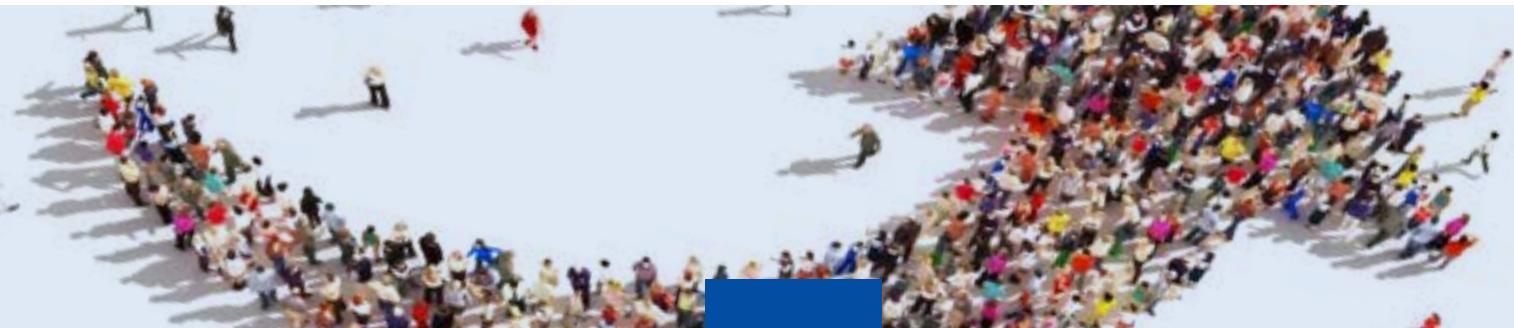


THE EUROPEAN
UNION
EXPLAINED



Ten priorities for Europe

A new start for Europe:
an EU agenda for jobs, growth,
fairness and democratic change



THE EUROPEAN UNION EXPLAINED

This publication is a part of a series that explains what the EU does in different policy areas, why the EU is involved and what the results are.

You can find the publications online:
http://europa.eu/pol/index_en.htm
<http://europa.eu/lbY34KD>

How the EU works

Ten priorities for Europe 
 The founding fathers of the EU

Agriculture

Banking and finance

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Budget

Climate action

Competition

Consumers

Culture and audiovisual

Customs

Digital single market

Economic and monetary union and the euro

Education, training, youth and sport

Employment and social affairs

Energy

Enlargement

Environment

Food safety

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Humanitarian aid and civil protection

Internal market

International cooperation and development

Justice, fundamental rights and equality

Maritime affairs and fisheries

Migration and asylum

Public health

Regional policy

Research and innovation

Taxation

Trade

Transport

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TEN PRIORITIES FOR EUROPE

Ten priorities for Europe

The European Union is facing unprecedented challenges ranging from high unemployment, slow economic growth, economic uncertainties and a huge investment gap to migratory pressure and environmental and security challenges, as well as instability in its neighbourhood. Many citizens have lost confidence in the capacity of political institutions at all levels to tackle these challenges. Some achievements of European integration so far, like the free movement of persons and open internal borders, are being questioned. Populism and nationalism are on the rise.

In November 2014, Jean-Claude Juncker took over as President of the European Commission, the executive organ of the European Union. He was elected on a political programme whose main purpose is to rebuild bridges in Europe and to restore European citizens' confidence by focusing EU policies on the key challenges ahead for our economies and societies, as well as to strengthen democratic legitimacy. To meet all of these challenges, Jean-Claude Juncker identified the 10 key priorities which are outlined in this booklet. They are the main focus for the EU institutions in 2015.



Jean-Claude Juncker,
 President of the European
 Commission, delivering the
 State of the Union speech at
 the European Parliament,
 September 2015.

The EU explained: Ten priorities for Europe

European Commission

Directorate-General for Communication

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A new boost for jobs, growth and investment

The European Commission's top priority is to get Europe growing again and increase the number of jobs without creating new debt.

Since the start of the global economic and financial crisis, the EU has been suffering from low levels of investment and high unemployment. Collective efforts at European level are needed to help Europe's economy recover.

As a result of the crisis, uncertainty in the economic outlook and high public and private debt in parts of the EU have been holding back investments. Resources are available, however, so money must be channelled to where it is most needed and projects must be developed to make best use of these resources.

