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P8_TA(2016)0312

Preparation of the Commission Work Programme 2017

European Parliament resolution of 6 July 2016 on the strategic priorities for the Commission Work Programme 2017 (2016/2773(RSP))

(2018/C 101/08)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Political Guidelines for the European Commission entitled ‘A New Start for Europe: My Agenda for Jobs, Growth, Fairness and Democratic Change’, presented by Jean-Claude Juncker on 15 July 2014,
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 27 October 2015 entitled ‘Commission Work Programme 2016 — No time for business as usual’ (COM(2015)0610) and Annexes I to VI thereto,
 - having regard to the Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law-Making of 13 April 2016,
 - having regard to the Conference of Committee Chairs’ Summary Report, which provides complementary input to this resolution from the point of view of parliamentary committees and which the Commission should take duly into account when drafting and adopting its Work Programme for 2017,
 - having regard to its resolution of 28 June 2016 on the decision to leave the EU resulting from the UK referendum ⁽¹⁾,
 - having regard to the European Council conclusions of 28-29 June 2016,
 - having regard to the contribution of the Committee of the Regions to the Commission’s 2017 Work Programme,
 - having regard to Rule 37(3) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the European integration process has brought peace and contributed to security and prosperity in Europe for decades;
- B. whereas Europe now faces many common and global challenges, but also increasing frustration and worry among many citizens about uncertain life prospects and a lack of opportunities that citizens expect decision-makers to respond to; whereas, if it is to succeed, the European Union cannot be reduced to an economic project; whereas it is urgent to win back the hearts of Europeans in favour of the European project and to strengthen economic, social and territorial cohesion;
- C. whereas the EU’s overlapping crises require effective European solutions, strongly anchored in a more democratic process through the community method, with the full involvement of the European Parliament and the national parliaments and in accordance with Article 5 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality;
- D. whereas the EU is our common home and must offer a place of safety and a stable economic environment for its citizens; whereas sustainability and economic growth are compatible and can be mutually reinforcing; whereas it is important to bring the EU out of the lengthy economic crisis by stepping up sustainable investments, reducing disparities and implementing agreed policies and developing better ones, in particular by deepening the internal market and improving the Economic and Monetary Union;
- E. whereas we have chosen to pursue a common future, as a community based on shared values and cherishing the richness and diversity of our traditions and history; whereas we want Europe to play its role and take up its responsibility on the global stage, committed to solidarity, multilateralism, our external partnerships and promoting

⁽¹⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0294.

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convergence on better standards; whereas we want to secure our common project of shared peace, prosperity and democracy, with a view to creating an appealing future for all generations;

Improving the working and living conditions of European citizens

1. Recalls that Europe's economic recovery has been modest and unbalanced, with many regions of the Union still experiencing unacceptable levels of unemployment, poverty, inequality and a severe lack of prospects for younger generations; the EU must work therefore towards a dynamic and inclusive labour market embedded in the European social market economy model, improving citizens' living conditions and enabling fair mobility; is convinced that all EU citizens must count on a fundamental set of fair working conditions and access to quality education, social protection and essential services which enable a work-life balance and meet the needs of a modern labour market within the EU; recognises that at the heart of a competitive and inclusive economy is its capacity to leverage the talent of women and men in all activities;

2. Calls on the Commission, to that end, to build on the ongoing public consultation and Parliament's forthcoming report by putting forward, in line with the subsidiarity principle and Treaty objectives, a proposal on a European pillar of social rights, to be translated into concrete initiatives, in particular to:

- promote the accessibility and quality of early education, childcare and healthcare, which are crucial to ensuring that no child is left behind; the Commission should therefore reflect on further actions to develop social investment, and in particular to reduce child poverty;
- close the skills gap and ensure access to quality education, training and lifelong learning for all;
- reduce social inequalities and promote quality employment, especially for young people and the long-term unemployed in order to boost economic growth;
- address work-life balance challenges and the gender gap in pay and pensions;

3. Stresses that the Commission should monitor, encourage and support Member States' efficient and effective spending of funds to boost youth employment and the creation of quality employment, in particular in regions with high unemployment levels, through programmes for jobs and growth such as those financed by the Youth Employment Initiative, the European Structural and Investment Funds, the European Fund for Strategic Investments and the European Investment Bank;

4. Emphasises that the Commission, in cooperation with the Member States and social partners, should also reinforce the European social dialogue with a view to better reconciling labour markets and social protection demands in order to address social inequalities and competitiveness challenges;

Strengthening economic recovery and long-term competitiveness with a view to creating jobs and generating prosperity

