabilities, especially intellectual disabilities, are more vulnerable to gender-based violence, sexual harassment or other forms of abuse; acknowledges, in addition, that due to their position of dependence they may be unable to identify or report the abuse; stresses the need to further accommodate implementation of the European Disability Strategy that allows preventive measures aimed at avoiding all types of abuses and to provide high-quality, accessible and tailor-made support for victims of violence;

130. Calls for the EU to mainstream the European Disability Strategy across all EU legislation and the EU Semester process; calls, in this connection, for a genuine structured dialogue between the EU and organisations representing persons with disabilities for the drafting of the post-2020 strategy;
Recommends that the future strategy include the essential role of support services for the enjoyment of human rights of persons with disabilities;

Recommends that the future strategy include issues related to staff training, which are fundamental if support according to the UNCRPD principles is to be provided;

Additional areas for action

Urges equality, gender and non-discrimination, including, for example, of LGBTQI with disabilities who are exposed to multiple discrimination, to be mainstreamed in all areas in a future strategy; calls on the Commission and the Member States to promote campaigns and training courses to raise awareness of the UNCRPD and of the need for respect of diversity in order to combat discrimination, stigma and prejudices against persons with disabilities, persons with psychosocial disabilities, learning disabilities or autism;

Emphasises that more must be done to overcome stereotypes and prejudices about disability in the media in order to change the prevalent exclusionary social norms; calls on the Commission and the Member States to invest in public awareness initiatives in order to ensure the depiction of persons with disabilities as equal citizens to counteract stereotypes about disability;

Points to the intersection of gender and disability, particularly with regard to informed consent about the use of contraception, forced sterilisation and access to reproductive rights; calls on the Member States to consider the need to evaluate their legislation in this regard;

Urges the EU to mainstream the rights of children with disabilities into all areas of the future strategy;

Recognises that legal capacity is one of the prerequisites for the enjoyment of human rights, including the right to vote, and that any new strategy must work towards no one being denied legal capacity on the basis of disability in all areas of life; stresses, to this end, that the EU should adopt appropriate measures to ensure that all persons with disabilities can exercise all the rights enshrined in European Union treaties and legislation, such as access to justice, goods and services, including banking, employment and health care, as well as voting in European elections and consumer rights in line with the Convention, and encourage non-coercive measures and supported-decision making in line with the UNCRPD;

Strongly urges the Commission to include all possible measures in the new strategy to ensure the liberty and security of all persons with all types of disabilities in line with the Convention and the UNCRPD Committee;

Strongly urges the Commission to retain the partnership principle in future regulations on funding and to ensure that it is fully respected;

Calls on the Commission to promote the structural involvement of persons with disabilities and their representative organisations in all decision-making processes, both nationally and at EU level, and to fund capacity building of organisations of persons with disabilities to enable persons with disabilities to engage in structural participation in all decisions that concern them; calls on the Member States to continue delivering UNCRPD training to ensure that persons with disabilities are aware of their rights so that discrimination can be prevented;

Recalls that the UNCRPD Committee has expressed its deep concern with the precarious situation of persons with disabilities in the current migration crisis in the EU; strongly urges the Commission to mainstream disability in its migration and refugee policies and to ensure that all EU funding directed towards tackling this humanitarian crisis is disability-inclusive;
142. Strongly urges the Member States to disaggregate data by types of disability, and to work closely with Eurostat to collect comparable data on disability in different fields, which includes persons living in institutions, while linking the disability strategy to the SDGs process and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

143. Stresses the need for measurable and comparable quantitative and qualitative indicators, including on accessibility, equality, employment, social protection, health, school outcomes and the numbers of students in inclusive education, in order to assess the implementation of the UNCRPD by the EU and the Member States, and strongly urges that data be collected in order to help apply these indicators;

144. Urges the EU to develop a human rights-based indicator system in cooperation with persons with disabilities and their representative organisations, as well as a comparable comprehensive data collection system, with data disaggregated by gender, age, rural or urban population and impairment type;

145. Recognises that persons with intellectual disabilities are particularly vulnerable to discrimination and abuse, and are often placed in institutions, with no access to education and no self-determination;

146. Strongly urges the Commission and the Member States to take additional measures to reach out to the most vulnerable, such as homeless persons with disabilities;

147. Stresses the need for continuous monitoring of the implementation of the UNCRPD in line with Article 33 thereof and in consultation with disability organisations;

148. Calls on the Commission to ensure that the work of the European Union High Level Group on combating racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance in relation to improving the recording and collection of data on hate crime fully includes hate crime against persons with disabilities;

149. Urges all Member States to allocate sufficient and stable financial and human resources to the monitoring frameworks established under Article 33(2) of the UNCRPD to carry out their functions independently;

150. Urges the Commission to provide adequate resources to the EU Monitoring Framework to enable it to perform its functions independently and adequately;

151. Recalls that the Committee on Petitions (PETI) receives a considerable number of petitions each year referring to the difficulties encountered by persons with disabilities across the EU in their everyday activities in relation to the eight main areas of action identified in the European Disability Strategy and other accessibility issues, such as access to healthcare and social protection, education and training, the labour market, the built environment and transport, goods and services, information and communication, and participation in political, public and cultural life;

152. Calls on all Member States to ratify the UNCRPD and to sign the Optional Protocol;

153. Highlights the protection role played by the Committee on Petitions through the petition process (alongside the European Ombudsman, appointed to protect citizens in the event of maladministration) in the context of the EU framework for the UNCRPD, enabling the petitioner to lodge a complaint against an infringement of their rights on the part of European, national and local authorities; stresses that the petitions received by the Committee illustrate the need to adopt an effective, horizontal, non-discriminatory and human rights-based approach to disability policies; stresses the role of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights in strengthening the fundamental rights of persons with disabilities in the EU and in supporting the EU’s implementation of the UNCRPD;

154. Emphasises that most of the petitions submitted by European citizens concern the difficulties involved in the application procedures, in obtaining recognition and in relation to late payments of invalidity pensions by the relevant administrations; underlines that the implementation of the European Disability Strategy and its social protection area for action should pay special attention to these issues, in accordance with Article 28 of the UNCRPD on an adequate standard of living and social protection;
155. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.
RECOMMENDATIONS

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

P8_TA(2017)0440

Eastern Partnership: November 2017 Summit

European Parliament recommendation of 15 November 2017 to the Council, the Commission and the EEAS on the Eastern Partnership, in the run-up to the November 2017 Summit (2017/2130(INI))

(2018/C 356/18)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to Articles 2, 3 and 8 and to Title V, notably Articles 21, 22, 36 and 37, of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), as well as to Part Five of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),

— having regard to the launch of the Eastern Partnership in Prague on 7 May 2009 as a common endeavour of the EU and its eastern partners Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine,

— having regard to the Joint Declarations of the Eastern Partnership Summits of 2011 in Warsaw, of 2013 in Vilnius and of 2015 in Riga,

— having regard to the Declaration of the leaders of 27 Member States and of the European Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission adopted on 25 March 2017 in Rome,

— having regard to the recommendations by and activities of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly, of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, and of the Committee of the Regions and the Conference of Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership (CORLEAP),


— having regard to the conclusions of the Foreign Affairs Council on the ENP and Eastern Partnership,

— having regard to its recommendation of 5 July 2017 to the Council concerning the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly (1), to its resolutions, notably those of 15 June 2017 (2) on the case of Afgan Mukhtarli and the situation of the media in Azerbaijan, of 6 April 2017 (3) and 24 November 2016 (4) on the situation in Belarus, of 16 March 2017 on EU priorities for the UN Human Rights Council sessions in 2017 (5), of 13 December 2016 on rights of women in the Eastern Partnership States (6), of 21 January 2016 on Association Agreements / Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine (7) and of 9 July 2015 on the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy (8),

(2) Texts adopted, P8_TA(2017)0267.
having regard to the Joint Statement of the Parliaments of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine of 3 July 2017,

— having regard to Rule 113 of its Rules of Procedure,

— having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (A8-0308/2017),

A. whereas the Eastern Partnership is based on a shared commitment between Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and the European Union to deepening their relations and adhering to international law and fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and gender equality, as well as to the social market economy, sustainable development and good governance;

B. whereas the Eastern Partnership pursues the common goals of promoting stability, confidence-building and cooperation, supporting democratic reforms, good neighbourly relations, peaceful conflict resolution and regional cooperation, enhancing people-to-people contacts and boosting trade, in order to increase political dialogue and association as well as economic cooperation and integration;

C. whereas, through its Global Strategy and the revised ENP, the EU seeks to bring its partners closer via accelerated political association and economic integration with the EU, while at the same time aiming to promote political stabilisation, societal resilience and economic prosperity in its neighbourhood, and offering opportunities for privileged political and economic relations in line with the degree of ambition of each partner country;

D. whereas, given that the EU considers cooperation to be a value in itself and strongly believes that it leads to win-win situations for all parties concerned, there is a commitment on the side of the EU to continue to work with all Eastern Partnership countries as long as core European values are not questioned or undermined;

E. whereas the EU and its partners need to match resources and instruments to the commitments made and whereas the partners need to focus more on the implementation of existing agreements;

F. whereas the participants in the 2015 Riga Summit called for progress to be made by the time of the next Summit in the areas of (1) strengthening institutions and good governance, (2) mobility and people-to-people contacts, (3) economic development and market opportunities, and (4) connectivity, energy efficiency, the environment and climate change;

G. whereas significant progress has been made since the last Summit, notably with the conclusion and entry into force of three Association Agreements (AAs) including a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, as well as visa-free regimes with Georgia and Ukraine since 2017 (and with Moldova since 2014), the conclusion of negotiations on a Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement with Armenia (which serves as an example of how membership of the Eurasian Economic Union and participation in the EU’s neighbourhood strategies can coexist), the launching of negotiations on a new comprehensive agreement with Azerbaijan, the adoption of major reforms in a number of these countries with the political, technical and financial support of the European Union, and the continuation of the critical engagement policy towards Belarus;

H. whereas since the launch of the Eastern Partnership in Prague, some founding members have experienced an overall deterioration of the human rights situation and a reversal of democratisation trends; whereas one of the main challenges will be to facilitate the ongoing transition towards inclusive, accountable, stable and viable democracies;

I. whereas increased mobility and the enhancement of people-to-people contacts between the partner countries and the EU remain an indispensable instrument for the promotion of European values;

J. whereas a new strategic work plan proposed by the Commission and the EEAS that combines both bilateral and regional cooperation aims to guide the future work of the EU and the six partner countries by focusing on twenty deliverables by 2020;
K. whereas the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the EU’s eastern partners remains under threat from unresolved regional conflicts, including some that were initiated and are still actively sustained by the Russian Federation in contradiction with its international commitments to uphold the international legal order; whereas the EU should play a more active role in the peaceful resolution of all ongoing conflicts in its neighbourhood; whereas Russian aggression towards Ukraine, the annexation of the Crimean peninsula and the continued occupation of two Georgian regions, as well as Russian hybrid threats including destabilisation activities and propaganda, threaten European security as a whole;

L. whereas the Eastern Partnership policy is based on the sovereign right of each partner to choose the level of ambition to which it aspires in its relations with the EU; whereas partners seeking closer relations with the EU should be able to count on more support and assistance in achieving mutually set goals if they fulfil existing reform commitments, in line with the ‘more for more’ principle;

1. Recommends the following to the Council, the Commission and the European External Action Service:

**On the future of the Eastern Partnership**

(a) to ensure that the November 2017 Summit will be forward looking, injecting new dynamism and setting a clear political vision for the future of the Eastern Partnership as a long-term policy; to ensure that the outcomes of this Summit will, as a first priority, provide the basis for upholding the core values of the European Union, in particular respect for democracy, human rights, fundamental freedoms, the rule of law, good governance, civil rights, nondiscrimination and gender equality, on which the Eastern Partnership is based, underlining that these values are at the heart of the AAAs and recognising the commitment of the partners concerned to implement and promote these values;

(b) to live up to the high expectations of citizens in all the partner countries as regards eradicating corruption, fighting organised crime and bolstering the rule of law and good governance; to therefore seek a renewed commitment by the partners to adopt and fully implement reforms related to the judiciary, public administration and the fight against corruption and organised crime, on the basis of adequate roadmaps with clearly defined objectives and deadlines;

(c) to strengthen civil society in the partner countries and its vital role within the Eastern Partnership, both as an indispensable actor in the process of democratic consolidation and as a platform for regional cooperation, by uncompromisingly opposing all legislation and measures that seek to curtail its legitimate activities and by encouraging its deeper involvement in drawing up, scrutinising and monitoring the implementation of reforms related to the Partnership as well as by promoting the transparency and accountability of public institutions;

(d) to encourage electoral reforms that ensure that legal frameworks are in line with international standards, recommendations by OSCE-led international observation missions and Venice Commission opinions and that are achieved through a transparent process, and are the subject of broad consultation and, as far as possible, consensus with opposition and civil society, in order to improve electoral frameworks without any bias towards ruling parties; to ensure the strict application by the EU of existing conditionality related to electoral reforms;

(e) to ensure that the outcomes of the November 2017 Summit take stock of what has already been achieved, emphasise the need to deliver on all commitments already made and provide a new impetus for the future of the Partnership including the delivery of tangible results for citizens, notably in terms of employment, reducing socioeconomic disparities, transport, connectivity, energy independence, mobility and education, noting that a new European External Investment Plan (EEIP) is an important instrument in this regard;

(f) to pursue efforts aimed at tackling unemployment, especially youth unemployment, including through a package of support measures for young people such as the EU4Youth programme, and developing skills adapted to the evolving needs of the labour market, including through vocational education and training, fostering entrepreneurship and local industries, supporting sustainable agriculture, developing tourism and the digital economy, and expanding social infrastructure and the public and private services sector, inter alia in the field of health and care;
(g) to promote and actively support the implementation of anti-discrimination policies in all sectors of society; to ensure gender equality in public policies and support for the employability and entrepreneurship of women, with policy continuity being guaranteed beyond the 2020 target date;

(h) to commit to working jointly on increased mobility between the EU and partner countries; to support Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine in implementing the visa liberalisation agreement and to ensure that suspension mechanisms are not triggered in the future, notably through close cooperation in the areas of police and customs to safeguard against security threats, criminality and overstays; to open visa dialogues with Armenia, to encourage progress by Azerbaijan in the implementation of Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements (VFA/RA) with a view to opening a visa dialogue in the future, and to finalise negotiations on VFA/RA with Belarus for the benefit of its citizens, should these countries make significant progress in the area of fundamental values and meet the precise conditions defined in visa liberalisation action plans;

(i) to further increase opportunities for closer cooperation in the fields of education, research and innovation, notably through facilitating participation in programmes such as Erasmus+, Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation and EU4Innovation as well as the provision of loan guarantees by the European Investment Bank Group as part of its innovFin programme; to provide support in order to reform education and address the research and innovation gap;

(j) to ensure that the outcomes of the November 2017 Summit will also provide a renewed impetus to boost sustainable economic growth, the modernisation of existing sectors, trade and investment opportunities, including intra-regional opportunities for cross-border cooperation and with a particular emphasis on entrepreneurship and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs);

(k) to call for recalibrated EU support to the Association agendas and to the related structural reforms, notably those allowing for improved competitiveness, a more favourable business environment and adequate access to sources of financing, including through the EU4Business initiative; to monitor closely the implementation of DCFTAs in order to avoid social and environmental dumping; to devise targeted assistance for SMEs to help them to fully absorb the potential of DCFTAs; to promote and support a genuine reform of the economic system aimed at phasing out monopolies and circumscribing the role of oligarchs through the introduction of adequate laws, as well as a major reform of the banking and financial sector aimed at combating money laundering and tax evasion;

(l) to support the development of the necessary transport and connectivity infrastructure, including through an ambitious investment plan for the TEN-T core network, and to also promote intra-regional trade; to support infrastructure projects that will provide new opportunities for trade and enable more communication and exchanges between the EU and the partner countries as well as among the partners;

(m) to improve both energy independence and efficiency through specific investments and the diversification of energy sources, in particular with regard to renewable energy and reducing dependence on fossil fuels, through strengthened cooperation in all priority areas covered by the EU Energy Union and closer integration of the partners’ energy markets with the European energy market, with a particular focus on interconnectivity and infrastructure; to ensure that onshore and offshore sections of new pipeline infrastructure within the region, including the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, are fully in line with EU legislation and the energy union strategy and that they do not undermine regional energy security; to work with the eastern partners to support the households most affected by rising energy prices;

(n) to ensure full respect for international nuclear safety and environmental protection agreements and obligations; to increase efforts towards the fulfilment of climate change commitments, including through public awareness-raising and a gradual and sustainable phase-out of obsolete power plants in Armenia and Ukraine; to follow closely the development of new projects such as the nuclear power plant in Ostrovets, Belarus;

(o) to ensure that the outcomes of the November 2017 Summit also address the security threats and conflicts that affect the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, fundamental human rights, and political, social and economic stability and development of the partners and of the region as a whole;
(p) to commit to sustaining the unity of action among EU Member States in maintaining collective pressure on Russia, whose military presence in the region has nevertheless grown over the past years, in particular through strengthened targeted restrictive measures, to solving the conflict in eastern Ukraine through full and genuine implementation of the Minsk agreements and by maintaining the OSCE monitoring mission, to solving the conflict between Russia and Georgia through tangible outcomes of the Geneva International Discussions and full implementation by Russia of the 2008 ceasefire agreement, to re-establishing Ukraine's full sovereignty in Crimea, and that of Georgia in its occupied territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and of Moldova in Transnistria, to paying adequate attention to the dangerous ecological situation in eastern Ukraine, to supporting its partners in strengthening their resilience, and to putting an end to the additional threats of state-sponsored assassinations, cyber warfare, disinformation and other types of destabilisation;

(q) to underline that the participation of an eastern partner in military exercises aimed at the EU and/or some of its partners, such as the Russian-led Zapad 2017 exercise in Belarus, is unacceptable; to ensure that a partner does not engage in such exercises again in the future;