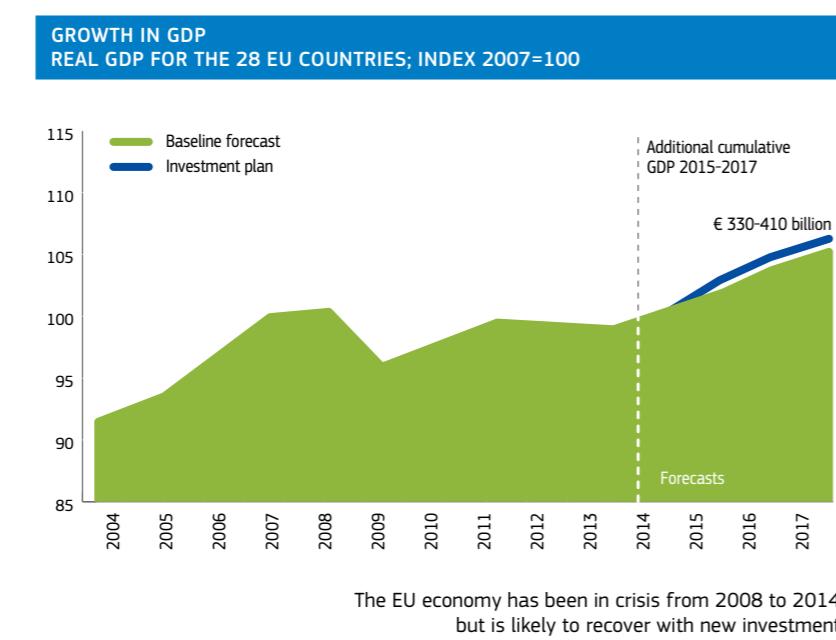
This Commission is focused on making smarter use of existing financial resources and making flexible use of public funds while improving the quality of regulation. It foresees a mobilisation of public and private sources of finance where public money is used to generate additional private investment without creating new debt.

To provide this additional financing and to target projects of strategic and societal importance, the Commission, in cooperation with the European Investment Bank, launched the investment plan for Europe. At its heart lies a new European Fund for Strategic Investments that has been created in record time in 2015, with an initial € 21 billion of EU money. This will grow thanks to a multiplier effect, triggering other investments of more than € 315 billion. This could create 1.3 million jobs in the coming 3 years. One quarter of the money will be invested in smaller businesses.

All the EU countries have endorsed the fund and may contribute to it. By October 2015, nine Member States had already pledged to contribute more than € 40 billion and China also indicated its intention to contribute.

Investment will be targeted towards:

- infrastructure — broadband, energy networks and transport;
- education, research and innovation;
- renewable energy and energy efficiency;
- projects to help young people find work.



Further reading and latest developments:
http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/jobs-growth-investment/index_en.htm

A connected digital single market

The Commission wants everyone to have better access to digital goods and services, to reliable high-speed infrastructure and to get the most out of the digital economy.

WHERE DO WE BUY ONLINE SERVICES FROM?



The internet and digital technologies are transforming the world. Europe must open up digital opportunities for people and businesses. At present, online barriers mean citizens miss out on opportunities to buy goods and services: only 15 % of EU citizens shop online from another EU country. Internet companies and start-ups do not take full advantage of online growth opportunities: only 7 % of small businesses sell cross-border. Businesses and governments are also not fully benefiting from digital tools.

A fully functional digital single market could contribute € 415 billion per year to the EU's economy and create 3.8 million jobs.

The digital single market strategy proposed by the Commission in May 2015 contains a set of actions to be achieved by the end of 2016. These include the following.