5. Is convinced that the EU can be a world leader by unleashing the full potential of its single market and promoting entrepreneurship, fair competition and investment in innovation;

6. Holds the view that the EU must foster a strong and diversified European business landscape; points out that the EU's competition policy is instrumental to the functioning of its social market economy; stresses that, if it is to remain competitive, fit for purpose and future-proof, European industry must become sustainable and go digital; shares the Commission's philosophy that Europe has to be big on big things and small on small things;

7. Calls for re-launching the sustainable growth and employment strategy Europe 2020, with a real ambition for the future, in particular for improving our social market economy model and implementing structural reforms to modernise Member States' economies and bring about widely shared prosperity; is convinced that boosting employment and

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productivity remains the top priority, and that the EU needs targeted investments to accelerate the transition towards an innovative, resource-efficient, digital economy with a view to reindustrialising Europe and reshoring jobs;

8. Asks the Commission to design a new, ambitious industrial strategy building on and complementing the circular economy package; points out that additional private and public investments are needed for energy transition, eco-innovative SMEs, research and education;

9. Calls on the Commission to propose more measures which would foster research and development, innovation, cultural diversity and creativity as key drivers of job creation, while bearing in mind that companies', and in particular SMEs', access to capital is vital in order to encourage development and production of new products and services in both traditional and emerging sectors and effective protection of intellectual property rights;

10. Considers that the single market needs to be further integrated, in particular in the digital area, creating a fair environment for consumers and SMEs and removing unjustified barriers; is deeply convinced that a globally competitive, innovative, citizen-oriented digital single market is a possible way forward to respond to the challenges of the 21st century;

11. Expects the Commission to mobilise all its powers and competences to promote a transition to a better growth model consistent with the principles of sustainable development which entails its economic, social and environmental dimensions;

Responding to climate change and ensuring energy security

12. Recalls that efforts must be stepped up to achieve the Energy Union, which will guarantee energy security and affordable and sustainable energy for all citizens and businesses;

13. Notes the human and economic consequences of climate disasters in Europe; highlights the importance of continuing to address the root causes of climate change, while ensuring the competitiveness of our industry, with an ambitious climate strategy, including energy efficiency;

14. Calls for necessarily ambitious targets to be set at EU level for greenhouse gas reductions and renewables and energy efficiency for the post-2020 period, in line with the Paris COP 21 Agreement;

15. Asks the Commission to develop a common strategy for energy and climate diplomacy that would address these global concerns;

16. Asks the Commission to identify efforts to phase out fossil fuel subsidies, while mitigating possible economic and social impacts;

Ensuring a consistent response to the increased inflow of refugees

17. Is of the opinion that the European Union must work out concrete solutions to address the refugee emergency, in particular by addressing its root causes, by strengthening cooperation with countries of transit and origin of migration flows and by using all available policies and instruments to ensure their stabilisation, rehabilitation and development;

18. Encourages the Commission, in cooperation with the Member States, to pursue necessary humanitarian assistance and ensure decent living conditions in refugee camps, combined with longer-term development programmes, especially in the field of education;

19. Points out that the EU asylum and migration policy is not fit for purpose and needs a fundamental rethink, based on Article 80 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union; holds that no reform of the Common European Asylum System should lead to lowering the current level of protection in EU asylum law;

20. Calls for systematic, enforceable programmes to be organised for the direct resettlement and relocation of asylum-seekers;

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21. Calls for conditions to be created within the EU for a well-managed reception of asylum-seekers that would ensure their safety and humane treatment, paying particular attention to the needs of vulnerable groups; stresses, at the same time, that sufficient resources must be guaranteed to ensure labour market integration and social inclusion of refugees;

22. Asks the Commission to make proposals for establishing a proper EU economic and legal migration policy that builds on existing instruments for students, researchers and highly skilled workers, and in the longer term for establishing more general rules governing entry and residence for those third country nationals seeking employment in the Union with a view to filling the gaps identified in the EU labour markets;

23. Believes that, as international migration is a global phenomenon that is growing in scope, complexity and impact, the EU and the rest of the international community must assume their respective responsibilities in this field;

Addressing the security concerns of citizens

24. Stresses that internal and external security are increasingly linked;

25. Urges the Commission, following the adoption of the proposal for a European Border and Coast Guard, to ensure its rapid start-up, and allocation of the necessary human and logistical capacities;

26. Calls on the Commission, with a view to addressing the threats of terrorism and violent extremism, to monitor closely the transposition and implementation of EU counter-terrorism measures, including effective police and judicial cooperation, timely sharing of information among national authorities and through Europol and Eurojust, and measures to tackle emerging trends of terrorism financing;