(r) to call for an immediate end to military hostilities between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces which unnecessarily claim the lives of civilians and soldiers whilst hampering socioeconomic development; to reaffirm support to the OSCE Minsk Group co-Chairs' efforts to solve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and to their 2009 Basic Principles, which include territorial integrity, self-determination and the non-use of force; to call on Armenia and Azerbaijan to re-launch negotiations in good faith with a view to implementing these principles to solve the conflict, which cannot be solved using military force; to call on the Governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan to hold high-level talks and commit to genuine confidence-building measures and dialogue between Armenian and Azerbaijani civil society; to make the ratification of new agreements between the EU and each of the parties conditional on meaningful commitments to and substantial progress towards solving the conflict, such as maintaining the ceasefire and supporting the implementation of the 2009 Basic Principles;

(s) to call for continued support to the work carried out by the EU and OSCE missions in Georgia, Moldova and eastern Ukraine as essential operations to ensure peace and security first and foremost for the benefit of the citizens on the ground; to ensure effective implementation of these missions' mandates and urge Russia to guarantee their unimpeded access; to consider supporting the deployment of an armed OSCE police mission in eastern Ukraine; to reflect, jointly with the partner countries, on the prospect of an enhanced role for the EU in solving these conflicts, including by launching ambitious fully-fledged Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions tasked with enhancing security and stability;

(t) to call on the EU's partners to fully cooperate with the EU in tackling challenges such as illegal migration, terrorism, cybercrime, human trafficking, smuggling and illicit trade;

(u) to consider, within the EaP policy, an attractive longer-term 'EaP+' model for associated countries that have made substantial progress in implementing AA/DCFTA-related reforms, that could eventually lead to joining the customs union, energy union, digital union and Schengen area, further EU internal market access, integration into EU transport networks, industrial partnerships, increased participation in other EU programmes and agencies, further cooperation in the field of the CSDP, and more immediate measures such as additional unilateral tariff preferences, a concrete timeframe for the abolition of roaming tariffs between the partners and the EU, and the development of high-capacity broadband; to open the 'EaP+' model to other Eastern Partnership countries once they are ready for such enhanced commitments and have made significant progress towards implementing mutually agreed reforms;

(v) to consider, for non-associated countries, new means of supporting civil society, businesses, the academic and independent media communities and young people, including through additional funding and mobility partnerships;

(w) to ensure that, in both cases, the common goals are both medium and long-term when necessary, encouraging some of the partner countries to move beyond the logic of electoral cycles to more strategic visions;
On the implementation of the Eastern Partnership

(x) to reiterate the principle of differentiation and that the scope and depth of cooperation with the EU is determined by its ambitions and those of the partners, as well as by the pace and quality of reforms to be evaluated based on their full and effective implementation, notably as regards respect for democracy, human rights, fundamental freedoms, the rule of law and good governance;

(y) to underline that the Eastern Partnership aims to create the necessary conditions for close political association and economic integration, including participation in EU programmes; to reiterate that AAs with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine do not constitute the final goal in their relations with the EU; to acknowledge once again the European aspirations of these countries; to point out that, pursuant to Article 49 of the TEU and in line with the Rome Declaration of 25 March 2017, any European state may apply to become a member of the EU, provided it adheres to the Copenhagen criteria and the principles of democracy, that it respects fundamental freedoms and human rights including those of minority groups and that it upholds the rule of law; to urge the Member States, in this regard, to agree to an ambitious declaration for the 2017 Summit that sets relevant long-term goals;

(z) to invite Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine to focus on the full implementation of the Association agendas in order to unlock all the opportunities available through the AAs, to engage also in the joint discussions on the progress, opportunities and challenges relating to the AA/DCFTA-related reforms; to reiterate the importance of genuine implementation of the abovementioned reforms for the future stability and development of the countries and the wellbeing of their societies; to reaffirm that the deepening of relations within the ‘EaP+’ model as well as any prospect of EU membership requires substantial progress in terms of the implementation of these reforms, notably as regards the rule of law, respect for human rights and good governance;

(aa) to ensure that strict conditionality is always attached to current and further levels of cooperation and support for the partners, and that it is also observed; to underline that EU financial support to its partners will be conditional on concrete reform steps and their effective implementation, and that the EU’s incentive-based approach will continue to benefit those partners most engaged in ambitious reforms; to envisage paying out grants in smaller instalments to enable the EU to better respond to unexpected crises or a lack of reforms; to emphasise in particular that no comprehensive agreement will be ratified with a country that does not respect EU values, notably through the non-implementation of decisions by the European Court of Human Rights and the harassment, intimidation and persecution of human rights defenders, NGOs and journalists; to also highlight that clear benchmarks need to be met before any new dialogue on visa-free regimes is launched and concluded; to reiterate that backsliding on prior achievements will systematically lead to the suspension of agreements, including in the area of visa-free regimes and EU funding;

(ab) to support the multilateral dimension of the Eastern Partnership as a means of increasing multilateral confidence-building, notably in conflict-affected areas, and creating opportunities for regional cooperation, including through transnational civil society platforms, cooperation between local and regional authorities, and cross-border projects such as people-to-people programmes involving intercultural dialogue and the younger generation as factors for change;

(ac) to highlight the importance of communicating policies related to the Eastern Partnership coherently and effectively, internally as well as externally, and of providing communication activities tailored to specific regions, notably so as to bridge the knowledge gap as regards the EU and its relations with its partners; to acknowledge the excellent work done so far by the East StratCom Task Force and to support its activities with additional funding; to address the challenge of better information about the concrete benefits and goals of the Eastern Partnership; to target disinformation through fact-based and accessible quality information in all languages of the partner countries, and to ensure full respect for the freedom of expression;

(ad) to maintain that EU support should be tailor-made to match the level of shared ambition regarding cooperation with each partner following the principles of both ‘more for more’ and ‘less for less’; to call in particular for the EU to align budgetary instruments such as the European Neighbourhood Instrument and the European Fund for Sustainable Development with political tasks and implementation strategies, notably within its annual and multiannual budgetary procedures;
(ae) to welcome the Commission proposals to provide the partners with macro-financial assistance (MFA) while insisting on strict and effective conditionality attached to the proposals, notably in terms of upholding the rule of law (including an independent judiciary and multi-party parliamentary system), ensuring good governance (including combating corruption effectively), and defending human rights and the freedom of the media; to provide Parliament and the Council with a detailed written report every six months on the progress made in these three areas for partners already benefiting from such assistance; to call on the Commission to draw up new MFA programmes for partner countries that have successfully completed past programmes, to make systematic provision for the abovementioned conditionality in future proposals for such assistance, and to ensure that it is strictly applied, notably in the case of Moldova;

#af) to ask the Commission, the European Investment Bank and other multilateral financial institutions to work towards the successful implementation of the Investment Plan for Europe and of a dedicated support mechanism for Eastern Partnership countries committed to implementing the AAs; to request the establishment of a trust fund for Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova based on the best practices of multi-donor instruments, while stressing that this trust fund should focus on private and public investments, in particular those in social and economic infrastructure and aimed at boosting investment absorptive capacity, and on the coordination of international financial institutions and international donor support on the ground; to consider holding a donors' conference for Ukraine in support of the country's humanitarian needs induced by the conflict in the East and the annexation of Crimea; to ensure that the use of all these funds is also strictly scrutinised in order to prevent any misuse;

(ag) to reiterate its strong support for parliamentary input towards and scrutiny of the Eastern Partnership policy, notably as regards the impact of the policy on citizens' lives; to enhance, in this respect, the role of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly within the new multilateral architecture of the Eastern Partnership, as well as of the Parliamentary Association or Cooperation Committees (PAC/PCC) within the Association or Cooperation Councils; to welcome the Comprehensive Democracy Support Approach (CDSA) programmes that are being implemented; to invite parliamentarians from the partner countries to work together to scrutinise implementation and exchange best practices; to step up the involvement of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum in this process;

(ah) to take note of Parliament’s resolve to increase its monitoring of the implementation of international agreements with the eastern partners and to increase its scrutiny of EU support provided in this respect; to respond to Parliament’s call on the partners and on the Commission to increase the transparency of all EU funding beneficiaries; to call on the Commission and the EEAS to transmit to Parliament and the Council a detailed written report on the implementation of these agreements every six months;

(ai) to take note of Parliament’s resolve to increase its scrutiny of the negotiation of future international agreements with the eastern partners; to call on the Council to provide Parliament without delay with all relevant negotiating directives in line with the relevant Interinstitutional Agreement (1); to welcome the effective cooperation of the Commission and the EEAS with Parliament in providing information on these negotiations, but to call on them to also provide, without delay, the draft negotiating texts and initialled agreements, in line with the relevant Framework Agreement (2);

2. Instructs its President to forward this recommendation to the Council, the European Commission and the European External Action Service, and, for information, to the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly and the governments and parliaments of the Eastern Partnership countries.

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II

(Information)

INFORMATION FROM EUROPEAN UNION INSTITUTIONS, BODIES, OFFICES AND AGENCIES

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

P8_TA(2017)0459

Request for waiver of the immunity of Ana Gomes

European Parliament decision of 30 November 2017 on the request for waiver of the immunity of Ana Gomes
(2017/2096(IMM))
(2018/C 356/19)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to the request for waiver of the immunity of Ana Gomes, forwarded on 30 May 2017 by the Permanent Representation of Portugal to the European Union and signed by the Deputy Attorney General of the Portuguese Republic in connection with criminal proceedings pending before the Peso da Régua District Court Public Prosecutor’s Office — District of Vila Real (ref. NUIPC 430/16.6T9LSBP), and announced in plenary on 12 June 2017,

— having heard Ana Gomes in accordance with Rule 9(6) of its Rules of Procedure,

— having regard to Article 8 of Protocol No 7 on the Privileges and Immunities of the European Union, and Article 6(2) of the Act of 20 September 1976 concerning the election of the members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage,


— having regard to Rule 157(2) of the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic and Article 11 of the Statute of Members of the Assembly of the Portuguese Republic,

— having regard to Rule 5(2), Rule 6(1) and Rule 9 of its Rules of Procedure,

— having regard to the report of the Committee on Legal Affairs (A8-0363/2017).

Thursday 30 November 2017

A. whereas a prosecutor of the Vila Real Public Prosecution Service attached to the Peso de Régua District Court has requested waiver of the parliamentary immunity of Ms Ana Gomes in connection with statements made by her in an interview with the Diário de Notícias, published by that newspaper on the Internet on 29 April 2016; whereas the request has been made with a view to initiating criminal proceedings against Ms Gomes and so that she may be questioned in that connection;

B. whereas the newspaper article indicated that investigations were under way in relation to the Viana shipyards and, in this connection, Ms Gomes commented that 'something was starting to happen with regard to a case of blatant corruption', expressing the view that the Atlântida ferry had been sold for 'peanuts';

C. whereas, in principle, the acts allegedly committed by Ms Gomes constitute three offences, that is to say affront to an organisation, service or legal person, defined by, and punishable under, the terms of Article 187(1) and (2)(a) and Article 183(2) of the Penal Code, against two parties, an offence punishable by a prison sentence of up to two years, or a fine of no less than 120 daily units;

D. whereas, according to Article 8 of Protocol No 7 on the Privileges and Immunities of the European Union, Members of the European Parliament may not be subject to any form of inquiry, detention or legal proceedings in respect of opinions expressed or votes cast by them in the performance of their duties;

E. whereas, pursuant to Rule 5 of the European Parliament’s Rules of Procedure, in the exercise of its powers in respect of privileges and immunities, Parliament shall act to uphold its integrity as a democratic legislative assembly and to ensure the independence of its Members in the performance of their duties;

F. whereas the European Court of Justice has ruled that a statement made by a Member outside the European Parliament may constitute an opinion expressed in the performance of his duties within the meaning of Article 8 of Protocol No 7, where it contains a subjective assessment having a direct and obvious connection with the performance of that Member’s duties in the European Parliament; whether or not this is the case must therefore be determined by the character and content of the statement and not to the place where it was made;

G. whereas today political debate takes place to an increasing extent outside Parliament’s premises through the media, in the form of press statements, interviews and blogs and on the Internet;

H. whereas statements by Ms Gomes during the interview were made in the performance of her duties as a Member of the European Parliament and within her remit as Vice-Chair of the Committee of Inquiry to investigate alleged contraventions and maladministration in the implementation of Union law in relation to money laundering, tax avoidance and tax evasion;

I. whereas the comments made by Ms Gomes are directly related to her observations during the TV124-Cara a Cara’ televised debate between her and Carlos Abreu Amorim that was broadcast on 29 November 2013, concerning which the European Parliament upheld her immunity (1);

J. whereas the observations made by Ms Gomes therefore fall within the sphere of activities of the European Parliament;

1. Decides not to waive the immunity of Ana Gomes;

2. Instructs its President to forward this decision and the report of its committee responsible immediately to the appropriate authorities of the Portuguese Republic and to Ana Gomes.

III

(Preparatory acts)

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

P8_TA(2017)0422

Mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund: application EGF/2017/004 IT/Almaviva


(2018/C 356/20)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to the Commission proposal to the European Parliament and the Council (COM(2017)0496 — C8-0322/2017),


— having regard to Council Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1311/2013 of 2 December 2013 laying down the multiannual financial framework for the years 2014-2020 (2), and in particular Article 12 thereof,

— having regard to the Interinstitutional Agreement of 2 December 2013 between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on budgetary discipline, on cooperation in budgetary matters and on sound financial management (3) (IIA of 2 December 2013), and in particular point 13 thereof,

— having regard to the trilogue procedure provided for in point 13 of the IIA of 2 December 2013,

— having regard to the letter of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs,

— having regard to the letter of the Committee on Regional Development,

— having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgets (A8-0346/2017),

A. whereas the Union has set up legislative and budgetary instruments to provide additional support to workers who are suffering from the consequences of major structural changes in world trade patterns or of the global financial and economic crisis, and to assist their reintegration into the labour market:

B. whereas the Union’s financial assistance to workers made redundant should be dynamic and made available as quickly and efficiently as possible;

C. whereas Italy submitted application EGF/2017/004 IT/Almaviva for a financial contribution from the EGF under the intervention criteria set out in point (a) of Article 4(1) of the EGF Regulation following 1,646 redundancies in Almaviva Contact SpA operating in the economic sector classified under the NACE Revision 2 Division 82 (Office administrative, office support and other business support activities) in the NUTS level 2 region of Lazio in Italy (ITI4); whereas 1,610 redundant workers are expected to participate in the measures;

1. Agrees with the Commission that the conditions set out in point (a) of Article 4(1) of the EGF Regulation are met and that Italy is entitled to a financial contribution of EUR 3,347,370 under that Regulation, which represents 60% of the total cost of EUR 5,578,950;

2. Notes that the Italian authorities submitted the application on 9 May 2017, and that following additional information provided by Italy its assessment was finalised by the Commission on 26 September 2017 and notified to Parliament on the same day;

3. Recalls that the economic crisis has put significant pressure on the price of marketing services and of assistance to buyers of goods and services, leading to a decrease in the turnover and profitability of service providers; taking account of the fact that labour cost is by far the highest production cost in the call centre sector, notes that businesses have reacted to these adverse conditions by relocating, intervening on the cost of labour or closing down; regrets that between 2009 and the first quarter of 2014 a third of all Italian enterprises in the sector have ceased activity;

4. Acknowledges that the present redundancies are directly linked to a 45% revenue decline of Almaviva’s centre in Rome between 2011 and 2016; regrets that it was not possible to find agreement with the unified trade union representation (RSU) on a plan to align the labour cost in Almaviva-Rome with other Almaviva work centres in Italy, which would have effectively translated into a wage reduction, resulting in the closure of the Rome centre;

5. Notes that workers of the call centre sector should be more protected, which implies in particular avoiding moving staff from one centre to another, which is used as a particular strategy to force massive layoffs;

6. Recognises that the regional and local economy are only slowly recovering vitality after the great difficulties resulting from the economic and financial crisis and that mass redundancies risk stopping or interrupting this recovery; emphasises the crucial importance of active labour market measures, such as those co-financed by the EGF, in avoiding this;

7. Notes that 79% of the targeted beneficiaries are women and that the large majority of them are between 30 and 55 years old; regrets that it was not possible to find a viable solution to avoid their lay-off, particularly given the fact that women in this age group are already less likely to stay and advance in the labour market due to the difficulty of finding a work-life balance as a result of their responsibilities as informal carers, as well as a lack of equal opportunity in the workplace;

8. Emphasises that the training and other personalised services should take full account of the characteristics of this group of workers, in particular, the high proportion of women; welcomes the inclusion of an estimated EUR 680,000 for the reimbursement of expenses for carers of dependent persons;

9. Welcomes the fact that the Italian authorities started providing the personalised services to the targeted beneficiaries on 6 April 2017, ahead of the application for the EGF support for the proposed coordinated package;
10. Notes that Italy is planning eight types of measures for the redundant workers covered by this application: (i) individual orientation, (ii) job search assistance, (iii) training, retraining and vocational training, (iv) reemployment vouchers, (v) support towards entrepreneurship, (vi) contribution to business start-up, (vii) reimbursement of expenses for carers of dependent persons, and (viii) reimbursement of mobility costs; notes that the income support measures will be 17.4% of the overall package of personalised measures, well below the maximum 35% set out in the EGF Regulation, and that these actions are conditional on the active participation of the targeted beneficiaries in job-search or training activities;

11. Welcomes the establishment of a committee constituted by the Ministry of Economic Development (MiSE (1)), ANPAL (2), Regione Lazio and trade unions to define the strategy and interventions in support of former Almaviva workers as well as to draw up the co-ordinated package of personalised services;

12. Understands that the use of reemployment vouchers is new, having only been used in one previous case; stresses the importance of fully evaluating the effectiveness of such measures once sufficient time has passed for data to be available;

13. Stresses that the Italian authorities have confirmed that the eligible actions do not receive assistance from other Union financial instruments, but that they will be complemented by actions to be financed either by the ESF or with national funds only;

14. Recalls that the design of the coordinated package of personalised services supported by the EGF should anticipate future labour market perspectives and required skills, and should be compatible with the shift towards a resource-efficient and sustainable economy;

15. Commends the commitment of the Italian government to defining a new legal framework for telecommunications workers in order to avoid further cases such as that which is the subject of the EGF/2017/004 IT/Almaviva application;

16. Reiterates that assistance from the EGF must not replace actions which are the responsibility of companies, by virtue of national law or collective agreements, or measures for restructuring companies or sectors;

17. Calls on the Commission to urge national authorities to provide more details in future proposals on the sectors which have growth prospects and are therefore likely to hire people, as well as to gather substantiated data on the impact of the EGF funding, including on the quality of jobs and the reintegration rate achieved through the EGF;

18. Recalls its appeal to the Commission to assure public access to all the documents related to EGF cases;

19. Approves the decision annexed to this resolution;

20. Instructs its President to sign the decision with the President of the Council and arrange for its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union;

21. Instructs its President to forward this resolution, including its Annex, to the Council and the Commission.

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(1) Ministero dello Sviluppo Economico (MiSE)
(2) Agenzia Nazionale per le Politiche Attive del Lavoro (ANPAL)
ANNEX

DECISION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL

on the mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund following an application from Italy — EGF/2017/004 IT/Almaviva

(The text of this annex is not reproduced here since it corresponds to the final act, Decision (EU) 2017/2192.)
Territorial typologies


(Ordinary legislative procedure: first reading)

(2018/C 356/21)

The European Parliament,
— having regard to the Commission proposal to Parliament and the Council (COM(2016)0788),
— having regard to Article 294(2) and Article 338(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, pursuant to which the Commission submitted the proposal to Parliament (C8-0516/2016),
— having regard to Article 294(3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
— having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee of 29 March 2017 (1),
— having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions of 13 July 2017 (2),
— having regard to the provisional agreement approved by the committee responsible under Rule 69f(4) of its Rules of Procedure and the undertaking given by the Council representative by letter of 4 October 2017 to approve Parliament’s position, in accordance with Article 294(4) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
— having regard to Rule 59 of its Rules of Procedure,
— having regard to the report of the Committee on Regional Development (A8-0231/2017),
1. Adopts its position at first reading hereinafter set out;
2. Calls on the Commission to refer the matter to Parliament again if it replaces, substantially amends or intends to substantially amend its proposal;
3. Instructs its President to forward its position to the Council, the Commission and the national parliaments.