- **Providing better online access to digital goods and services by:**
 - ▶ harmonising EU rules on contracts and consumer protection when buying online, whether for physical goods like shoes and furniture or digital content like e-books and apps;
 - ▶ promoting cheaper cross-border parcel delivery services: 62 % of companies that would like to sell online say that high delivery costs are a barrier;
 - ▶ ending unjustified geo-blocking — a discriminatory practice where online sellers either deny consumers access to a website based on their location or re-route them to a local store with different prices. Such blocking can mean that, for example, car rental customers in one EU country may end up paying more for an identical car rental in the same location than customers from another EU country;
 - ▶ modernising copyright law to allow for wider online access to cultural works across the EU. In particular, the Commission wants to ensure that users who buy films, music or articles at home can also enjoy them while travelling across Europe;
- **Embarking on an ambitious overhaul of telecoms rules:** all digital services, applications and content depend on the availability of high-speed, secure infrastructures. This requires a strong, competitive and dynamic telecoms sector. Action needs to be taken to tackle the fact that markets remain isolated and national.
- **Maximising the growth potential of the digital economy.** This will be achieved by investment in ICT infrastructure for, to give an example, cloud computing and use of 'big data', as well as research and innovation to boost industrial competitiveness. It will also include better public services and improved digital skills for citizens — in short, an 'inclusive society'.

Further reading and latest developments:
http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/digital-single-market/index_en.htm

A resilient energy union with a forward-looking climate change policy

The Commission wants to ensure secure, affordable and climate-friendly energy for citizens and businesses. Using energy more wisely and fighting climate change is not only an investment in our children's future, it will also create new jobs and growth.

The European energy system faces a pressing need to ensure secure, sustainable, affordable and competitive energy for all citizens. Excessive dependence on a limited number of supply sources leaves countries vulnerable to supply disruptions. The EU must reduce its dependence on fossil fuels and cut greenhouse gas emissions, while ensuring that households and businesses are provided with affordable energy. The EU faces many challenges in achieving this.

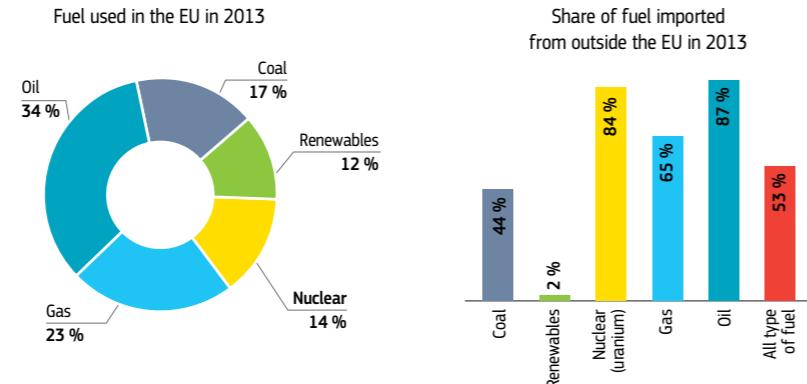
- The EU is the largest energy importer in the world, importing 53 % of its energy at an annual cost of around € 400 billion.
- Many electricity grids and gas pipelines are built for national purposes and are not well connected across borders. For example, until 2015 the electricity cables connecting France and Spain could only handle 3 % of peak demand south of the border. Fixing problems like these could save consumers up to € 40 billion a year.
- 75 % of our houses are energy inefficient; 94 % of transport relies on oil products, of which 90 % are imported.
- Wholesale electricity prices in Europe are 30 % higher and wholesale gas prices are over 100 % greater than in the United States.

In February 2015, the Commission set out its strategy to achieve a resilient energy union with a forward-looking climate change policy. The strategy will ensure that the EU is well placed to meet its challenges based on solidarity and trust between Member States. The strategy focuses on the following five key areas.

- **Secure supplies:** the EU must become less dependent on energy from outside its borders. This means making better, more efficient use of our domestic energy sources while diversifying to other sources and supplies.

The strategy is accompanied by an action plan presenting specific measures that will be prepared and implemented over the coming years. In July, the Commission presented proposals to deliver a new deal for energy consumers, to launch a redesign of the European electricity market, to update energy efficiency labelling and to revise the EU emissions trading system.

WHERE DOES OUR ENERGY COME FROM?



Europeans need more secure and sustainable energy sources.

- **Internal energy market:** energy should flow freely across the EU, without any technical or regulatory barriers. Only then can energy providers freely compete and provide the best energy prices. The free flow will also make it easier to produce more renewable energy.
- **Energy efficiency:** consuming less energy means less pollution and greater preservation of our domestic energy sources, reducing our need for energy imports.
- **Emissions reduction:** the agreed EU target of emitting at least 40 % fewer greenhouse gases by 2030 is a first step. This implies that we have to invest more in the development of renewable energy sources.
- **Research and innovation:** having the technological lead in alternative energy and reducing energy consumption will create huge export and industrial opportunities. This will also help boost growth and jobs.