27. Calls on the Commission to mobilise expertise and technical and financial resources in order to ensure EU-level coordination and exchanges of best practices in the fight against violent extremism and terrorist propaganda, radical networks and recruitment by terrorist organisations through offline and online means, with a particular focus on prevention, integration and re-integration strategies;

28. Urges the Commission and the Member States to ensure full implementation of security legislation already adopted; reiterates its call for an in-depth evaluation of the EU counter-terrorism strategy, assessing both the application of the adopted measures and their effectiveness; expects the Commission to update the security agenda as necessary in the light of the evolving terrorist threat;

29. Calls on the Commission to present its announced proposals for a proper legal basis for the European Counter Terrorism Centre within Europol, proposals to improve and develop existing information systems, address information gaps and move towards interoperability, as well as proposals for compulsory information sharing at EU level, accompanied by necessary data protection safeguards;

Deploying an ambitious external action agenda: on neighbourhood and on the global system

30. Calls for an ambitious the EU Global Strategy which positions the EU as a geopolitical player in a rapidly changing world, and expects the Commission and the European External Action Service to mobilise in a coherent way all EU external action instruments with a view to achieving improved global governance, wide convergence on better standards, improved security and stronger respect for human rights in the world; stresses, to that end, that the following key elements should be moved to the top of the EU's external affairs agenda:

- promoting stability and prosperity in the EU's neighbourhood, through initiatives fostering development, democracy, good governance and the rule of law, by enhancing civilian conflict prevention and reconciliation measures, and activities in the context of the common security and defence policy, including with the appropriate involvement of NATO, which, for those states which are members of it, remains the foundation of their collective defence and the forum for its implementation;
- reviving, with the support of the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the common security and defence policy, which can no longer be the weakest link in the EU integration process; the security environment requires European defence to become a fully fledged policy that provides

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equal security for, and shows equal concern for the vital security preoccupations of, all Member States; structures, mechanisms or tools that already exist must become an operational reality;

- moving forward the enlargement negotiation process by strengthening social, political and economic stability and democracy in the candidate countries, without concessions on the Copenhagen accession criteria;
- making development cooperation policy more effective and better coordinated, and coherent with other instruments of the EU's external action; ensuring coherence and consistency between development and security policies, as they are interlinked, interdependent and mutually reinforcing;
- integrating the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) in the EU's external and internal policies; urges the Commission to report on its plan for implementation, monitoring, follow-up and incorporation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs;
- promoting trade as an important instrument for fostering growth, jobs and competitiveness and promoting EU standards relating to human rights and sustainable development; the Union's trade defence instruments must be modernised and vigorously applied, and non-standard methodologies used where appropriate;
- adopting solutions to counter hybrid threats and foster the resilience of the EU and Member States, as well as that of EU partners, notably in the EU neighbourhood;

Fair taxation policies for adequate resources

31. Stresses that there has never been a more urgent need to step up the fight against tax evasion and tax avoidance, which represents potential income to national budgets of up to EUR 1 trillion; considers that these resources could have been spent on investing in the future, boosting employment and reducing inequalities;

32. Underlines that the Commission must continue to act without delay to ensure that profits are taxed in the European countries where the economic activity actually takes place and value created; the EU should work towards a mandatory common consolidated corporate tax base, step up efforts to investigate tax-related state aid breaches, apply common rules on the use and transparency of tax rulings and pursue a determined common approach to close down tax havens;

33. Calls on the Commission to include in its fight against tax evasion and tax avoidance an external dimension, including as regards profits that leave the EU without being taxed;

Strengthening the EU budget and financial instruments

34. Is of the opinion that, in order to act effectively, the EU needs a new financial and fiscal strategy; considers that the Commission should, to this end, propose measures based on the following principles and elements:

- mobilising adequate resources swiftly; it is inevitable to reform the system of financing the Union by strengthening genuine own resources or introducing new ones, in order to make the Union budget more stable, more sustainable and more predictable; at the same time, it is important to respect the principle of universality and to improve transparency;
- for maximum results, EU budgetary instruments must be managed with close attention to performance and cost-effectiveness, while ensuring compliance and protecting EU financial interests;
- the EU should take steps to put together resources for responding to the challenges of high youth and long-term unemployment and the internal and external dimensions of the refugee emergency;
- after only two years of implementation, the multiannual financial framework (MFF) has reached its limits; furthermore, without a comprehensive mid-term revision of the MFF, the EU budget will be unable to address additional financial needs and new political priorities, and unable to avoid the resurgence of a payment crisis; calls on the Commission to