(As an agreement was reached between Parliament and Council, Parliament’s position corresponds to the final legislative act, Regulation (EU) 2017/2391.)

Recognition of professional qualifications in inland navigation ***I


(Ordinary legislative procedure: first reading)

(2018/C 356/22)

The European Parliament,
— having regard to the Commission proposal to Parliament and the Council (COM(2016)0082),
— having regard to Article 294(2) and Article 91(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, pursuant to which the Commission submitted the proposal to Parliament (C8-0061/2016),
— having regard to Article 294(3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
— having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee of 13 July 2016 (1),
— after consulting the Committee of Regions,
— having regard to the provisional agreement approved by the committee responsible under Rule 69f(4) of its Rules of Procedure and the undertaking given by the Council representative by letter of 30 June 2017 to approve Parliament's position, in accordance with Article 294(4) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
— having regard to Rule 59 of its Rules of Procedure,
— having regard to the report of the Committee on Transport and Tourism and the opinions of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and the Committee on Legal Affairs (A8-0338/2016),
1. Adopts its position at first reading hereinafter set out;
2. Calls on the Commission to refer the matter to Parliament again if it replaces, substantially amends or intends to substantially amend its proposal;
3. Instructs its President to forward its position to the Council, the Commission and the national parliaments.

Cooperation between national authorities responsible for the enforcement of consumer protection laws ***I


(Ordinary legislative procedure: first reading)

(2018/C 356/23)

The European Parliament,
— having regard to the Commission proposal to Parliament and the Council (COM(2016)0283),
— having regard to Article 294(2) and Article 114 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, pursuant to which the Commission submitted the proposal to Parliament (C8-0194/2016),
— having regard to Article 294(3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
— having regard to the reasoned opinions submitted, within the framework of Protocol No 2 on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, by the Bulgarian Parliament, the Czech Chamber of Deputies, the Austrian Federal Council and the Swedish Parliament, asserting that the draft legislative act does not comply with the principle of subsidiarity,
— having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee of 19 October 2016 (1),
— having regard to the provisional agreement approved by the committee responsible under Rule 69f(4) of its Rules of Procedure and the undertaking given by the Council representative by letter of 30 June 2017 to approve Parliament’s position, in accordance with Article 294(4) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
— having regard to Rule 59 of its Rules of Procedure,
— having regard to the report of the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection and the opinion of the Committee on Legal Affairs (A8-0077/2017),

1. Adopts its position at first reading hereinafter set out;
2. Calls on the Commission to refer the matter to Parliament again if it replaces, substantially amends or intends to substantially amend its proposal;
3. Instructs its President to forward its position to the Council, the Commission and the national parliaments.

P8_TC1-COD(2016)0148


(As an agreement was reached between Parliament and Council, Parliament’s position corresponds to the final legislative act, Regulation (EU) 2017/2394.)

(1) OJ C 34, 2.2.2017, p. 100.
Period for adopting delegated acts


(Ordinary legislative procedure: first reading)

(2018/C 356/24)

The European Parliament,
— having regard to the Commission proposal to Parliament and the Council (COM(2017)0136),
— having regard to Article 294(2) and Article 91 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, pursuant to which the Commission submitted the proposal to Parliament (C8-0116/2017),
— having regard to Article 294(3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
— having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee of 5 July 2017 (1),
— after consulting the Committee of the Regions,
— having regard to the undertaking given by the Council representative by letter of 27 October 2017 to approve Parliament’s position, in accordance with Article 294(4) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
— having regard to Rule 59 of its Rules of Procedure,
— having regard to the report of the Committee on Transport and Tourism (A8-0332/2017),
1. Adopts its position at first reading hereinafter set out;
2. Calls on the Commission to refer the matter to Parliament again if it replaces, substantially amends or intends to substantially amend its proposal;
3. Instructs its President to forward its position to the Council, the Commission and the national parliaments.


(As an agreement was reached between Parliament and Council, Parliament’s position corresponds to the final legislative act, Decision (EU) 2017/2380.)

Nomination of a member of the Court of Auditors — Karel Pinxten

European Parliament decision of 15 November 2017 on the nomination of Karel Pinxten as a Member of the Court of Auditors (C8-0328/2017 — 2017/0812(NLE))

(Consultation)


The European Parliament,

— having regard to Article 286(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, pursuant to which the Council consulted Parliament (C8-0328/2017),

— having regard to Rule 121 of its Rules of Procedure,

— having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgetary Control (A8-0336/2017),

A. whereas Parliament's Committee on Budgetary Control proceeded to evaluate the credentials of the nominee, in particular in view of the requirements laid down in Article 286(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union;

B. whereas at its meeting of 19 October 2017 the Committee on Budgetary Control heard the Council's nominee for membership of the Court of Auditors;

1. Delivers a negative opinion on the Council's nomination of Karel Pinxten as a Member of the Court of Auditors;

2. Instructs its President to forward this decision to the Council and, for information, the Court of Auditors, the other institutions of the European Union and the audit institutions of the Member States.
The European Parliament,

— having regard to Article 286(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, pursuant to which the Council consulted Parliament (C8-0329/2017),
— having regard to Rule 121 of its Rules of Procedure,
— having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgetary Control (A8-0337/2017),

A. whereas Parliament’s Committee on Budgetary Control proceeded to evaluate the credentials of the nominee, in particular in view of the requirements laid down in Article 286(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union;

B. whereas at its meeting of 19 October 2017 the Committee on Budgetary Control heard the Council’s nominee for membership of the Court of Auditors;

1. Delivers a favourable opinion on the Council’s nomination of Pietro Russo as a Member of the Court of Auditors;

2. Instructs its President to forward this decision to the Council and, for information, the Court of Auditors, the other institutions of the European Union and the audit institutions of the Member States.
Nomination of a member of the Court of Auditors — Hannu Takkula

European Parliament decision of 15 November 2017 on the nomination of Hannu Takkula as a Member of the Court of Auditors (C8-0330/2017 — 2017/0814(NLE))

(Consultation)

(2018/C 356/27)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to Article 286(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, pursuant to which the Council consulted Parliament (C8-0330/2017),
— having regard to Rule 121 of its Rules of Procedure,
— having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgetary Control (A8-0338/2017),
A. whereas Parliament’s Committee on Budgetary Control proceeded to evaluate the credentials of the nominee, in particular in view of the requirements laid down in Article 286(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union;
B. whereas at its meeting of 19 October 2017 the Committee on Budgetary Control heard the Council’s nominee for membership of the Court of Auditors;
1. Delivers a favourable opinion on the Council’s nomination of Hannu Takkula as a Member of the Court of Auditors;
2. Instructs its President to forward this decision to the Council and, for information, the Court of Auditors, the other institutions of the European Union and the audit institutions of the Member States.
Nomination of a member of the Court of Auditors — Baudilio Tomé Muguruza

European Parliament decision of 15 November 2017 on the nomination of Baudilio Tomé Muguruza as a Member of the Court of Auditors (C8-0331/2017 — 2017/0815(NLE))

(Consultation)

(2018/C 356/28)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to Article 286(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, pursuant to which the Council consulted Parliament (C8-0331/2017),
— having regard to Rule 121 of its Rules of Procedure,
— having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgetary Control (A8-0342/2017),

A. whereas Parliament's Committee on Budgetary Control proceeded to evaluate the credentials of the nominee, in particular in view of the requirements laid down in Article 286(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union;

B. whereas at its meeting of 26 October 2017 the Committee on Budgetary Control heard the Council's nominee for membership of the Court of Auditors;

1. Delivers a favourable opinion on the Council's nomination of Baudilio Tomé Muguruza as a Member of the Court of Auditors;

2. Instructs its President to forward this decision to the Council and, for information, the Court of Auditors, the other institutions of the European Union and the audit institutions of the Member States.
Nomination of a member of the Court of Auditors — Bettina Jakobsen

European Parliament decision of 15 November 2017 on the nomination of Bettina Jakobsen as a Member of the Court of Auditors (C8-0332/2017 — 2017/0816(NLE))

(Consultation)

(2018/C 356/29)

The European Parliament,
— having regard to Article 286(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, pursuant to which the Council consulted Parliament (C8-0332/2017),
— having regard to Rule 121 of its Rules of Procedure,
— having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgetary Control (A8-0341/2017),
A. whereas Parliament’s Committee on Budgetary Control proceeded to evaluate the credentials of the nominee, in particular in view of the requirements laid down in Article 286(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union;
B. whereas at its meeting of 26 October 2017 the Committee on Budgetary Control heard the Council’s nominee for membership of the Court of Auditors;
1. Delivers a favourable opinion on the Council’s nomination of Bettina Jakobsen as a Member of the Court of Auditors;
2. Instructs its President to forward this decision to the Council and, for information, the Court of Auditors, the other institutions of the European Union and the audit institutions of the Member States.
Nomination of a member of the Court of Auditors — João Alexandre Tavares Gonçalves de Figueiredo

European Parliament decision of 15 November 2017 on the nomination of João Alexandre Tavares Gonçalves de Figueiredo as a Member of the Court of Auditors (C8-0333/2017 — 2017/0817(NLE))

(Consultation)

(2018/C 356/30)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to Article 286(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, pursuant to which the Council consulted Parliament (C8-0333/2017),

— having regard to Rule 121 of its Rules of Procedure,

— having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgetary Control (A8-0343/2017),

A. whereas Parliament's Committee on Budgetary Control proceeded to evaluate the credentials of the nominee, in particular in view of the requirements laid down in Article 286(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union;

B. whereas at its meeting of 26 October 2017 the Committee on Budgetary Control heard the Council's nominee for membership of the Court of Auditors:

1. Delivers a favourable opinion on the Council's nomination of João Alexandre Tavares Gonçalves de Figueiredo as a Member of the Court of Auditors;

2. Instructs its President to forward this decision to the Council and, for information, the Court of Auditors, the other institutions of the European Union and the audit institutions of the Member States.
Nomination of a member of the Court of Auditors — Iliana Ivanova

European Parliament decision of 15 November 2017 on the nomination of Iliana Ivanova as a Member of the Court of Auditors (C8-0334/2017 — 2017/0818(NLE))

(Consultation)

(2018/C 356/31)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to Article 286(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, pursuant to which the Council consulted Parliament (C8-0334/2017),
— having regard to Rule 121 of its Rules of Procedure,
— having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgetary Control (A8-0344/2017),

A. whereas Parliament’s Committee on Budgetary Control proceeded to evaluate the credentials of the nominee, in particular in view of the requirements laid down in Article 286(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union;

B. whereas at its meeting of 26 October 2017 the Committee on Budgetary Control heard the Council’s nominee for membership of the Court of Auditors;

1. Delivers a favourable opinion on the Council’s nomination of Iliana Ivanova as a Member of the Court of Auditors;

2. Instructs its President to forward this decision to the Council and, for information, the Court of Auditors, the other institutions of the European Union and the audit institutions of the Member States.
Protection against dumped and subsidised imports from countries not members of the EU


(Ordinary legislative procedure: first reading)

(2018/C 356/32)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to the Commission proposal to Parliament and the Council (COM(2016)0721),

— having regard to Article 294(2) and Article 207(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, pursuant to which the Commission submitted the proposal to Parliament (C8-0456/2016),

— having regard to Article 294(3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

— having regard to the resolution of the European Parliament of 12 May 2016 on China’s market economy status (1),

— having regard to the provisional agreement approved by the committee responsible under Rule 69f(4) of its Rules of Procedure and the undertaking given by the Council representative by letter of 11 October 2017 to approve Parliament's position, in accordance with Article 294(4) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

— having regard to Rule 59 of its Rules of Procedure,

— having regard to the report of the Committee on International Trade and the opinion of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (A8-0236/2017),

1. Adopts its position at first reading hereinafter set out;

2. Takes note of the statements by the Commission annexed to this resolution;

3. Calls on the Commission to refer the matter to Parliament again if it replaces, substantially amends or intends to substantially amend its proposal;

4. Instructs its President to forward its position to the Council, the Commission and the national parliaments.

P8_TC1-COD(2016)0351


(As an agreement was reached between Parliament and Council, Parliament’s position corresponds to the final legislative act, Regulation (EU) 2017/2321.)

ANNEX TO THE LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION

Commission declaration on transition

The Commission recalls that the purpose of the new methodology is to maintain the continued protection of the Union industry against unfair trade practices, in particular those arising from significant market distortions. In that respect, the Commission will ensure that the Union industry incurs no additional burden when seeking protection under the anti-dumping instrument, in particular in the context of potential expiry reviews requests lodged after the entry into force of the new methodology.

Commission declaration on Article 23 and interaction with European Parliament and Council

The Commission shall inform the European Parliament and the Council whenever it intends to produce or update a report pursuant to Article 2(6a)(c) of the Basic Regulation. Where the European Parliament or the Council inform the Commission that they consider that the conditions for producing or updating a report pursuant to Article 2(6a)(c) of the Basic Regulation are met, the Commission will take the appropriate action and inform the European Parliament and the Council accordingly.

Commission declaration concerning the reports pursuant to Article 2(6a)c of the Basic Regulation

The Commission will swiftly make use of the possibility foreseen under Article 2(6a)c of the Basic Regulation to produce reports on significant distortions, so that interested parties have those reports at their disposal when preparing submissions to which Article 2(6a) of the Basic Regulation may apply. It will provide guidance to interested parties on the use of those reports.
The European Parliament,

— having regard to the draft Council decision (15470/2016),
— having regard to the draft Partnership Agreement on relations and cooperation between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and New Zealand, of the other part (09787/2016),
— having regard to the request for consent submitted by the Council in accordance with Article 37 of the Treaty on European Union and Article 207, Article 212(1), Article 218(6), second subparagraph, point (a), and Article 218(8), second subparagraph, of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (C8-0027/2017),
— having regard to its non-legislative resolution of 16 November 2017 on the draft decision (1),
— having regard to Rule 99(1) and (4) and Rule 108(7) of its Rules of Procedure,
— having regard to the recommendation of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (A8-0327/2017),

1. Gives its consent to conclusion of the agreement;

2. Instructs its President to forward its position to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States and of New Zealand.