Further reading and latest developments:
http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/energy-union/index_en.htm

A deeper and fairer internal market with a strengthened industrial base

An integrated EU economy is the best way to meet the challenges of globalisation. The EU needs to complete the internal market for products and services and make it the launch pad for companies and industry to thrive in the global economy. This creates growth and jobs. Enhancing fair, efficient, growth-friendly and transparent taxation is equally part of this priority.

The Commission's priorities are to:

- create a capital markets union, making it easier for small businesses to raise money and make Europe a more attractive place to invest;
- encourage workers to take up jobs in other EU countries in order to fill vacancies and meet the need for special skills;
- prevent social dumping;
- boost administrative cooperation among national tax authorities;
- work for the adoption of a common consolidated corporate tax base and a financial transaction tax at EU level.

In September 2015, following a public consultation, the Commission adopted an action plan setting out 20 key measures to achieve a true single market for capital in Europe. This project aims to unlock funding for Europe's businesses and to boost growth in the EU. The intention is to achieve this by 2019.

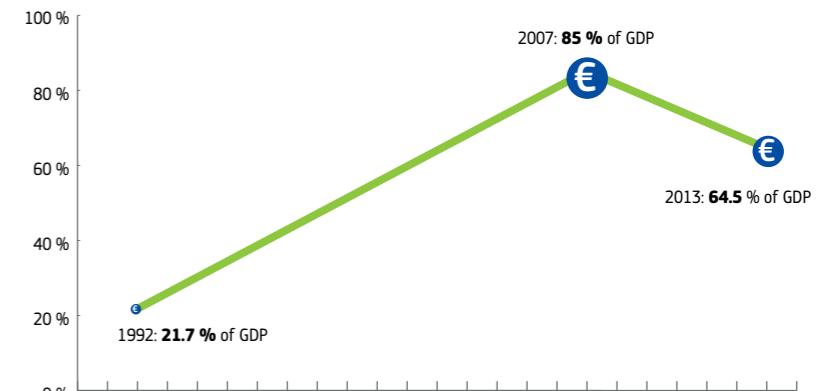
The free movement of capital is a long-standing objective of the European Union. Europe's capital markets, however, remain fragmented along national lines and European economies remain heavily reliant on banks for their funding needs. This makes them more vulnerable in times of recession to a tightening of bank lending. In other parts of the world it is more common that investors directly offer so-called 'venture capital' to new companies.

The capital markets union is intended to break down the barriers that are blocking cross-border investments in the EU and preventing businesses from getting access to finance. For example, if EU venture capital markets functioned like that of the United States, an extra € 90 billion might have been invested in companies between 2008 and 2013.

In June 2015, the Commission presented an action plan to fundamentally reform corporate taxation in the EU. It sets out a series of initiatives to tackle tax avoidance, secure sustainable revenues to finance public services and strengthen the single market for businesses. The action plan contains two key goals:

- the EU Member States should agree on common rules on how to calculate the basis on which they tax businesses. This would make it much cheaper for businesses to operate across borders and reduce tax avoidance while allowing different Member States to maintain different corporate tax rates;
- profits should be taxed where they are generated rather than on the basis of formal business structures or accounting transactions carried out for tax purposes.

STOCK MARKET CAPITALISATION IN THE EU (VALUE OF ALL SHARES) IN % OF GDP



Capital markets in the EU had problems after the financial crisis.

Further reading and latest developments:
http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/internal-market/index_en.htm

A deeper and fairer Economic and Monetary Union

To tackle the global economic crisis, the EU and its Member States took bold and unprecedented measures that were not always easy, especially for citizens, and that sometimes did not take their social consequences sufficiently into account. Now is the time to draw on the lessons learned for an improved economic governance and start completing the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) based on the 'Five Presidents' Report' under the lead of President Juncker.