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present a review of the functioning of the MFF before the end of 2016 and to take decisive action to revise the ceilings of the MFF upward and expand its flexibility to respond to circumstances not foreseen in 2013;

- the European Fund for Strategic Investment (EFSI) needs to be managed in a way that enables all Member States to undertake high levels of strategic investment in line with the EFSI regulation and ensures that funding for investment is contributing to the transition to a sustainable economy and society; the Commission's proposal for the EFSI's next phase should be based on these objectives;
- effective implementation of cohesion policy for 2014-2020 should be accompanied by preparations for its post-2020 phase, respecting its true nature as set out in the Treaties, its importance for the development of the single market and its potential as an investment tool accessible to all regions in the EU; synergies between the European Structural and Investment Funds, the EFSI and other EU funding instruments should be strengthened with a view to accelerating smart, green and inclusive growth, with a credible balance between grants and financial instruments being developed and avoiding any decrease in cohesion policy budget;
- the Commission should present proposals to reduce the bureaucratic complexity of the CAP for farmers; the Commission should further devise improved instruments to deal with extreme crises on the agricultural markets; believes that framework legislation at EU level is necessary to tackle unfair trading practices in the food supply chain so as to ensure that European farmers and consumers may benefit from fair selling and buying conditions;

Completing the Economic and Monetary Union

35. Insists on respecting the requirements in Union law regarding democratic accountability for decisions in the context of European economic governance;
36. Holds the view that the EU needs to be working towards upward economic and social convergence, in full compliance with the Stability and Growth Pact rules and with the European Semester governance framework;
37. Considers that the Commission should consistently improve its monitoring of debts, deficits and macroeconomic imbalances in a way that respects the Stability and Growth Pact and encourages economic growth and job creation, with increased attention to the euro area's aggregate fiscal stance;
38. Believes that the EU needs to improve the credibility, consistency, national ownership and democratic legitimacy of the European Semester in order to ensure that Member States implement the country-specific recommendations with structural reforms and investments aimed at modernising their economies and increasing competitiveness, pursue fiscal responsibility and tackle inequalities and imbalances;
39. Calls for closer economic policy coordination with a view to addressing the euro area's investment gaps and strengthening reform efforts in order to increase competitiveness and to sustain demand;
40. Considers that the banking union needs to be completed, with risk-reduction measures going hand in hand with risk-sharing;
41. Notes that the outcomes of the ongoing reflection on developing an Economic and Monetary Union fiscal capacity should be taken into account;
42. Asks the Commission to present a consistent and well-substantiated set of proposals on completing the Economic and Monetary Union as identified by the Five Presidents' Report;

Strengthening fundamental rights and democracy

43. Is concerned that the ongoing crises have not only damaged the cohesion of European societies, but also shaken the faith of European citizens in democratic institutions at EU and sometimes national level; believes, therefore, that enhancing the EU's democratic legitimacy and restoring trust in its capacity to serve the interests of citizens must be Europe's highest priority;

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44. Recalls that many of today's challenges, from climate change to asylum and migration, from financial markets to corporations' supply chains, and from terrorist networks to failed and rogue states, are transnational and require European solutions defined through the community method, with the full involvement of the Commission and Parliament;

45. Recalls that, as the guardian of the Treaties, the Commission is responsible for promoting the general interest of the Union (Article 17 TEU), namely peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples (Article 3 TEU); points out that Parliament also has a particular political responsibility in helping to overcome divisions between Member States, defend the general interest of Europeans and ensure democratic legitimacy for decisions taken at European level; calls on the Commission to ensure that all initiatives, including those of the European Council, are compliant with the provisions of the Treaties;

46. Asks the Commission to take initiatives with a view to strengthening the European institutions and encouraging EU citizens to be more involved in European political life; calls for all the EU institutions to connect better with younger generations and their platforms for debate; believes that stronger actions are also possible to inform EU citizens about their rights, exploit the potential of the European Citizens' Initiative and strengthen the role of the EU Ombudsman;

47. Stresses that the Commission should put forward proposals for democracy, rule of law and fundamental rights, taking into consideration Parliament's forthcoming report; believes that it should also continue to progress towards EU accession to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), taking into account the Court of Justice opinion on the matter and addressing the remaining legal challenges;

48. Calls for all the EU institutions to strive for the highest possible standards of transparency, accountability and integrity and to fight conflicts of interest;

49. Is committed to using all its tools and resources to act as a driving force in a renewed democratic process towards the reform of the European Union;

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50. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission.