Mobilisation of the Contingency Margin in 2017


(2018/C 356/34)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to the Commission proposal to the European Parliament and the Council (COM(2017)0900 — C8-0408/2017),

— having regard to Council Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1311/2013 of 2 December 2013 laying down the multiannual financial framework for the years 2014-2020 (1), and in particular Article 13 thereof,

— having regard to the Interinstitutional Agreement of 2 December 2013 between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on budgetary discipline, on cooperation in budgetary matters and on sound financial management (2), and in particular point 14 thereof,

— having regard to the joint text approved by the Conciliation Committee on 18 November 2017 (A8-0359/2017) in the context of the conciliation on the 2018 draft general budget,


— having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgets (A8-0372/2017),

A. whereas the European Parliament and the Council mobilised the Contingency Margin in 2017 in the amount of EUR 1,906.1 million above the commitment ceilings of Heading 3 (Security and Citizenship) and heading 4 (Global Europe);

B. whereas, within this amount, the European Parliament and the Council decided to offset EUR 575.0 million against the unallocated margin under Heading 2 (Sustainable Growth: Natural Resources) in 2017 as well as EUR 507.3 million, EUR 570.0 million and EUR 253.9 million against the unallocated margins under Heading 5 (Administration) in 2017, 2018 and 2019 respectively;

C. whereas the Conciliation Committee convened for the adoption of the 2018 budget subsequently agreed to adjust the abovementioned offsetting of the Contingency Margin in order to decrease by EUR 252.0 million the amount offset in Heading 5 in 2018 and introduce a corresponding offset in Heading 5 in 2020;

1. Takes note of the Commission’s proposal, as part of the agreement on the 2018 budget, to revise the offsetting of the contingency margin mobilised in 2017 in order to increase the overall commitments margin available in 2018; regrets the excessive focus of some Member States on the available margins below the MFF ceilings, often disregarding the flexibilities offered by the special instruments;

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2. Underlines that, even without a revised offsetting, the overall commitments margin in the agreed 2018 budget would already stand at EUR 1 348,3 million whereas more than EUR 900 million are still available under the Flexibility Instrument and the Global Margin for Commitments (GMC); points out that a further EUR 1,2 billion should become available under the GMC and the Flexibility Instrument in the course of 2018;

3. Takes note that such a revision of the offsetting, while not essential, releases EUR 252 million of additional margin in 2018 instead of 2020, thereby providing additional flexibility at an earlier stage under this MFF;

4. Regrets that the European Parliament and the Council have to resort to splitting the concerned offsetting under Heading 5 between 2018 and 2020 in order to provide the EU budget with the flexibility needed in 2018; expresses concern over the consequent reduction in the margin of Heading 5 that this manoeuvre will bring in 2020; points out that the adoption of such an off-limit approach is a clear signal that the EU budget is not being furnished with the indispensable resources for carrying out the policies and programmes of the Union;

5. Approves the decision annexed to this resolution;

6. Instructs its President to sign the decision with the President of the Council and arrange for its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union;

7. Instructs its President to forward this resolution, including its annex, to the Council and the Commission.
ANNEX

DECISION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL


(The text of this annex is not reproduced here since it corresponds to the final act, Decision (EU) 2018/9.)
Draft amending Budget No 6/2017: Reduction of payment and commitment appropriations in line with updated forecasts of expenditure and update of revenue (own resources and fines)


(2018/C 356/35)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to Article 314 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

— having regard to Article 106a of the Treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community,


— having regard to the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2017, as definitively adopted on 1 December 2016 (2),


— having regard to the Interinstitutional Agreement of 2 December 2013 between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on budgetary discipline, on cooperation in budgetary matters and on sound financial management (4),

— having regard to Draft amending budget No 6/2017, which the Commission adopted on 9 October 2017 (COM(2017)0597),

— having regard to the position on Draft amending budget No 6/2017 which the Council adopted on 27 November 2017 and forwarded to Parliament on the same day (14275/2017 — C8-0417/2017),

— having regard to Rules 88 and 91 of its Rules of Procedure,

— having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgets (A8-0379/2017),

A. whereas Draft amending budget No 6/2017 aims to update both the expenditure and the revenue sides of the budget to take account of the latest developments;

B. whereas, on the expenditure side, Draft amending budget No 6/2017 decreases the level of payment appropriations by EUR 7 719.7 million, mostly in budget lines under heading 1b (Economic, social and territorial cohesion) and, to a lesser extent, under headings 2 (Sustainable growth — natural resources), 3 (Security and Citizenship) and 4 (Global Europe) and in the European Union Solidarity Fund (EUSF), and therefore reduces national contributions accordingly;

C. whereas Draft amending budget No 6/2017 decreases the level of commitment appropriations by EUR 15,33 million under heading 2 and releases EUR 46 million of commitment appropriations in the EUSF;

D. whereas, on the revenue side, Draft amending budget No 6/2017 also includes adjustments linked to the revision of the forecasts of Traditional Own Resources (i.e. customs duties and sugar sector levies), value-added tax (VAT) and gross national income (GNI) bases, and the budgeting of the 2013 and 2016 UK corrections and their financing;

E. whereas Draft amending budget No 6/2017 takes account of a total amount of EUR 3 209,7 million in fines which has become definitive and exceeds the level initially planned for the 2017 budget, and assigns the difference between the latter and the former (amounting up to EUR 2 209,7 million) to the reduction of own resources contributions from Member States to the Union budget;

F. whereas Draft amending budget No 6/2017 results in a reflow to national budgets of EUR 9 829,6 million additional to the reflow of EUR 6 405 million already confirmed in light of Amending budget 2/2017;

1. Expresses serious concerns over the payment surplus of EUR 7 719,7 million; is particularly astonished by the situation of European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds in sub-heading 1b, where Member States, in their July submission, revised downwards their forecasts for payment claims by EUR 5,9 billion due to continued delays in the implementation of the programmes, thereby preventing many potential projects and beneficiaries from Union support; also deplores that the Member States failed to launch their national programmes for the Asylum and Integration Fund (AMIF) and the Internal Security Fund (ISF) at the expected pace and to properly implement the schemes for the relocation of refugees, resulting in a EUR 287,6 million cut in heading 3;

2. Takes note of the Commission’s analysis of the causes of under-implementation in sub-heading 1b, such as the focus on absorbing the 2007-2013 envelopes, the late adoption of the legal bases, the lengthy designation of national authorities, the changes brought in by the new legal framework, and the reduced incentives due to the N+3 de-commitment rule; is worried by the fact that, according to the Commission’s latest payments forecasts, under-implementation is to continue in the years to come and will result in an additional EUR 31 billion in payments spilling over into the next multiannual financial framework (MFF); takes note of the fact that not all Member States have the same difficulties in implementation; urges in particular those Member States with a very high level of under-implementation to take the necessary measures to properly implement the jointly agreed Union programmes, with the assistance of the Commission;

3. Regrets the delays in the disbursement of Union funds in pre-accession and neighbouring countries, which result in a significant reduction in payments (EUR - 702,2 million) at a time when they would be most needed; acknowledges the unpredictable environment in which the Union is sometimes called upon to operate; invites the Commission to take the necessary measures, including via increased policy dialogue and technical assistance, in order to prevent such delays;

4. By contrast, notes with satisfaction that Union programmes under sub-heading 1a (Competitiveness for growth and jobs) are generally well implemented, as witnessed by this Draft amending budget and the recent adoption of the Global Transfer where sub-heading 1a absorbs a significant part of the under-execution in payments in other headings; stresses that this proves the Council wrong in its constant approach to reduce this sub-heading’s appropriations on the grounds of an alleged lack of absorption capacity;

5. Deplores again that amounts recovered from the under-implementation of Union programmes and from fines under the Union’s competition policy are destined to reduce Member States’ GNI contributions instead of being used for the funding of Union priorities; highlights that Draft amending budget No 6/2017 generates a reflow of GNI contributions of EUR 9 829,6 million to Member States on top of the reflow of EUR 6 405 million already approved in Amending budget 2/2017; draws attention to the fact that the disagreement between the two arms of the budgetary authority as regards
spending of the 2018 Union budget, after Parliament’s reading and at the beginning of the conciliation period, amounted to merely EUR 3 619.8 million in commitment appropriations and EUR 2 182.4 million in payment appropriations;

6. Approves the Council position on Draft amending budget No 6/2017;

7. Instructs its President to declare that Amending budget No 6/2017 has been definitively adopted and arrange for its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union;

8. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Court of Auditors and the national parliaments.
Mobilisation of the European Union Solidarity Fund to provide for the payment of advances in the general budget 2018


The European Parliament,

— having regard to the Commission proposal to the European Parliament and the Council (COM(2017)0270 — C8-0161/2017),


— having regard to Council Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1311/2013 of 2 December 2013 laying down the multiannual financial framework for the years 2014-2020 (2), and in particular Article 10 thereof,

— having regard to the Interinstitutional Agreement of 2 December 2013 between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on budgetary discipline, on cooperation in budgetary matters and on sound financial management (3), and in particular point 11 thereof,

— having regard to the results of the trilogue of 17 November 2017,

— having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgets (A8-0371/2017),

A. whereas, in line with Regulation (EU) No 661/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council (4), an amount of EUR 50 000 000 is made available for the payment of advances through appropriations in the general budget of the Union:

1. Approves the decision annexed to this resolution;

2. Instructs its President to sign the decision with the President of the Council and arrange for its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union;

3. Instructs its President to forward this resolution, including its annex, to the Council and the Commission.


ANNEX

DECISION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL

on the mobilisation of the European Union Solidarity Fund to provide for the payment of advances in the general budget of the Union for 2018

(The text of this annex is not reproduced here since it corresponds to the final act, Decision (EU) 2018/508.)
Mobilisation of the Flexibility Instrument to finance immediate budgetary measures to address the on-going challenges of migration, refugee inflows and security threats


(2018/C 356/37)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to the Commission proposal to the European Parliament and the Council (COM(2017)0271 — C8-0163/2017),

— having regard to Council Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1311/2013 of 2 December 2013 laying down the multiannual financial framework for the years 2014-2020 (1)(MFF Regulation), and in particular Article 11 thereof,

— having regard to the Interinstitutional Agreement of 2 December 2013 between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on budgetary discipline, on cooperation in budgetary matters and on sound financial management (2), and in particular point 12 thereof,

— having regard to the draft general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2018, which the Commission adopted on 29 June 2017 (COM(2017)0400), as amended by Letter of amendment No 1/2018 (COM(2017)0615),

— having regard to the position on the draft general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2018, which the Council adopted on 4 September 2017 and forwarded to Parliament on 13 September 2017 (11815/2017 — C8-0313/2017),

— having regard to its position of 25 October 2017 on the 2018 draft general budget (3),

— having regard to the joint text approved by the Conciliation Committee on 18 November 2017 (14587/17 — C8-0416/2017),

— having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgets (A8-0370/2017),

A. whereas after having examined all possibilities for re-allocating commitment appropriations under heading 3 (Security and Citizenship), it appears necessary to mobilise the Flexibility Instrument for commitment appropriations;

B. whereas the Commission had proposed to mobilise the Flexibility Instrument to supplement the financing in the general budget of the Union for the financial year 2018 beyond the ceiling of heading 3 by the amount of EUR 817,1 million to finance measures in the field of migration, refugee inflows and security threats;

C. whereas the Conciliation Committee convened for the 2018 budget agreed on a further mobilisation of EUR 20,2 million as a result of reinforcements in heading 3;

(3) Texts adopted, P8_TA(2017)0408
1. Notes that the 2018 ceilings for heading 3 do not allow for an adequate financing of urgent measures in the field of migration, refugee inflows and security threats;

2. Agrees therefore with the mobilisation of the Flexibility Instrument for an amount of EUR 837.2 million in commitment appropriations;

3. Agrees furthermore to the proposed allocation of the corresponding payment appropriations of EUR 464 million in 2018, EUR 212.7 million in 2019, EUR 126.4 million in 2020 and EUR 34.2 million in 2021;

4. Reiterates that the mobilisation of this instrument, as provided for in Article 11 of the MFF Regulation, shows, once more, the crucial need for the Union budget to be more flexible;

5. Reiterates its long-standing view that the payments stemming from commitments previously mobilised through the Flexibility Instrument can only be counted over and above the MFF ceilings;

6. Approves the decision annexed to this resolution;

7. Instructs its President to sign the decision with the President of the Council and arrange for its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union;

8. Instructs its President to forward this resolution, including its annex, to the Council and the Commission.
ANNEX

DECISION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL
on the mobilisation of the Flexibility Instrument to finance immediate budgetary measures to address the ongoing challenges of migration, refugee inflows and security threats

(The text of this annex is not reproduced here since it corresponds to the final act, Decision (EU) 2018/8.)
Mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund: application EGF/2017/003 GR/Attica retail


(2018/C 356/38)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to the Commission proposal to the European Parliament and the Council (COM(2017)0613 — C8-0360/2017),


— having regard to Council Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1311/2013 of 2 December 2013 laying down the multiannual financial framework for the years 2014-2020 (2), and in particular Article 12 thereof,

— having regard to the Interinstitutional Agreement of 2 December 2013 between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on budgetary discipline, on cooperation in budgetary matters and on sound financial management (3) (IIA of 2 December 2013), and in particular point 13 thereof,

— having regard to Special Report No 7/2013 of the Court of Auditors, according to which the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) delivers genuine EU added value when it is used to cofinance services for redundant workers or allowances not ordinarily existing under Member States' unemployment benefit systems,

— having regard to the trilogue procedure provided for in point 13 of the IIA of 2 December 2013,

— having regard to its resolutions adopted since January 2007 on the mobilisation of the EGF, including the comments of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs on the respective applications,

— having regard to the letter of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs,

— having regard to the letter of the Committee on Regional Development,

— having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgets (A8-0367/2017),

A. whereas the Union has set up legislative and budgetary instruments to provide additional support to workers who are suffering from the consequences of major structural changes in world trade patterns or of the global financial and economic crisis and to assist their reintegration into the labour market;

B. whereas Greece submitted application EGF/2017/003 GR/Attica retail for a financial contribution from the EGF following 725 redundancies in nine enterprises operating in the retail-trade sector in the region of Attica and 10 other regions (1);

C. whereas the application is based on the intervention criteria laid down in Article 4(2) of the EGF Regulation;

D. whereas, in order to establish the link between the redundancies and the global financial and economic crisis, Greece argues that its economy was in serious recession for six consecutive years (2008-2013); whereas, between 2008 and 2016, Greek GDP and public consumption fell by 26.2% and 22.8%, respectively, and there are 700,000 more people unemployed in the country; whereas since 2008, Greek Governments have, to deal with foreign debt repayments, significantly raised tax rates, streamlined public expenditure and reduced public-sector pay, in particular pensions, while private-sector pay has also decreased as a result of the combination of policies applied; whereas the fall in incomes has been reflected in a fall in consumption that has hit the retail sector hard;

1. Agrees with the Commission that the conditions set out in Article 4(2) of the EGF Regulation are met and that Greece is entitled to a financial contribution of EUR 2,949,150 under that Regulation, which represents 60% of the total cost of EUR 4,915,250;

2. Notes that the Commission respected the deadline of 12 weeks calculated from receipt of the completed application from the Greek authorities until finalisation of its assessment on the compliance with the conditions for providing a financial contribution on 23 October 2017, and notified that assessment to Parliament on the same day;

3. Notes that the nine enterprises concerned own shops and supermarkets that sell consumer goods; deplores the significant fall in retail sales between 2008 and 2015, which ranged from 60% for household appliance retailers to 30% for food retailers and 23% for supermarkets;

4. Acknowledges that the redundancies in question are directly linked to the decline in the retail sector since 2008; notes that 164,000 jobs were lost between 2008 and 2015 in the retail trade, manufacturing and construction sectors, which account for 64.2% of total job losses;

5. Points out that the economic crisis has put significant downward pressure on Greek households’ purchasing power since 2008; notes that the drastic reduction in lending to businesses and individuals has had an impact on retailers; deplores the fact that the combined impact of those two factors has led to a drop in the overall turnover index in the retail trade sector, decreasing by more than 63% between 2008 and 2016; points out that the austerity measures applied since 2008, in particular pay cuts, renegotiation of leases and deferring due dates for bills, have caused the situation to deteriorate; points out that this case demonstrates that the measures applied could not tackle the economic crisis effectively and in the long term;

6. Emphasises, with concern, that the Attica region, where over 70% of the redundancies are concentrated, has an unemployment rate of 22.9% while in the other 10 regions it ranges from 19.5% in the Aegean region to 26.8% in the Epirus and Western Macedonia regions; is concerned by the fact that such lay-offs may compound still further the unemployment situation that the regions in question have been facing since the onset of the economic and financial crisis; notes in particular that 31.8% of the population of Attica is at risk of poverty or social exclusion;

7. Notes that Greece is planning five types of measures: (i) occupational guidance, (ii) training, retraining and vocational training, (iii) help with business start-ups, (iv) job search allowances and training allowances, and (v) job creation subsidies;

(1) Eastern Macedonia, Thrace (EL11), Central Macedonia (EL12), Western Macedonia (EL13), Thessaly (EL14), Epirus (EL21), Western Greece (EL23), Central Greece (EL24), Peloponnese (EL25), Southern Aegean (EL42), Crete (EL43).
8. Notes that 85.2% of the targeted beneficiaries are over 55 years of age, and that 24.8% are over 64; stresses how regrettable it is that no viable solution could be found to prevent them from being made redundant, particularly given that age is an aggravating factor when looking for a job; welcomes Greece's decision to offer vocational training courses to workers which correspond to their needs, especially those of the elderly beneficiaries, and to current labour market requirements;

9. Notes and welcomes the fact that the co-ordinated package of personalised services has been drawn up in consultation with the General Secretary and representatives of the Institute of Labour of the Greek General Confederation of Labour (GSEE); points out that strong social dialogue based on mutual trust and shared responsibility is the best tool with which to seek consensual solutions and common outlooks when predicting, preventing and managing restructuring processes; stresses that that could help prevent job losses and, therefore, EGF cases;

10. Notes that the income support measures will constitute 34.72% of the overall package of personalised measures, just below the maximum 35% set out in the EGF Regulation and a much higher percentage than those proposed for other recent cases; recalls that these actions are conditional on the active participation of the targeted beneficiaries in job-search or training activities;

11. Points out that the Greek authorities have confirmed that the eligible actions are not receiving assistance from other EU financial instruments;

12. Points out that the coordinated package of personalised services benefiting from the EGF should be geared, in terms of its design, to initiatives conducive to employment, to upskilling of workers and to making the most of their employment history so as to reach out to the business community, including cooperatives, and should be coordinated with existing Union programmes, including the European Social Fund; is convinced that a coherent strategy would reduce the risk of relocation and create an environment conducive for industrial production to return to the Union; stresses that a serious policy of preventing and pre-empting restruc turings ought to be given priority over any use of the EGF; stresses also the importance of a genuine industrial policy at Union level to bring sustainable and inclusive growth;

13. Recalls that it already expressed concern about the disparity between resources requested from the EGF and amounts reimbursed by Member States in its resolution of 15 September 2016 on the activities, impact and added value of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund between 2007 and 2014 (1); invites the Commission to continue encouraging Member States to make more realistic forecasts of likely costs so as to minimise the need to subsequently recover funds;

14. Recalls that in line with Article 7 of the EGF Regulation, the design of the coordinated package of personalised services should anticipate future labour market perspectives and required skills and should be compatible with the shift towards a resource-efficient and sustainable economy;

15. Reiterates that EGF assistance must not replace actions which are the responsibility of enterprises, under national law or collective agreements, or of measures for restructuring enterprises or sectors;

16. Reiterates its call on the Commission to ensure access by the public to all documents relating to EGF applications;

17. Approves the decision annexed to this resolution;

18. Instructs its President to sign the decision with the President of the Council and arrange for its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union;

19. Instructs its President to forward this resolution, including its Annex, to the Council and the Commission

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ANNEX

DECISION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL

on the mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund following an application from Greece — EGF/2017/003 GR/Attica retail

(The text of this annex is not reproduced here since it corresponds to the final act, Decision (EU) 2018/6.)
Mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund: application EGF/2017/005 FI/Retail


(2018/C 356/39)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to the Commission proposal to the European Parliament and the Council (COM(2017)0618 — C8-0364/2017),


— having regard to Council Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1311/2013 of 2 December 2013 laying down the multiannual financial framework for the years 2014-2020 (2), and in particular Article 12 thereof,

— having regard to the Interinstitutional Agreement of 2 December 2013 between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on budgetary discipline, on cooperation in budgetary matters and on sound financial management (3) (IIA of 2 December 2013), and in particular point 13 thereof,