The EMU was a major step in the integration of EU economies. It involves the coordination of economic and fiscal policies, a common monetary policy and a common currency, the euro. Whilst all 28 EU Member States take part in the economic union, some countries have taken integration further and have adopted the euro. Economic integration brings the benefits of greater size and internal efficiency to the EU economy as a whole and to the economies of the individual Member States. This, in turn, offers opportunities for economic stability, higher growth and more employment — outcomes of direct benefit to EU citizens.

Since the financial and economic crisis began in October 2008, the EU has taken action to ensure:

- **economic support** to the EU countries that were hit particularly hard by the crisis, combined with agreements on reforms. Most of these assistance programmes were successfully concluded in 2014, while the situation in Greece required new agreements in 2015;
- **the restoration of financial stability** and the formation of the right conditions for growth and job creation. There are now common rules on how to supervise banks and help banks in difficulty;
- a better EU system of economic and financial **governance**. All EU countries now discuss and analyse their public budget together.

The Commission's main objectives for improvement are as follows:

- to make decisions about providing support for struggling euro area countries more democratically legitimate, with enhanced parliamentary control at EU and national levels;
- to evaluate EU support and reform programmes not only for how they help create sustainable finances but also for their impact on the citizens of the country concerned;

ECONOMIC POLICY PRIORITIES: THREE PILLARS



- to review the rules on how the EU monitors the fiscal and macroeconomic situation and the national budgets;
- to encourage further structural reforms in the euro area.

In February 2015, the Commission presented an analysis to the Heads of State and Government on the main shortcomings of the EMU that had been revealed by the crisis. As a result, in June, **ambitious plans on how to deepen the EMU and how to complete it by 2025** at the latest were announced by the President of the Commission in close cooperation with the presidents of the euro summit, the Eurogroup (the ministers of the Member States in the euro area), the European Central Bank and the European Parliament (the so-called 'Five Presidents' Report'). Proposed measures include the introduction of a **European deposit insurance scheme** and the creation of a euro area treasury.

A reasonable and balanced free trade agreement with the United States

The European Commission is currently negotiating a trade agreement with the United States. The aim is to open up as much trade and investment as possible between the two blocs. This will result in more jobs and more growth on both sides.

The EU and the United States together make up 40 % of global economic output. A comprehensive Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) could bring important economic benefits, wider choice for consumers and new opportunities for businesses. TTIP would also strengthen the EU's strategic position in the world.

The agreement is about more than just removing tariffs. Tariffs between the EU and the United States are already low (on average only 4 %), so the main hurdles to trade lie 'behind the border' in regulations, non-tariff barriers and red tape. Estimates show that 80 % of the overall potential wealth gains of a trade deal will come from cutting administrative costs and from liberalising trade in services and public procurement.

With TTIP, the Commission wants to help people and businesses by:

- **opening up United States markets** to EU firms, including for public services;
- **helping cut red tape** that firms face when exporting;
- **setting new rules** to make it **easier and fairer to export, import and invest** overseas.

TTIP would help European firms sell more goods and services in the United States. European firms could also participate on an equal footing in United States government tenders. This would be good for the economy and for jobs.

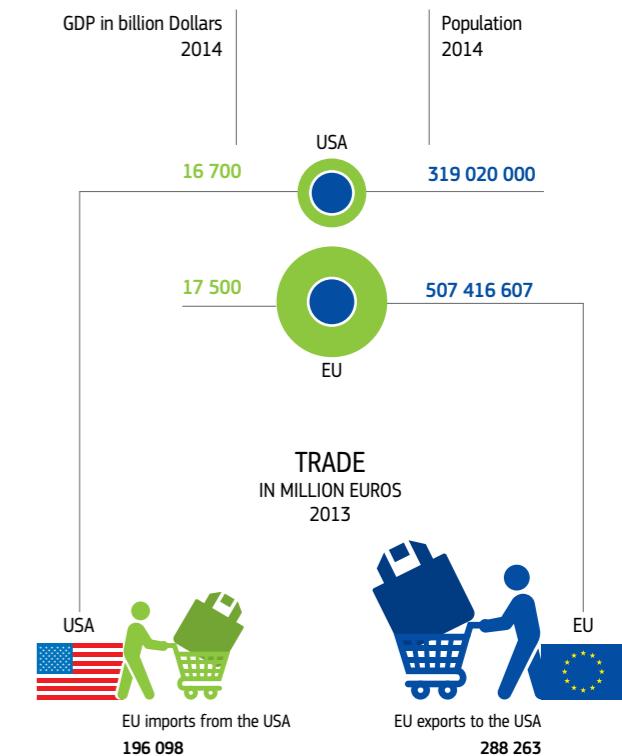
Here in Europe, cheaper American imports would mean more choice in the shops at lower prices: cheaper goods and services would also bring savings for business.