— having regard to the trilogue procedure provided for in point 13 of the IIA of 2 December 2013,

— having regard to the letter of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs,

— having regard to the letter of the Committee on Regional Development,

— having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgets (A8-0366/2017),

A. whereas the Union has set up legislative and budgetary instruments to provide additional support to workers who are suffering from the consequences of major structural changes in world trade patterns or of the global financial and economic crisis, and to assist their reintegration into the labour market;

B. whereas the Union’s financial assistance to workers made redundant should be dynamic and made available as quickly and efficiently as possible;

C. whereas Finland submitted application EGF/2017/005 FI/Retail for a financial contribution from the EGF under the intervention criteria set out in point (b) of Article 4(1) of the EGF Regulation following 1 660 redundancies in three enterprises operating in the economic sector classified under the NACE Revision 2 Division 47 (Retail trade, except motor vehicles and motorcycles) in the NUTS level 2 regions of Länsi Suomi, Helsinki-Uusimaa, Etelä-Suomi and Pohjois- ja Itä-Suomi in Finland; whereas 1 500 redundant workers are expected to participate in the measures;

D. whereas the financial control of the actions supported by the EGF is the responsibility of the Member State concerned, as laid down in Article 21(1) of the EGF Regulation;

1. Agrees with the Commission that the conditions set out in point (b) of Article 4(1) of the EGF Regulation are met and that Finland is entitled to a financial contribution of EUR 2 499 360 under that Regulation, which represents 60 % of the total cost of EUR 4 165 600;

2. Notes that the Commission respected the deadline of 12 weeks from the receipt of the completed application from the Finnish authorities until the finalisation of its assessment on the compliance with the conditions for providing a financial contribution on 23 October 2017 and notified its assessment to Parliament on the same day;

3. Notes that Finland argues that the redundancies are linked to major structural changes in world trade patterns due to globalisation, more particularly to the exponential growth of international online trading; notes, in particular, that the increase in online sales of retail products in Finland, combined with the popularity of non-EU web-shops with Finnish consumers, has led to a steady decrease in the sales of conventional Finnish department stores since 2014;

4. Notes that all four NUTS-2 regions of Finland are affected by the dismissals that occurred at two major Finnish department store chains; recognises that such stores have faced declining cash-flow and profitability arising from the growth of e-commerce, changing shopping habits and weak consumer confidence;

5. Recalls that the dismissals occurred at two major Finnish department store chains and one subsidiary, which since 2015 have all experienced serious issues of declining profitability and deteriorating cash-flow due to the rise of e-commerce, changing shopping habits and weak consumer confidence; regrets that in early 2017 two of the companies concerned had to close down completely;

6. Is aware that, at the same time, a major change in the nature of retail jobs has occurred, with part-time jobs requiring new skills, such as IT, forecasting, data analysis, communication, customer knowledge and logistical skills, on the rise; regrets that 43% of Finnish retail staff, who are over 45 years old, lack such skills; considers that impediments to re-employment for those over 50 years old represent an important issue and awaits with interest an evaluation of the career coaching pilots that have been included for this group of redundant workers;

7. Underlines that a large number of the redundant workers are over the age of 55 and over 76% are women; in view of this, acknowledges the importance of active labour market measures co-funded by the EGF for improving the chances of reintegration in the labour market of these vulnerable groups; welcomes that particular importance has been paid to tailoring the proposed measures to the specific needs of the target groups;

8. Notes that Finland is planning seven types of measures for the redundant workers covered by this application: (i) coaching measures and other preparatory measures, (ii) employment and other business measures, (iii) training courses, (iv) start-up grants, (v) career coaching pilots, (vi) pay subsidies, (vii) allowances for travel and accommodation; welcomes the planned career coaching pilots looking at physical, mental, or other issues that may act as an impediment to re-employment for beneficiaries over 50 years old; notes that sufficient funds are allocated to control and reporting;

9. Notes that the income supports measures will constitute 22.05% of the overall package of personalised measures, well below the maximum 35% set out in the EGF Regulation and that those actions are conditional on the active participation of the targeted beneficiaries in job-search or training activities;

10. Acknowledges that the coordinated package of personalised services has been drawn up in consultation with representatives of the Centres for Economic Development, Transport and Environment of Uusimaa, Pirkanmaa, Pohjois-Pohjanmaa, Varsinais-Suomi and the Employment and Economic Development Office of Uusimaa, as well as company and trade union representatives;

11. Notes that the Finnish authorities have provided assurances that the proposed actions will not receive financial support from other Union funds or financial instruments, that any double financing will be prevented and that they will be complementary with actions funded by the Structural Funds;
12. Recalls that the design of the coordinated package of personalised services supported by the EGF should anticipate future labour market perspectives and required skills, and should be compatible with the shift towards a resource-efficient and sustainable economy;

13. Reiterates that assistance from the EGF must not replace actions which are the responsibility of companies, by virtue of national law or collective agreements, or measures for restructuring companies or sectors;

14. Calls on the Commission to urge national authorities to provide more details, in future proposals, on the sectors which have growth prospects and are therefore likely to hire people, as well as to gather substantiated data on the impact of the EGF funding, including on the quality of jobs and the reintegration rate achieved through the EGF;

15. Recalls its appeal to the Commission to assure public access to all the documents related to EGF cases;

16. Approves the decision annexed to this resolution;

17. Instructs its President to sign the decision with the President of the Council and arrange for its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union;

18. Instructs its President to forward this resolution, including its Annex, to the Council and the Commission.
ANNEX

DECISION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL

on the mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund following an application from Finland — EGF/2017/005 FI/Retail)

(The text of this annex is not reproduced here since it corresponds to the final act, Decision (EU) 2018/7.)
The European Parliament,

— having regard to the joint text approved by the Conciliation Committee and the relevant Parliament, Council and Commission statements (14587/2017 — C8-0416/2017),

— having regard to the draft general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2018, which the Commission adopted on 29 June 2017 (COM(2017)0400),

— having regard to the position on the draft general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2018, which the Council adopted on 4 September 2017 and forwarded to Parliament on 13 September 2017 (11815/2017 — C8-0313/2017),

— having regard to Letter of amendment No 1/2018 to the draft general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2018, which the Commission presented on 16 October 2017,

— having regard to its resolution of 25 October 2017 on the Council position on the draft general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2018 (1) and to the budget amendments contained therein,

— having regard to Article 314 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

— having regard to Article 106a of the Treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community,

— having regard to Council Decision 2014/335/EU, Euratom of 26 May 2014 on the system of own resources of the European Union (2),


— having regard to the Interinstitutional Agreement of 2 December 2013 between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on budgetary discipline, on cooperation in budgetary matters and on sound financial management (5),

— having regard to Rule 90 and Rule 91 of its Rules of Procedure,

— having regard to the report of its delegation to the Conciliation Committee (A8-0359/2017),

(1) Texts adopted of that date, P8_TA(2017)0408.
1. Approves the joint text agreed by the Conciliation Committee, which consists of the following documents taken together:
   — list of budget lines not modified, compared to the draft budget or the Council’s position;
   — summary figures by financial framework headings;
   — line by line figures on all budget items;
   — a consolidated document showing the figures and final text of all lines modified during the conciliation;
2. Confirms the joint statements by Parliament, the Council and the Commission annexed to this resolution;
3. Takes note of the unilateral statements by the Commission and by the Council annexed to this resolution;
4. Instructs its President to declare that the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2018 has been definitively adopted and to arrange for its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union;
5. Instructs its President to forward this legislative resolution to the Council, the Commission, the other institutions and bodies concerned and the national parliaments.
These joint conclusions cover the following sections:

1. Budget 2018
3. Statements

Summary overview

A. Budget 2018

According to the elements for joint conclusions:

— The overall level of commitment appropriations in the 2018 budget is set at EUR 160,113.5 million. Overall, this leaves a margin below the MFF ceilings for 2018 of EUR 1,600.3 million in commitment appropriations.

— The overall level of payment appropriations in the 2018 budget is set at EUR 144,681.0 million.

— The Flexibility Instrument for 2018 is mobilised in commitment appropriations for an amount of EUR 837.2 million for heading 3 Security and Citizenship.

— The Global margin for commitments is used at a level of EUR 1,113.7 million for heading 1a Competitiveness for Growth and Jobs and heading 1b Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion.

— The decision (EU) 2017/344 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 December 2016 on the mobilisation of the Contingency margin in 2017 (1) will be amended to adjust the offsetting profile to decrease the amount offset in heading 5 Administration in 2018 from EUR 570 million to EUR 318 million and correspondingly introduce offsetting of EUR 252 million for the same heading in 2020.

— The 2018 payment appropriations related to the mobilisation of the Flexibility Instrument in 2014, 2016, 2017 and 2018 are estimated by the Commission at EUR 678.3 million.

B. Budget 2017

According to the elements for joint conclusions, Draft Amending Budget 6/2017 is accepted as proposed by the Commission.

1. Budget 2018

1.1. ‘Closed’ lines

Unless stated otherwise below in these conclusions, all budget lines not amended by either Council or Parliament, and those for which Parliament accepted Council’s amendments during their respective reading, are confirmed.

For the other budget lines, the Conciliation Committee has agreed on the conclusions included in sections 1.2 to 1.7 below.

1.2. Horizontal issues

Decentralised agencies

The EU contribution (in commitment and payment appropriations and the number of posts) for all decentralised agencies are set at the level proposed by the Commission in the Draft Budget, as amended by Amending Letter 1/2018 with the exception of:

— Under heading 3:

— The European Police Office (EUROPOL, budget article 18 02 04) for which 10 additional posts are allocated and commitment and payment appropriations increased by EUR 3 690 000.

— The European Asylum Office (EASO, budget article 18 03 02) for which the commitment and payment appropriations are increased by EUR 5 000 000.

— The European Body for the Enhancement of Judicial Cooperation (EUROJUST, budget article 33 03 04) for which 5 additional posts are allocated and commitment and payment appropriations increased by EUR 1 845 000.

— Under heading 1a:

— The European GNSS Agency (GSA, budget article 02 05 11) for which 5 additional posts are allocated and commitment and payment appropriations increased by EUR 345 000.

— The European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA, budget article 12 02 06) for which the level of commitment and payment appropriations and the number of posts are reduced at the level of the Draft Budget.

Executive agencies

The EU contribution (in commitment and payment appropriations and the number of posts) for executive agencies are set at the level proposed by the Commission in the Draft Budget 2018, as amended by Amending Letter 1/2018.

Pilot Projects/Preparatory Actions

A comprehensive package of 87 pilot projects/preparatory actions (PP/PA), for a total amount of EUR 100,0 million in commitment appropriations is agreed as proposed by the Parliament in addition to the preparatory action proposed by the Commission in the Draft budget 2018.

When a pilot project or a preparatory action appears to be covered by an existing legal basis, the Commission may propose the transfer of appropriations to the corresponding legal basis in order to facilitate the implementation of the action.

This package fully respects the ceilings for pilot projects and preparatory actions set in the Financial Regulation.

1.3. Expenditure headings of the financial framework — commitment appropriations

After taking into account the above conclusions on ‘closed’ budget lines, agencies and pilot projects and preparatory actions, the Conciliation Committee has agreed on the following:
### Heading 1a — Competitiveness for Growth and Jobs

Commitment appropriations are set at the level proposed by the Commission in the Draft Budget, as amended by Amending Letter 1/2018 but with the adjustments, agreed by the Conciiliation Committee, detailed in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget line / Programme</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>DB 2018 (incl. AL1)</th>
<th>Budget 2018</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.1.11</strong></td>
<td>European satellite navigation systems (EGNOS and Galileo)</td>
<td>-4 090 000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02 05 01</td>
<td>Developing and providing global satellite-based radio navigation infrastructures and services (Galileo) by 2020</td>
<td>623 949 000</td>
<td>621 709 000</td>
<td>-2 240 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02 05 02</td>
<td>Providing satellite-based services improving the performance of GPS to gradually cover the whole European Civil Aviation Conference (ECAC) region by 2020 (EGNOS)</td>
<td>185 000 000</td>
<td>183 150 000</td>
<td>-1 850 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.1.13</strong></td>
<td>European Earth Observation Programme (Copernicus)</td>
<td>-10 370 000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02 06 01</td>
<td>Delivering operational services relying on space-borne observations and in-situ data (Copernicus)</td>
<td>130 664 000</td>
<td>129 364 000</td>
<td>-1 300 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02 06 02</td>
<td>Building an autonomous Union’s Earth observation capacity (Copernicus)</td>
<td>507 297 000</td>
<td>498 227 000</td>
<td>-9 070 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.1.14</strong></td>
<td>European Solidarity Corps (ESC)</td>
<td>-30 000 000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 05 01</td>
<td>European Solidarity Corps</td>
<td>68 235 652</td>
<td>38 235 652</td>
<td>-30 000 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.1.31</strong></td>
<td>Horizon 2020</td>
<td>110 000 000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02 04 02 01</td>
<td>Leadership in space</td>
<td>173 389 945</td>
<td>184 528 490</td>
<td>11 138 545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02 04 02 03</td>
<td>Increasing innovation in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)</td>
<td>36 937 021</td>
<td>43 178 448</td>
<td>6 241 427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06 03 03 01</td>
<td>Achieving a resource-efficient, environmentally-friendly, safe and seamless European transport system</td>
<td>53 986 199</td>
<td>56 835 072</td>
<td>2 848 873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08 02 01 01</td>
<td>Strengthening frontier research in the European Research Council</td>
<td>1 827 122 604</td>
<td>1 842 122 604</td>
<td>15 000 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget line / Programme</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>DB 2018 (incl. AL1)</td>
<td>Budget 2018</td>
<td>Difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08 02 02 01</td>
<td>Leadership in nanotechnologies, advanced materials, laser technology, biotechnology and advanced manufacturing and processing</td>
<td>518 395 125</td>
<td>524 204 453</td>
<td>5 809 328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08 02 03 03</td>
<td>Making the transition to a reliable, sustainable and competitive energy system</td>
<td>330 244 971</td>
<td>336 486 398</td>
<td>6 241 427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08 02 03 04</td>
<td>Achieving a European transport system that is resource-efficient, environmentally friendly, safe and seamless</td>
<td>230 777 055</td>
<td>239 323 675</td>
<td>8 546 620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08 02 03 05</td>
<td>Achieving a resource-efficient and climate change resilient economy and a sustainable supply of raw materials</td>
<td>297 738 618</td>
<td>303 307 891</td>
<td>5 569 273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08 02 08</td>
<td>SME instrument</td>
<td>471 209 870</td>
<td>481 209 870</td>
<td>10 000 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09 04 02 01</td>
<td>Leadership in information and communications technology</td>
<td>722 055 754</td>
<td>725 189 515</td>
<td>3 133 761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 03 01 01</td>
<td>Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions — generating, developing and transferring new skills, knowledge and innovation</td>
<td>870 013 019</td>
<td>885 710 765</td>
<td>15 697 746</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32 04 03 01</td>
<td>Making the transition to a reliable, sustainable and competitive energy system</td>
<td>300 984 111</td>
<td>320 757 111</td>
<td>19 773 000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.1.4 **Competitiveness of enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises (COSME)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget line / Programme</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>DB 2018 (incl. AL1)</th>
<th>Budget 2018</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>02 02 02</td>
<td>Improving access to finance for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the form of equity and debt</td>
<td>199 554 000</td>
<td>214 554 000</td>
<td>15 000 000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.1.5 **Education, Training and Sport (Erasmus+)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget line / Programme</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>DB 2018 (incl. AL1)</th>
<th>Budget 2018</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 02 01 01</td>
<td>Promoting excellence and cooperation in the European education and training area and its relevance to the labour market</td>
<td>1 955 123 300</td>
<td>1 979 123 300</td>
<td>24 000 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 02 01 02</td>
<td>Promoting excellence and cooperation in the European youth area and the participation of young people in European democratic life</td>
<td>182 672 916</td>
<td>212 672 916</td>
<td>30 000 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget line / Programme</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>DB 2018 (incl. AL1)</td>
<td>Budget 2018</td>
<td>Difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.1.7</strong></td>
<td><strong>Customs, Fiscalis and Anti-Fraud</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-1 365 232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 02 01</td>
<td>Supporting the functioning and modernisation of the customs union</td>
<td>80 071 000</td>
<td>78 860 555</td>
<td>-1 210 445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 03 01</td>
<td>Improving the proper functioning of the taxation systems</td>
<td>32 043 000</td>
<td>31 888 213</td>
<td>-154 787</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.1.81</strong></td>
<td><strong>Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) — Energy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-1 977 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32 02 01 04</td>
<td>Union contribution to Financial Instruments for creating an environment more conducive to private investment for energy projects</td>
<td>19 773 000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-19 773 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.1. DAG</strong></td>
<td><strong>Decentralised agencies</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-3 965 555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02 05 11</td>
<td>European GNSS Agency</td>
<td>30 993 525</td>
<td>31 338 525</td>
<td>345 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 02 06</td>
<td>European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA)</td>
<td>15 947 170</td>
<td>11 636 615</td>
<td>-4 310 555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.1. OTH</strong></td>
<td><strong>Other actions and programmes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-2 346 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02 03 02 01</td>
<td>Support to standardisation activities performed by CEN, Cenelec and ETSI</td>
<td>18 908 000</td>
<td>18 562 000</td>
<td>-346 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 02 01</td>
<td>Procedures for awarding and advertising public supply, works and service contracts</td>
<td>8 500 000</td>
<td>7 500 000</td>
<td>-1 000 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 02 01</td>
<td>Providing quality statistical information, implementing new methods of production of European statistics and strengthening the partnership within the European Statistical System</td>
<td>59 475 000</td>
<td>58 475 000</td>
<td>-1 000 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.1. PPPA</strong></td>
<td><strong>Pilot projects and preparatory actions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>51 650 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.1. SPEC</strong></td>
<td><strong>Actions financed under the prerogatives of the Commission and specific competences conferred to the Commission</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-2 900 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01 02 01</td>
<td>Coordination and surveillance of, and communication on, the economic and monetary union, including the euro</td>
<td>12 000 000</td>
<td>11 500 000</td>
<td>-500 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04 03 01 08</td>
<td>Industrial relations and social dialogue</td>
<td>16 438 000</td>
<td>15 038 000</td>
<td>-1 400 000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As a consequence, the agreed level of commitment appropriations is set at EUR 22 001.5 million, with no margin left under the expenditure ceiling of heading 1a of EUR 21 239 million, and the use of the Global Margin for Commitments for an amount of EUR 762.5 million.

**Heading 1b — Economic, social and territorial Cohesion**

Commitment appropriations are set at the level proposed by the Commission in the Draft Budget, as amended by Amending Letter 1/2018 but with the adjustment, agreed by the Conciliation Committee, detailed in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget line / Programme</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>DB 2018 (incl. AL1)</th>
<th>Budget 2018</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.2.5</td>
<td>Youth Employment initiative (specific top-up allocation)</td>
<td>116 666 667</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04 02 64</td>
<td>Youth Employment Initiative</td>
<td>233 333 333</td>
<td>350 000 000</td>
<td>116 666 667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.2.</strong> PPPA</td>
<td>Pilot projects and preparatory actions</td>
<td></td>
<td>7 700 000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>124 366 667</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a consequence, the agreed level of commitment appropriations is set at EUR 55 532.2 million, with no margin left under the expenditure ceiling of heading 1b of EUR 55 181 million, and the use of the Global Margin for Commitments for an amount of EUR 351.2 million.

**Heading 2 — Sustainable Growth: Natural Resources**

Commitment appropriations are set at the level proposed by the Commission in the Draft Budget, as amended by Amending Letter 1/2018 but with the adjustments, agreed by the Conciliation Committee, detailed in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget line / Programme</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>DB 2018 (incl. AL1)</th>
<th>Budget 2018</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.0.10</td>
<td>European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) — Market related expenditure and direct payments</td>
<td></td>
<td>- 229 900 000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The decrease of commitment appropriations is fully attributed to higher assigned revenue available arising from the EAGF surplus of 31 October 2017 which will cover the full needs of the sector as updated in Amending Letter 1/2018. Among these updated needs, Amending Letter 1/2018 increases the payments for:

— Young farmers by EUR 34 million (budget item 05 03 01 13),
— Agricultural practices beneficial for the climate and environment by EUR 95 million (budget item 05 03 01 11),
— Other measures for pigmeat, poultry, eggs, bee-keeping and other animal products by EUR 60 million (budget item 05 02 15 99)
— National support programmes for the wine sector by EUR 7 million (budget item 05 02 09 08), and
— Storage measures for skimmed-milk powder by EUR 2 million (budget item 05 02 12 02).

As a consequence, the agreed level of commitment appropriations is set at EUR 59 285,3 million, leaving a margin of EUR 981,7 million under the expenditure ceiling of heading 2.

**Heading 3 — Security and Citizenship**

Commitment appropriations are set at the level proposed by the Commission in the Draft Budget, as amended by Amending Letter 1/2018 but with the adjustments, agreed by the Conciliation Committee, detailed in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget line / Programme</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>DB 2018 (incl. AL1)</th>
<th>Budget 2018</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.0.11</td>
<td>Creative Europe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 500 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 04 01</td>
<td>Strengthening the financial capacity of SMEs and small and very small organisations in the European cultural and creative sectors, and fostering policy development and new business models</td>
<td>34 528 000</td>
<td>35 528 000</td>
<td>1 000 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 04 02</td>
<td>Culture sub-programme — Supporting cross-border actions and promoting transnational circulation and mobility</td>
<td>68 606 000</td>
<td>71 106 000</td>
<td>2 500 000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 3.0.8 Food and feed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget line / Programme</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>DB 2018 (incl. AL1)</th>
<th>Budget 2018</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.0.8</td>
<td>Food and feed</td>
<td>-6 500 000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 04 01</td>
<td>Ensuring a higher animal health status and high level of protection of animals in the Union</td>
<td>161 500 000</td>
<td>160 000 000</td>
<td>-1 500 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 04 02</td>
<td>Ensuring timely detection of harmful organisms for plants and their eradication</td>
<td>25 000 000</td>
<td>22 000 000</td>
<td>-3 000 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 04 03</td>
<td>Ensuring effective, efficient and reliable controls</td>
<td>57 483 000</td>
<td>55 483 000</td>
<td>-2 000 000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.0. DAG Decentralised agencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget line / Programme</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>DB 2018 (incl. AL1)</th>
<th>Budget 2018</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.0. DAG</td>
<td>DAG</td>
<td>10 535 000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 02 04</td>
<td>European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol)</td>
<td>116 687 271</td>
<td>120 377 271</td>
<td>3 690 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 03 02</td>
<td>European Asylum Support Office (EASO)</td>
<td>85 837 067</td>
<td>90 837 067</td>
<td>5 000 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33 03 04</td>
<td>The European Union's Judicial Cooperation Unit (Eurojust)</td>
<td>36 506 468</td>
<td>38 351 468</td>
<td>1 845 000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.0. PPPA Pilot projects and preparatory actions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget line / Programme</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>DB 2018 (incl. AL1)</th>
<th>Budget 2018</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.0. PPPA</td>
<td>Pilot projects and preparatory actions</td>
<td>12 650 000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20 185 000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a consequence, the agreed level of commitment appropriations is set at EUR 3 493.2 million, with no margin left under the expenditure ceiling of heading 3, and the mobilisation of EUR 837.2 million through the Flexibility Instrument.

### Heading 4 — Global Europe

Commitment appropriations are set at the level proposed by the Commission in the Draft Budget, as amended by Amending Letter 1/2018, but with the adjustments, agreed by the Conciliation Committee, detailed in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget line / Programme</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>DB 2018 (incl. AL1)</th>
<th>Budget 2018</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.0.1</td>
<td>IPA II</td>
<td>Instrument for Pre-accession assistance (IPA II)</td>
<td>-95 000 000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05 05 04 02</td>
<td>Support to Turkey — Economic, social and territorial development and related progressive alignment with the Union acquis</td>
<td>148 000 000</td>
<td>131 000 000</td>
<td>-17 000 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget line / Programme</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>DB 2018 (incl. AL1)</td>
<td>Budget 2018</td>
<td>Difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 02 01 01</td>
<td>Support to Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo (1), Montenegro, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia — Political reforms and related progressive alignment with the Union acquis</td>
<td>189 267 000</td>
<td>199 267 000</td>
<td>10 000 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 02 03 01</td>
<td>Support to Turkey — Political reforms and related progressive alignment with the Union acquis</td>
<td>217 400 000</td>
<td>167 400 000</td>
<td>- 50 000 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 02 03 02</td>
<td>Support to Turkey — Economic, social and territorial development and related progressive alignment with the Union acquis</td>
<td>274 384 000</td>
<td>236 384 000</td>
<td>- 38 000 000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.0.2 European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget line / Programme</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>DB 2018 (incl. AL1)</th>
<th>Budget 2018</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22 04 01 03</td>
<td>Mediterranean countries — Confidence building, security and the prevention and settlement of conflicts</td>
<td>262 072 675</td>
<td>296 072 675</td>
<td>34 000 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 04 01 04</td>
<td>Support to the peace process and financial assistance to Palestine and to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA)</td>
<td>293 379 163</td>
<td>299 379 163</td>
<td>6 000 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 04 02 02</td>
<td>Eastern Partnership — Poverty reduction and sustainable development</td>
<td>351 556 726</td>
<td>361 556 726</td>
<td>10 000 000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.0.3 Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget line / Programme</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>DB 2018 (incl. AL1)</th>
<th>Budget 2018</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21 02 07 03</td>
<td>Human development</td>
<td>193 374 058</td>
<td>205 874 058</td>
<td>12 500 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 02 20</td>
<td>Erasmus+ — Contribution from the development cooperation instrument (DCI)</td>
<td>94 928 673</td>
<td>102 428 673</td>
<td>7 500 000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.0.4 Partnership instrument for cooperation with third countries (PI)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget line / Programme</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>DB 2018 (incl. AL1)</th>
<th>Budget 2018</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19 05 01</td>
<td>Cooperation with third countries to advance and promote Union and mutual interests</td>
<td>126 263 000</td>
<td>123 263 000</td>
<td>- 3 000 000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.0. OTH Other actions and programmes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget line / Programme</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>DB 2018 (incl. AL1)</th>
<th>Budget 2018</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13 07 01</td>
<td>Financial support for encouraging the economic development of the Turkish Cypriot community</td>
<td>32 473 000</td>
<td>34 473 000</td>
<td>2 000 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 02 40</td>
<td>Commodities agreements</td>
<td>5 583 000</td>
<td>2 500 000</td>
<td>- 3 083 000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### In EUR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget line / Programme</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>DB 2018 (incl. AL1)</th>
<th>Budget 2018</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.0. PPPA</td>
<td>Pilot projects and preparatory actions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0. SPEC</td>
<td>Actions financed under the prerogatives of the Commission and specific competences conferred to the Commission</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 06 01</td>
<td>Information outreach on the Union's external relations</td>
<td>12 000 000</td>
<td>15 000 000</td>
<td>3 000 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 08 01</td>
<td>Evaluation of the results of Union aid and follow-up and audit measures</td>
<td>30 676 000</td>
<td>29 176 000</td>
<td>-1 500 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 08 02</td>
<td>Coordination and promotion of awareness on development issues</td>
<td>13 036 000</td>
<td>12 536 000</td>
<td>-500 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-19 183 000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244(1999) and the International Court of Justice opinion on Kosovo's declaration of independence.

As a consequence, the agreed level of commitment appropriations is set at EUR 9 568.8 million, leaving a margin of EUR 256.2 million under the expenditure ceiling of heading 4.

### Heading 5 — Administration

The number of posts in the establishment plans of the Institutions and the appropriations proposed by the Commission in the Draft Budget, as amended by Amending Letter 1/2018 are agreed by the Conciliation Committee with the following exceptions:

— The section of the Parliament for which its reading is approved;

— The section of the Council for which its reading is approved;

— The European External Action Service for which EUR 800 000 are allocated to a newly created budget item 2 2 1 4 Strategic Communication Capacity. This is aimed at properly equipping the European External Action Service to cover strategic communication tools, contracting strategic communication expertise, supporting language plurality of strategic communication products and engaging and maintaining a network of counter-disinformation specialists in Member States and neighbouring countries. The budget item 3 0 0 4 Other administrative expenditure is reduced by EUR 800 000 to ensure budget neutrality.

Moreover, the impact in the Budget 2018 of the automatic salary update to be applied from 1 July 2017 is integrated in all sections of the Institutions as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>in EUR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parliament</td>
<td>-2 796 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council</td>
<td>-948 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution</td>
<td>Amount (in EUR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commission (including pensions)</td>
<td>-13,179,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Court of Justice</td>
<td>-868,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Court of Auditors</td>
<td>-357,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Economic &amp; Social Committee</td>
<td>-193,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee of the Regions</td>
<td>-146,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ombudsman</td>
<td>-24,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Data Protection Supervisor</td>
<td>-13,459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European External Action Service</td>
<td>-878,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>-19,404,859</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, additional reductions of EUR 5 million were identified across all Institutions for expenditure related to buildings, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Amount (in EUR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Council</td>
<td>-378,623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commission (including pensions)</td>
<td>-3,637,499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Court of Justice</td>
<td>-270,611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Court of Auditors</td>
<td>-96,409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Economic &amp; Social Committee</td>
<td>-89,461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee of the Regions</td>
<td>-63,393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ombudsman</td>
<td>-7,016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Data Protection Supervisor</td>
<td>-9,526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European External Action Service</td>
<td>-447,462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>-5,000,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a consequence, and after taking into account pilot projects and preparatory actions (EUR 3.5 million) proposed under section 1.2 above, the agreed level of commitment appropriations is set at EUR 9,665.5 million, leaving a margin of EUR 362.5 million under the expenditure ceiling of heading 5, after the use of EUR 318.0 million of the margin to offset the mobilisation of the Contingency margin in 2017.

**Special instruments: EGF, EAR and EUSF**

Commitment appropriations for the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) and for the Emergency Aid Reserve (EAR) are set at the level proposed by the Commission in the Draft Budget, as amended by Amending Letter 1/2018. The reserve for the European Union Solidarity Fund (EUSF) is suppressed (budget article 40 02 44).
1.4. Payment appropriations

The overall level of payment appropriations in the 2018 Budget is set at the level of the Draft Budget, as amended by Amending Letter 1/2018 with the following adjustments agreed by the Conciliation Committee:

1. First, account is taken of the agreed level of commitment appropriations for non-differentiated expenditure, for which the level of payment appropriations is equal to the level of commitment appropriations. This includes the additional reduction of agricultural expenditure by -EUR 229.9 million. The combined effect is a decrease of -EUR 255.3 million;

2. The payment appropriations for all new pilot projects and preparatory actions proposed by the Parliament are set at 50 % of the corresponding commitment appropriations, or at the level proposed by Parliament if lower. In the case of extension of existing pilot projects and preparatory actions the level of payment appropriations is the one defined in the Draft Budget plus 50 % of the corresponding new commitment appropriations, or at the level proposed by Parliament if lower. The combined effect is an increase of EUR 50.0 million;

3. The adjustments on the following budget lines are agreed as a result of the evolution in commitment appropriations for differentiated expenditure:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget line / Programme</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>DB 2018 (incl. AL1)</th>
<th>Budget 2018</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1.14</td>
<td>European Solidarity Corps (ESC)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- 22 501 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 05 01</td>
<td>European Solidarity Corps</td>
<td>51 177 000</td>
<td>28 676 000</td>
<td>- 22 501 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.5</td>
<td>Education, Training and Sport (Erasmus+)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12 000 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 02 01 01</td>
<td>Promoting excellence and cooperation in the European education and training area and its relevance to the labour market</td>
<td>1 845 127 000</td>
<td>1 857 127 000</td>
<td>12 000 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1. DAG</td>
<td>Decentralised agencies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- 3 965 555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02 05 11</td>
<td>European GNSS Agency</td>
<td>30 993 525</td>
<td>31 338 525</td>
<td>345 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 02 06</td>
<td>European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA)</td>
<td>15 947 170</td>
<td>11 636 615</td>
<td>- 4 310 555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1. OTH</td>
<td>Other actions and programmes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- 900 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 02 01</td>
<td>Procedures for awarding and advertising public supply, works and service contracts</td>
<td>8 200 000</td>
<td>7 300 000</td>
<td>- 900 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0. DAG</td>
<td>Decentralised agencies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10 535 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 02 04</td>
<td>European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol)</td>
<td>116 687 271</td>
<td>120 377 271</td>
<td>3 690 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget line / Programme</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>DB 2018 (incl. AL1)</td>
<td>Budget 2018</td>
<td>Difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 03 02</td>
<td>European Asylum Support Office (EASO)</td>
<td>85 837 067</td>
<td>90 837 067</td>
<td>5 000 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33 03 04</td>
<td>The European Union's Judicial Cooperation Unit (Eurojust)</td>
<td>36 506 468</td>
<td>38 351 468</td>
<td>1 845 000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.0.1 Instrument for Pre-accession assistance (IPA II)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget line / Programme</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>DB 2018 (incl. AL1)</th>
<th>Budget 2018</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>05 05 04 02</td>
<td>Support to Turkey — Economic, social and territorial development and related progressive alignment with the Union acquis</td>
<td>120 000 000</td>
<td>107 200 000</td>
<td>-12 800 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 02 01 01</td>
<td>Support to Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo (1), Montenegro, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia — Political reforms and related progressive alignment with the Union acquis</td>
<td>219 000 000</td>
<td>221 500 000</td>
<td>2 500 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 02 03 01</td>
<td>Support to Turkey — Political reforms and related progressive alignment with the Union acquis</td>
<td>86 000 000</td>
<td>48 500 000</td>
<td>-37 500 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 02 03 02</td>
<td>Support to Turkey — Economic, social and territorial development and related progressive alignment with the Union acquis</td>
<td>291 000 000</td>
<td>262 500 000</td>
<td>-28 500 000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.0.2 European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget line / Programme</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>DB 2018 (incl. AL1)</th>
<th>Budget 2018</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22 04 01 03</td>
<td>Mediterranean countries — Confidence building, security and the prevention and settlement of conflicts</td>
<td>125 000 000</td>
<td>133 500 000</td>
<td>8 500 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 04 01 04</td>
<td>Support to the peace process and financial assistance to Palestine and to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA)</td>
<td>260 000 000</td>
<td>261 500 000</td>
<td>1 500 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 04 02 02</td>
<td>Eastern Partnership — Poverty reduction and sustainable development</td>
<td>320 000 000</td>
<td>322 500 000</td>
<td>2 500 000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.0.3 Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget line / Programme</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>DB 2018 (incl. AL1)</th>
<th>Budget 2018</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21 02 07 03</td>
<td>Human development</td>
<td>170 000 000</td>
<td>179 400 000</td>
<td>9 400 000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### In EUR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget line / Programme</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>DB 2018 (incl. AL1)</th>
<th>Budget 2018</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21 02 20</td>
<td>Erasmus+ — Contribution from the development cooperation instrument (DCI)</td>
<td>95 995 100</td>
<td>103 495 100</td>
<td>7 500 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4.0. OTH</strong> Other actions and programmes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 07 01</td>
<td>Financial support for encouraging the economic development of the Turkish Cypriot community</td>
<td>25 000 000</td>
<td>26 000 000</td>
<td>1 000 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4.0. SPEC</strong> Actions financed under the prerogatives of the Commission and specific competences conferred to the Commission</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 06 01</td>
<td>Information outreach on the Union's external relations</td>
<td>13 700 000</td>
<td>15 200 000</td>
<td>1 500 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244(1999) and the International Court of Justice opinion on Kosovo's declaration of independence.

4. Additional reductions in payment appropriations are made on the following budget lines:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget line / Programme</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>DB 2018 (incl. AL1)</th>
<th>Budget 2018</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.2.12</strong> Transition regions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04 02 61</td>
<td>European Social Fund — Transition regions — Investment for growth and jobs goal</td>
<td>1 345 000 000</td>
<td>1 305 000 000</td>
<td>- 40 000 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 03 61</td>
<td>European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) — Transition regions — Investment for growth and jobs goal</td>
<td>2 750 463 362</td>
<td>2 735 463 362</td>
<td>- 15 000 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.2.13</strong> Competitiveness (More developed regions)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04 02 62</td>
<td>European Social Fund — More developed regions — Investment for growth and jobs goal</td>
<td>2 882 000 000</td>
<td>2 847 000 000</td>
<td>- 35 000 000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. The reserve for the European Union Solidarity Fund (budget article 40 02 44) is suppressed (-EUR 88.0 million).

These actions will provide a level of payment appropriations of EUR 144 681.0 million, a reduction of –EUR 582.5 million in comparison with the Draft Budget, as amended by Amending Letter 1/2018.

1.5. Reserve

There are no reserves in addition to those of the Draft Budget, as amended by Amending Letter 1/2018, except for budget item 22 02 03 01 Support to Turkey — Political reforms and related progressive alignment with the Union acquis for which EUR 70 000 000 in commitment appropriations and EUR 35 000 000 in payment appropriations are placed in reserve pending the fulfillment of the following condition:

‘Amount to be released when Turkey makes measurable sufficient improvements in the fields of rule of law, democracy, human rights and press freedom, according to the annual report of the Commission.’

The budget remark of budget item 22 02 03 01 is modified accordingly.

1.6. Budget remarks

Unless otherwise specifically addressed in previous paragraphs, amendments introduced by the European Parliament or the Council to the text of budget remarks are agreed, with the exception of those on budget lines listed in the following tables:
— Budget lines for which the amendments introduced by the European Parliament are approved with the modification proposed by the Commission in its Executability Letter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget line</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>06 02 01 01</td>
<td>Removing bottlenecks, enhancing rail interoperability, bridging missing links and improving cross-border sections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09 05 01</td>
<td>MEDIA Sub-programme — Operating transnationally and internationally and promoting transnational circulation and mobility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 04 01 01</td>
<td>Europe for citizens — Strengthening remembrance and enhancing capacity for civic participation at the Union level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 02 07 03</td>
<td>Human development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 02 03 02</td>
<td>Support for economic, social and territorial development and related progressive alignment with the Union acquis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

— Budget lines for which the respective budget remark as proposed in the Draft Budget, as amended by Amending Letter 1/2018 and the EAGF update, are approved.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget line</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>02 02 01</td>
<td>Promoting entrepreneurship and improving the competitiveness and access to markets of Union enterprises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02 03 04</td>
<td>Internal market governance tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05 02 08 03</td>
<td>Operational funds for producer organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05 03 01 01</td>
<td>Single payment scheme (SPS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05 03 01 10</td>
<td>Basic payment scheme (BPS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05 04 60 01</td>
<td>Promoting sustainable rural development, a more territorially and environmentally balanced, climate-friendly and innovative Union agricultural sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08 02 02 02</td>
<td>Enhancing access to risk finance for investing in research and innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09 05 05</td>
<td>Multimedia actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 03 61</td>
<td>European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) — Transition regions — Investment for growth and jobs goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 03 62</td>
<td>European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) — More developed regions — Investment for growth and jobs goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 06 01</td>
<td>Assistance to Member States in the event of a major natural disaster with serious repercussions on living conditions, the natural environment or the economy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Budget line

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget line</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18 02 01 02</td>
<td>Prevention and fight against cross-border organised crime and better management of security-related risks and crisis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 03 01 01</td>
<td>Strengthening and developing the common European asylum system and enhancing solidarity and responsibility-sharing between the Member States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 04 01</td>
<td>Enhancing the respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms and supporting democratic reforms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 02 01</td>
<td>Delivery of rapid, effective and needs-based humanitarian aid and food assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33 02 07</td>
<td>European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is with the understanding that amendments introduced by the European Parliament or the Council cannot modify or extend the scope of an existing legal base, or impinge on the administrative autonomy of institutions, and that the action can be covered by available resources.

#### 1.7. New budget lines

The budget nomenclature proposed by the Commission in the Draft Budget, as amended by Amending Letter 1/2018, is agreed with the inclusion of:

— the new pilot projects and preparatory actions, proposed under section 1.2 above; and

— the new budget item 2 2 1 4 within the section of the European External Action Service, proposed under 1.3 above.

#### 2. Budget 2017

Draft Amending Budget (DAB) 6/2017 is approved as proposed by the Commission.

#### 3. Statements

##### 3.1. Joint statement by the European Parliament, Council and Commission on the payment appropriations

The European Parliament and the Council recall the need to ensure, in the light of implementation, an orderly progression of payments in relation to the appropriations for commitments so as to avoid any abnormal level of unpaid invoices at year-end.

The European Parliament and the Council calls on the Commission to continue monitoring closely and actively the implementation of the 2014-2020 programmes. To that end, they invite the Commission to present in a timely manner, updated figures concerning the state of implementation and estimates regarding payment appropriations requirements in 2018.

The Council and the European Parliament will take any necessary decisions in due time for duly justified needs to prevent the accumulation of an excessive amount of unpaid bills and to ensure that payment claims are duly reimbursed.
3.2. Joint statement by the European Parliament, Council (¹) and Commission on the Youth Employment Initiative

The Parliament, the Council and the Commission recall that reducing unemployment and, in particular, youth unemployment, remains a high and shared political priority, and to this end they reaffirm their determination to make the best possible use of budgetary resources available to tackle it, and in particular through the Youth Employment Initiative. Therefore, they welcome the increase of the amount allocated to this initiative in 2018. However, it is not only essential to provide for an adequate financing in the EU budget, but also to put in place, at the same time, the right procedures to implement them effectively.

In this regard, an effective cooperation between the Parliament, the Council and the Commission is needed to ensure the highest possible impact of the measures adopted.

Therefore, the Council and the European Parliament undertake to consider as a matter of priority the modification in the Common Provisions Regulation required by the adoption of the 2018 budget.

The Commission shall facilitate the swift approval of the changes in the programmes to implement the YEI.

3.3. Unilateral statement by the Commission on the Youth Employment Initiative

Reducing youth unemployment remains a high political priority. The Commission undertakes to monitor closely the implementation trend of the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI). Should the trend of this initiative accelerate and should the absorption capacity allow for an increase, the Commission will propose an increase of the YEI funding through an amending budget to be financed by the Global margin for commitments in accordance with Article 14 of the MFF Regulation.

In that case, the Commission expects the Council and the European Parliament to process rapidly any such draft amending budget.

3.4. Unilateral statement by the Council on the 5 % staff reduction

The Council recalls that the target year for the full implementation of the 5 % reduction of staff was 2017. However, as not all institutions, bodies and agencies have met the reduction target, the Council urges continued efforts in 2018 in order to fulfil the agreement.

It is essential that the 5 % staff reduction target is implemented by all institutions, bodies and agencies, and monitored until it is fully achieved. With that in mind, the Council invites the Commission to continue to assess the outcome of the exercise in order to draw lessons for the future.

(¹) The United Kingdom does not support this statement
Changes to the resources for economic, social and territorial cohesion and to the resources for the investment for growth and jobs goal and for the European territorial cooperation goal

European Parliament legislative resolution of 30 November 2017 on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 as regards the changes to the resources for economic, social and territorial cohesion and to the resources for the Investment for growth and jobs goal and for the European territorial cooperation goal (COM(2017)0565 — C8-0342/2017 — 2017/0247(COD))

(Ordinary legislative procedure: first reading)
(2018/C 356/41)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to the Commission proposal to Parliament and the Council (COM(2017)0565),
— having regard to Article 294(2) and Article 177 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, pursuant to which the Commission submitted the proposal to Parliament (C8-0342/2017),
— having regard to Article 294(3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
— after consulting the European Economic and Social Committee,
— after consulting the Committee of the Regions,
— having regard to the letter of the Committee on Budgets,
— having regard to Rule 59 of its Rules of Procedure,
— having regard to the report of the Committee on Regional Development (A8-0358/2017),

A. Whereas for reasons of urgency it is justified to proceed to the vote before the expiry of the deadline of eight weeks laid down in Article 6 of Protocol No 2 on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality;

1. Adopts its position at first reading hereinafter set out;
2. Calls on the Commission to refer the matter to Parliament again if it replaces, substantially amends or intends to substantially amend its proposal;
3. Instructs its President to forward its position to the Council, the Commission and the national parliaments.

Position of the European Parliament adopted at first reading on 30 November 2017 with a view to the adoption of Regulation (EU) 2017/... of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 as regards the changes to the resources for economic, social and territorial cohesion and to the resources for the Investment for growth and jobs goal and for the European territorial cooperation goal

(As an agreement was reached between Parliament and Council, Parliament’s position corresponds to the final legislative act, Regulation (EU) 2017/2305.)
EU-Egypt Agreement for scientific and technological cooperation: participation of Egypt in the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA) ***

European Parliament legislative resolution of 30 November 2017 on the draft Council decision on the conclusion of the Agreement for scientific and technological cooperation between the European Union and the Arab Republic of Egypt setting out the terms and conditions for the participation of the Arab Republic of Egypt in the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA) (11965/2017 — C8-0345/2017 — 2017/0196(NLE))

(Consent)

(2018/C 356/42)

The European Parliament,
— having regard to the draft Council decision (11965/2017),
— having regard to the draft agreement for scientific and technological cooperation between the European Union and the Arab Republic of Egypt setting out the terms and conditions for the participation of the Republic of Egypt in the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA) (11926/2017),
— having regard to Decision (EU) 2017/1324 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 July 2017 on the participation of the Union in the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA) jointly undertaken by several Member States (1),
— having regard to the request for consent submitted by the Council in accordance with Article 186 and Article 218(6), second subparagraph, point (a)(v), of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (C8-0345/2017),
— having regard to Rule 99(1) and (4) and Rule 108(7) of its Rules of Procedure,
— having regard to the recommendation of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (A8-0353/2017),
1. Gives its consent to conclusion of the agreement;
2. Instructs its President to forward its position to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States and of the Arab Republic of Egypt.

EU-Algeria Agreement for scientific and technological cooperation: participation of Algeria in the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA) ***

European Parliament legislative resolution of 30 November 2017 on the draft Council decision on the conclusion of the Agreement for scientific and technological cooperation between the European Union and the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria setting out the terms and conditions for the participation of the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria in the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA) (11964/2017 — C8-0346/2017 — 2017/0197(NLE))

(Consent)
(Consent)
(Consent)
(2018/C 356/43)

The European Parliament,
— having regard to the draft Council decision (11964/2017),
— having regard to the draft agreement for scientific and technological cooperation between the European Union and the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria setting out the terms and conditions for the participation of the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria in the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA) (11924/2017),
— having regard to Decision (EU) 2017/1324 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 July 2017 on the participation of the Union in the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA) jointly undertaken by several Member States (1),
— having regard to the request for consent submitted by the Council in accordance with Article 186 and Article 218(6), second subparagraph, point (a)(v), of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (C8-0346/2017),
— having regard to Rule 99(1) and (4) and Rule 108(7) of its Rules of Procedure,
— having regard to the recommendation of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (A8-0354/2017),
1. Gives its consent to conclusion of the agreement;
2. Instructs its President to forward its position to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States and of the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria.

EU-Jordan Agreement for scientific and technological cooperation: participation of Jordan in the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA) ***

European Parliament legislative resolution of 30 November 2017 on the draft Council decision on the conclusion of the Agreement for scientific and technological cooperation between the European Union and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan setting out the terms and conditions for the participation of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA) (11966/2017 — C8-0343/2017 — 2017/0200(NLE))

(Consent)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to the draft Council decision (11966/2017),
— having regard to the draft agreement for scientific and technological cooperation between the European Union and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan setting out the terms and conditions for the participation of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA) (11927/2017),
— having regard to Decision (EU) 2017/1324 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 July 2017 on the participation of the Union in the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA) jointly undertaken by several Member States (1),
— having regard to the request for consent submitted by the Council in accordance with Article 186 and Article 218(6), second subparagraph, point (a)(v), of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (C8-0343/2017),
— having regard to Rule 99(1) and (4) and Rule 108(7) of its Rules of Procedure,
— having regard to the recommendation of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (A8-0355/2017),

1. Gives its consent to conclusion of the agreement;

2. Instructs its President to forward its position to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States and of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.


(Consultation)

(2018/C 356/45)

The European Parliament,
— having regard to the proposal for a Council decision (COM(2017)0360),
— having regard to Article 38, fourth paragraph, of the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction,
— having regard to Article 81(3) and Article 218(6), second subparagraph, point (b), of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, pursuant to which the Council consulted Parliament (C8-0234/2017),
— having regard to the opinion of the Court of Justice (1) on the exclusive external competence of the European Union for a declaration of acceptance of an accession to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction,
— having regard to Rules 78c and 108(8) of its Rules of Procedure,
— having regard to the report of the Committee on Legal Affairs (A8-0364/2017),

1. Approves the authorisation for Romania to accept, in the interest of the European Union, the accession of Chile, Iceland and Bahamas to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction;

2. Instructs its President to forward its position to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States, as well as to the Permanent Bureau of the Hague Conference on Private International Law.

(1) Opinion of the Court of Justice of 14 October 2014, 1/13, ECLI:EU:C:2014:2303.
Accession of Panama, Uruguay, Colombia and El Salvador to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction *


(Consultation)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to the proposal for a Council decision (COM(2017)0369),
— having regard to Article 38, fourth paragraph, of the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction,
— having regard to Article 81(3) and Article 218(6), second subparagraph, point (b), of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, pursuant to which the Council consulted Parliament (C8-0231/2017),
— having regard to the opinion of the Court of Justice (¹) on the exclusive external competence of the European Union for a declaration of acceptance of an accession to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction,
— having regard to Rules 78c and 108(8) of its Rules of Procedure,
— having regard to the report of the Committee on Legal Affairs (A8-0362/2017),

1. Approves the authorisation for Austria and Romania to accept, in the interest of the European Union, the accession of Panama, Uruguay, Colombia and El Salvador to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction;

2. Instructs its President to forward its position to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States, as well as to the Permanent Bureau of the Hague Conference on Private International Law.

(¹) Opinion of the Court of Justice of 14 October 2014, 1/13, ECLI:EU:C:2014:2303.
Accession of San Marino to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction *


(Consultation)

(2018/C 356/47)

The European Parliament,
— having regard to the proposal for a Council decision (COM(2017)0359),
— having regard to Article 38, fourth paragraph, of the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction,
— having regard to Article 81(3) and Article 218(6), second subparagraph, point (b), of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, pursuant to which the Council consulted Parliament (C8-0232/2017),
— having regard to the opinion of the Court of Justice (¹) on the exclusive external competence of the European Union for a declaration of acceptance of an accession to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction,
— having regard to Rules 78c and 108(8) of its Rules of Procedure,
— having regard to the report of the Committee on Legal Affairs (A8-0360/2017),

1. Approves the authorisation for Croatia, the Netherlands, Portugal and Romania to accept, in the interest of the European Union, the accession of San Marino to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction;

2. Instructs its President to forward its position to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States, as well as to the Permanent Bureau of the Hague Conference on Private International Law.

(¹) Opinion of the Court of Justice of 14 October 2014, 1/13, ECLI:EU:C:2014:2303.
Accession of Georgia and South Africa to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction *


(Consultation)

(2018/C 356/48)

The European Parliament,
— having regard to the proposal for a Council decision (COM(2017)0357),
— having regard to Article 38, fourth paragraph, of the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction,
— having regard to Article 81(3) and Article 218(6), second subparagraph, point (b), of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, pursuant to which the Council consulted Parliament (C8-0233/2017),
— having regard to the opinion of the Court of Justice (1) on the exclusive external competence of the European Union for a declaration of acceptance of an accession to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction,
— having regard to Rules 78c and 108(8) of its Rules of Procedure,
— having regard to the report of the Committee on Legal Affairs (A8-0361/2017),

1. Approves the authorisation for Luxembourg and Romania to accept, in the interest of the European Union, the accession of Georgia and South Africa to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction;

2. Instructs its President to forward its position to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States, as well as to the Permanent Bureau of the Hague Conference on Private International Law.

(1) Opinion of the Court of Justice of 14 October 2014, 1/13, ECLI:EU:C:2014:2303.
The European Parliament,

— having regard to the Commission proposal to Parliament and the Council (COM(2016)0850),

— having regard to Article 294(2) and Article 114 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, pursuant to which the Commission submitted the proposal to Parliament (C8-0158/2017),

— having regard to Article 294(3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

— having regard to the reasoned opinion submitted, within the framework of Protocol No 2 on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, by the Swedish Parliament, asserting that the draft legislative act does not comply with the principle of subsidiarity,

— having regard to the opinion of the European Central Bank of 8 November 2017 (1),

— having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee of 30 March 2017 (2),

— having regard to the decision by the Conference of Presidents on 18 May 2017 to authorise the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs to split the above-mentioned Commission proposal and to draw up two separate legislative reports on the basis thereof,

— having regard to the provisional agreement approved by the committee responsible under Rule 69f(4) of its Rules of Procedure and the undertaking given by the Council representative by letter of 15 November 2017 to approve the Parliament’s position, in accordance with Article 294(4) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

— having regard to Rule 59 of its Rules of Procedure,

— having regard to the report of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs (A8-0255/2017),

1. Adopts its position at first reading hereinafter set out;

2. Calls on the Commission to refer the matter to Parliament again if it replaces, substantially amends or intends to substantially amend its proposal;

(1) Not yet published in the Official Journal.
(2) OJ C 209, 30.6.2017, p. 36.
3. Instructs its President to forward its position to the Council, the Commission and the national parliaments.

P8_TC1-COD(2016)0360B


(As an agreement was reached between Parliament and Council, Parliament’s position corresponds to the final legislative act, Regulation (EU) 2017/2395.)
Instrument contributing to stability and peace


(Ordinary legislative procedure: first reading)

(2018/C 356/50)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to the Commission proposal to Parliament and the Council (COM(2016)0447),

— having regard to Article 294(2), Article 209(1) and Article 212(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, pursuant to which the Commission submitted the proposal to Parliament (C8-0264/2016),

— having regard to the opinion of the Committee on Legal Affairs on the proposed legal basis,

— having regard to Article 294(3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

— having regard to the provisional agreement approved by the committee responsible under Rule 69f(4) of its Rules of Procedure and the undertaking given by the Council representative by letter of 27 October 2017 to approve Parliament’s position, in accordance with Article 294(4) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

— having regard to Rules 59 and 39 of its Rules of Procedure,

— having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the opinion of the Committee on Development (A8-0261/2017),

1. Adopts its position at first reading hereinafter set out;

2. Approves the joint statement by Parliament, the Council and the Commission annexed to this resolution, which will be published in the L series of the Official Journal of the European Union together with the final legislative act;

3. Calls on the Commission to refer the matter to Parliament again if it replaces, substantially amends or intends to substantially amend its proposal;

4. Instructs its President to forward its position to the Council, the Commission and the national parliaments.


(As an agreement was reached between Parliament and Council, Parliament’s position corresponds to the final legislative act, Regulation (EU) 2017/2306.)
ANNEX TO THE LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION


The European Parliament, the Council and the Commission agree that capacity building in support of development and security for development should be financed within Heading IV of the multiannual financial framework for the years 2014-2020, primarily through redeployments, while preserving the financial balance among all instruments to the maximum extent possible. Furthermore, without prejudice to the prerogatives of the budgetary authority in the annual budgetary procedure, such redeployments should not include use of appropriations allocated to measures under Regulation (EU) No 233/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 establishing a financing instrument for development cooperation for the period 2014-2020.
Thursday 30 November 2017

P8_TA(2017)0470

**Ranking of unsecured debt instruments in insolvency hierarchy**


(Ordinary legislative procedure: first reading)

(2018/C 356/51)

The European Parliament,
— having regard to the Commission proposal to Parliament and the Council (COM(2016)0853),
— having regard to Article 294(2) and Article 114 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, pursuant to which the Commission submitted the proposal to Parliament (C8-0479/2016),
— having regard to Article 294(3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
— having regard to the opinion of the European Central Bank (1),
— having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee (2),
— having regard to the provisional agreement approved by the committee responsible under Rule 69f(4) of its Rules of Procedure and the undertaking given by the Council representative by letter of 15 November 2017 to approve the Parliament’s position, in accordance with Article 294(4) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
— having regard to Rule 59 of its Rules of Procedure,
— having regard to the report of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs (A8-0302/2017),
1. Adopts its position at first reading hereinafter set out;
2. Calls on the Commission to refer the matter to Parliament again if it replaces, substantially amends or intends to substantially amend its proposal;
3. Instructs its President to forward its position to the Council, the Commission and the national parliaments.

P8_TC1-COD(2016)0363


(As an agreement was reached between Parliament and Council, Parliament’s position corresponds to the final legislative act, Directive (EU) 2017/2399.)

Value added tax obligations for supplies of services and distance sales of goods *


(Special legislative procedure — consultation)

(2018/C 356/52)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to the Commission proposal to the Council (COM(2016)0757),

— having regard to Article 113 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, pursuant to which the Council consulted Parliament (C8-0004/2017),

— having regard to Rule 78c of its Rules of Procedure,

— having regard to the report of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs (A8-0307/2017),

1. Approves the Commission proposal as amended;

2. Calls on the Commission to alter its proposal accordingly, in accordance with Article 293(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union;

3. Calls on the Council to notify Parliament if it intends to depart from the text approved by Parliament;

4. Asks the Council to consult Parliament again if it intends to substantially amend the Commission proposal;

5. Instructs its President to forward its position to the Council, the Commission and the national parliaments.

Amendment 1

Proposal for a directive

Recital - 1 (new)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text proposed by the Commission</th>
<th>Amendment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The difference between expected VAT revenues and VAT actually collected (the ‘VAT gap’) in the Union was approximately EUR 152 billion in 2015 and cross-border fraud amounts to a VAT revenue loss in the Union of approximately EUR 50 billion a year, all of which makes VAT an important issue to be addressed at Union level and the adoption of a definitive VAT regime based on the destination principle essential.</td>
<td>(-1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Amendment 2
Proposal for a directive
Recital 3

(3) The assessment of those special schemes as introduced on 1 January 2015 has identified a number of areas for improvement. First, the burden for micro-businesses established in a Member State occasionally supplying such services to other Member States of having to comply with VAT obligations in Member States other than their Member State of establishment should be reduced. A Community-wide threshold should therefore be introduced up to which these supplies remain subject to VAT in their Member State of establishment. Second, the requirement of having to comply with the invoicing and record keeping requirements of all Member States to which supplies are made is very burdensome. Hence, to minimise burdens on business, the rules concerning invoicing and record keeping should be those applicable in the Member State of identification of the supplier making use of the special schemes. Third, taxable persons not established in the Community but having a VAT registration in a Member State (e.g. because they carry out occasional transactions subject to VAT in that Member State) can use neither the special scheme for taxable persons not established in the Community, nor the special scheme for taxable persons established in the Community. As a consequence, it is proposed that such taxable persons should be permitted to use the special scheme for taxable persons not established within the Community.

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Amendment 3
Proposal for a directive
Recital 3 a (new)

(3a) While the assessment of the Mini-One Stop Shop (MOSS) has been largely positive, 99% of the VAT revenue processed via the MOSS is declared by only 13% of the businesses registered, demonstrating the need for Member States to promote the MOSS to a wider range of small and medium sized enterprises, in order to overcome barriers to cross-border e-commerce.
### Amendment 4
**Proposal for a directive**
**Recital 9 a (new)**

**Text proposed by the Commission**

**Amendment**

(9a) This amending Directive could lead to an increase in administrative costs for small consignments, since relevant packages require a distinguishing mark indicating that the VAT import scheme has been used and the postal sector is required to sort the packages based on whether the VAT import scheme is used. Member States and the Commission should pay close attention to the impact on the postal sector.

### Amendment 5
**Proposal for a directive**
**Recital 14**

**Text proposed by the Commission**

**Amendment**

(14) The date of application of the provisions of this Directive shall, where relevant, take account of the time needed to put in place the measures necessary to implement this Directive and for the Member States to adapt their IT system for registration and for declaration and payment of the VAT.

### Amendment 6
**Proposal for a directive**
**Recital 17 a (new)**

**Text proposed by the Commission**

**Amendment**

(17a) The Commission's proposal is only a building block for closing the VAT gap; further measures are needed to effectively combat VAT fraud in the Union.
Amendment 7
Proposal for a directive
Article 1 — paragraph 1 — point 1 (new)
Directive 2006/112/EC
Article 14 — paragraph 3 a (new)

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

(-1) In Article 14, the following paragraph is added:

‘3a. Where a taxable person, acting in its own name but on behalf of another person, participates in a distance sale of goods imported from third countries or territories in a consignment having an intrinsic value of less than EUR 150, or the equivalent in national currency, and has an annual turnover exceeding EUR 1 000 000, or the equivalent in national currency, in the current calendar year, and including cases where a telecommunications network, an interface or a portal is used for the purpose of the distance sale, that taxable person shall be deemed to have received and supplied those goods itself.’

Amendment 8
Proposal for a directive
Article 1 — paragraph 1 — point 2
Directive 2006/112/EC
Article 58 — paragraph 2 — point b

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

(b) services are provided to customers located in any Member State other than the Member State referred to in point (a); and

Amendment 9
Proposal for a directive
Article 1 — paragraph 1 — point 2
Directive 2006/112/EC
Article 58 — paragraph 2 — point c

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

(c) the total value, exclusive of VAT, of such supplies does not in the current calendar year exceed EUR 10 000, or the equivalent in national currency, and did not do so in the course of the preceding calendar year.
### Amendment 10

**Proposal for a directive**

**Article 1 — paragraph 1 — point 6**

Directive 2006/112/EC

Article 369 — paragraph 2 — subparagraph 2

**Text proposed by the Commission**

‘The Member State of identification shall determine the period throughout which those records shall be kept by the taxable person not established within the Community.’

**Amendment**

‘Those records shall be kept for a period of five years from the end of the calendar year during which the transaction was carried out.’

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### Amendment 11

**Proposal for a directive**

**Article 2 — title**

**Text proposed by the Commission**

Amendments to Directive 2006/112/EC with effect from 1 January 2021.

**Amendment**

Amendments to Directive 2006/112/EC with effect from 1 April 2021.

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### Amendment 12

**Proposal for a directive**

**Article 2 — paragraph 1**

**Text proposed by the Commission**

With effect from 1 January 2021, Directive 2006/112/EC is amended as follows:

**Amendment**

With effect from 1 April 2021, Directive 2006/112/EC is amended as follows:

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### Amendment 13

**Proposal for a directive**

**Article 2 — paragraph 1 — point 6**

Directive 2006/112/EC

Title V — Chapter 3a — Article 59c — paragraph 1 — point c

**Text proposed by the Commission**

(c) the total value, exclusive of VAT, of the supplies covered by these provisions does not in the current calendar year exceed EUR **10 000**, or the equivalent in national currency, nor did it do so in the course of the preceding calendar year.

**Amendment**

(c) the total value, exclusive of VAT, of the supplies covered by these provisions does not in the current calendar year exceed EUR **35 000**, or the equivalent in national currency, nor did it do so in the course of the preceding calendar year.
Amendment 14
Proposal for a directive
Article 2 — paragraph 1 — point 7
Directive 2006/112/EC
Article 143 — paragraph 1 — point ca

Text proposed by the Commission

'(ca) the importation of goods where the VAT is declared under the special scheme in Chapter 6, Section 4, of Title XII and where, at the latest upon lodging of the import declaration, the VAT identification number of the supplier or of the intermediary acting on his behalf allocated under Article 369q has been provided to the competent customs office in the Member State of importation;'

Amendment

'(ca) the importation of goods where the VAT is declared under the special scheme in Chapter 6, Section 4, of Title XII and where, at the latest upon lodging of the import declaration, the VAT identification number of the supplier or of the intermediary acting on his behalf allocated under Article 369q has been provided to the competent customs office in the Member State of importation, while the Commission shall specify in an act the precise nature of the import declaration;'

Amendment 15
Proposal for a directive
Article 2 — paragraph 1 — point 21
Directive 2006/112/EC
Article 369b — paragraph 1

Text proposed by the Commission

Member States shall permit any taxable person carrying out intra-Community distance sales of goods and any taxable person not established in the Member State of consumption supplying services to a non-taxable person who is established or has his permanent address or usually resides in that Member State, to use this special scheme. This special scheme applies to all those goods or services supplied in the Community.

Amendment

Member States shall permit any taxable person carrying out intra-Community distance sales of goods and any taxable person not established in the Member State of consumption supplying any services to a non-taxable person to use the special scheme under this chapter, regardless of where such non-taxable person is established or has his permanent address or usually resides. This special scheme applies to all those goods or services supplied in the Community.
Amendment 16
Proposal for a directive
Article 2 — paragraph 1 — point 29
Directive 2006/112/EC
Article 369l — paragraph 1 — point 5 a (new)

Text proposed by the Commission

(5a) The value of the goods, which may not exceed EUR 150 in accordance with this paragraph, shall be determined by the currency conversion pursuant to Article 53 of the Union Customs Code, provided that the goods are being traded in foreign currencies.

Amendment 17
Proposal for a directive
Article 2 — paragraph 1 — point 30
Directive 2006/112/EC
Article 369y — paragraph 1

Text proposed by the Commission

Where the person for whom the imported goods in consignments of an intrinsic value not exceeding EUR 150 are destined does not opt for the application of the standard arrangements for importation of goods, including for the application of a reduced VAT rate in accordance with Article 94 (2), the Member State of importation shall permit the person presenting the goods to customs within the territory of the Community to make use of special arrangements for declaration and payment of import VAT in respect of goods for which the dispatch or transport ends in that Member State.

Amendment 18
Proposal for a directive
Article 2 — paragraph 1 — point 30
Directive 2006/112/EC
Article 369z — paragraph 1 — point b

Text proposed by the Commission

(b) the person presenting the goods to customs within the territory of the Community shall be responsible for collecting the VAT from the person for whom the goods are destined.

Amendment

(b) the person declaring the goods to customs within the territory of the Community shall be responsible for collecting the VAT from the person for whom the goods are destined.
Amendment 19
Proposal for a directive
Article 2 — paragraph 1 — point 30
Directive 2006/112/EC
Article 369z — paragraph 2

Text proposed by the Commission
2. Member States shall provide that the person presenting the goods to customs within the territory of the Community takes appropriate measures to ensure that the correct tax is paid by the person for whom the goods are destined.

Amendment
2. Member States shall provide that the person declaring the goods to customs within the territory of the Community takes appropriate measures to ensure that the correct tax is paid by the person for whom the goods are destined.

Amendment 20
Proposal for a directive
Article 3 — paragraph 1

Text proposed by the Commission
With effect from 1 January 2021, Title IV of Directive 2009/132/EC is deleted.

Amendment
With effect from 1 April 2021, Title IV of Directive 2009/132/EC is deleted.

Amendment 21
Proposal for a directive
Article 4 — paragraph 1 — subparagraph 4

Text proposed by the Commission
They shall apply the provisions necessary to comply with Articles 2 and 3 of this Directive with from 1 January 2021.

Amendment
They shall apply the provisions necessary to comply with Articles 2 and 3 of this Directive from 1 April 2021.
Administrative cooperation and combating fraud in the field of value added tax *


(Special legislative procedure — consultation)

(2018/C 356/53)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to the Commission proposal to the Council (COM(2016)0755),

— having regard to Article 113 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, pursuant to which the Council consulted Parliament (C8-0003/2017),

— having regard to Rule 78c of its Rules of Procedure,

— having regard to the report of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs (A8-0306/2017),

1. Approves the Commission proposal as amended;

2. Calls on the Commission to alter its proposal accordingly, in accordance with Article 293(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union;

3. Calls on the Council to notify Parliament if it intends to depart from the text approved by Parliament;

4. Asks the Council to consult Parliament again if it intends to substantially amend the Commission proposal;

5. Instructs its President to forward its position to the Council, the Commission and the national parliaments.

Amendment 1
Proposal for a regulation
Recital 1a (new)

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

(1a) The VAT gap in the Union is estimated at 12.8% or EUR 152 billion per year including EUR 50 billion of cross-border VAT fraud, making VAT an important issue to be addressed at Union level.
### Amendment 2
#### Proposal for a regulation
#### Recital 5

**Text proposed by the Commission**

(5) As under the special schemes, a Member State of identification collects and controls VAT on behalf of the Member States of consumption, it is appropriate to provide for a mechanism whereby the Member State of identification would receive a fee from the Member States of consumption concerned compensating for the costs of collection and control. However, as the current system whereby a fee is retained from the VAT amounts to be transferred by the Member State of identification to the Member States of consumption has caused complications for tax administrations, in particular when dealing with reimbursements, such a fee should be calculated and paid annually, outside the special schemes.

**Amendment**

(5) As under the special schemes, a Member State of identification collects and controls VAT on behalf of the Member States of consumption, it is appropriate to provide for a mechanism whereby the Member State of identification would receive a fee from the Member States of consumption concerned compensating for the costs of collection and control. However, as the current system whereby a fee is retained from the VAT amounts to be transferred by the Member State of identification to the Member States of consumption has caused complications for tax administrations, in particular when dealing with reimbursements, such a fee should be calculated and paid annually, outside the special schemes, and where a rebate is paid between differing national currencies, the valid exchange rate published by the European Central Bank should be applied.

### Amendment 3
#### Proposal for a regulation
#### Recital 6

**Text proposed by the Commission**

(6) To simplify the collection of statistical data concerning the application of the special schemes, the Commission should be authorised to automatically access general information related to the special schemes stored in the Member States' electronic systems, with the exception of data concerning individual taxable persons.

**Amendment**

(6) To simplify the collection of statistical data concerning the application of the special schemes, the Commission should be authorised to automatically access general information related to the special schemes stored in the Member States' electronic systems, with the exception of data concerning individual taxable persons. Member States should be encouraged to ensure that such general information is available to other relevant national authorities, if that is not already the case, in order to combat VAT fraud and money laundering.

### Amendment 4
#### Proposal for a regulation
#### Recital 7 a (new)

**Text proposed by the Commission**

(7a) Communication between the Commission and Member States should be adequate and effective, with a view to attaining the objectives of this Regulation in a timely manner.
Amendment 5
Proposal for a regulation
Recital 9 a (new)

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

(9a) The use of IT in combating fraud could allow the competent authorities to identify fraud networks faster and in a comprehensive manner. A targeted and balanced approach using new technologies could reduce the need for Member States’ general anti-fraud measures and at the same time increase the efficiency of anti-fraud policy.

Amendment 6
Proposal for a regulation
Article 1 — paragraph 1 — point 5 — point b

Regulation (EU) No 904/2010
Section 3 — Subsection 1 — Article 47a — paragraph 1

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

The provisions of this Section shall apply from 1 January 2021. Member States shall exchange all information referred to in Subsection 2 without delay, unless expressly stated otherwise.

Amendment 7
Proposal for a regulation
Article 1 — paragraph 1 — point 5 — point b

Regulation (EU) No 904/2010
Section 3 — Subsection 3 — Article 47j — paragraph 4

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

4. Each Member State shall communicate to the other Member States and the Commission the details of the competent person responsible for coordination of administrative enquiries within that Member State. That information shall be published on the website of the Commission.
Amendment 8
Proposal for a regulation
Article 1 — paragraph 1 — point 5 — point b
Regulation (EU) No 904/2010
Section 3 — Subsection 4 — Article 47l — paragraph 3 a (new)

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

Within two years of the date of application of this Regulation, the Commission shall conduct a review to ensure the viability and cost effectiveness of the fee and, if necessary, take steps for correction.

Amendment 9
Proposal for a regulation
Article 1 — paragraph 1 — point 5 — point b
Regulation (EU) No 904/2010
Section 3 — Subsection 5 — Article 47m — paragraph 1

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

Member States shall grant the Commission access to statistical information stored in their electronic system pursuant to Article 17(1)(d). This information shall not contain any personal data and shall be limited to the information necessary for relevant statistical purposes.

Amendment 10
Proposal for a regulation
Article 1 — paragraph 1 — point 5 — point b
Regulation (EU) No 904/2010
Section 3 — Subsection 6 — Article 47n — paragraph 1 — point f

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

(f) the information to be accessed by the Commission as referred to in Article 47m as well as the technical means for the extraction of this information.

(f) the information to be accessed by the Commission as referred to in Article 47m as well as the technical means for the extraction of this information. The Commission shall ensure that the extraction of data does not impose an unnecessary administrative burden on Member States.