The Commission will negotiate a reasonable and balanced trade agreement with the United States. The Commission supports free trade, but not at the price of sacrificing European standards in areas such as food safety, health, social and data protection or cultural diversity.

In September the Commission proposed a new and transparent system for resolving disputes between investors and states — the investment court system. This would replace the existing investor-to-state dispute settlement (ISDS) mechanism in all ongoing and future EU investment negotiations, including the TTIP.

The European Parliament, which is elected by EU citizens, will have the final say on whether an agreement is acceptable.

TTIP: A NEW TRADE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE EU AND THE USA



Trade between the EU and the United States is already worth hundreds of billions of euros a year, and a new free trade agreement is likely to increase this further.

An area of justice and fundamental rights based on mutual trust

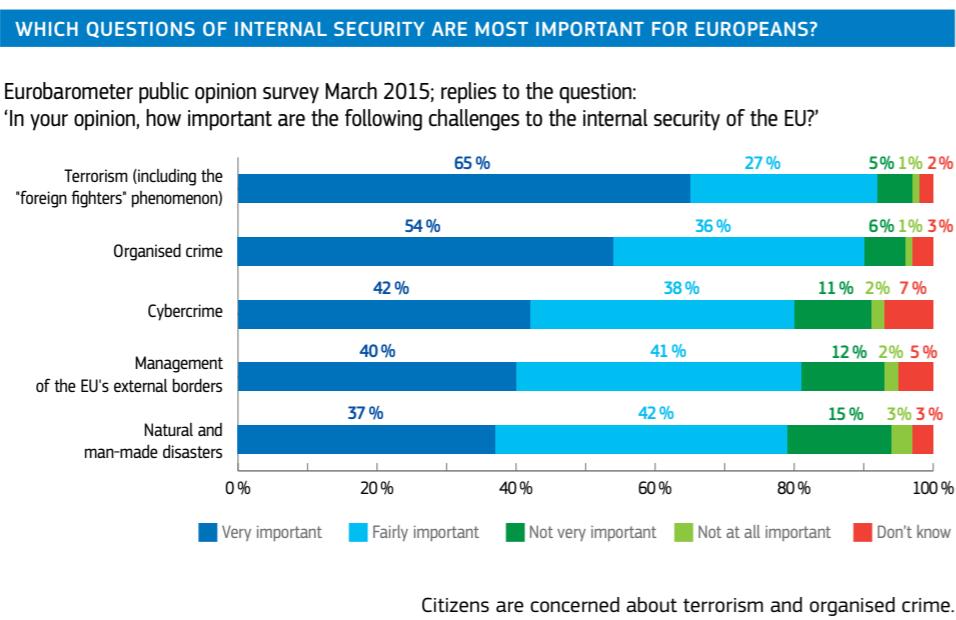
The EU is not simply a common market for goods and services. It is based on the values of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights. The Commission will not lose sight of those values in its efforts to fight terrorism, human trafficking, smuggling and cybercrime.

The Commission's main objectives are to:

- make it easier for citizens and companies in the EU to defend their rights outside their home country by improving the mutual recognition of judgments by courts across the EU;
- crack down on organised crime, such as human trafficking, smuggling and cybercrime, and to tackle corruption;
- conclude the accession of the EU to the Council of Europe's Convention on Human Rights;
- obtain guarantees that United States government agencies and companies adequately protect EU citizens' personal data.

In April 2015, the European Commission set out a European agenda on security to support Member States' cooperation in tackling security threats and to increase collaboration in the fight against terrorism, organised crime and cybercrime. The agenda sets out the concrete tools and measures which will be used to ensure security and tackle these three most pressing threats more effectively.

Key actions include:



Further reading and latest developments:
http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/justice-fundamental-rights/index_en.htm

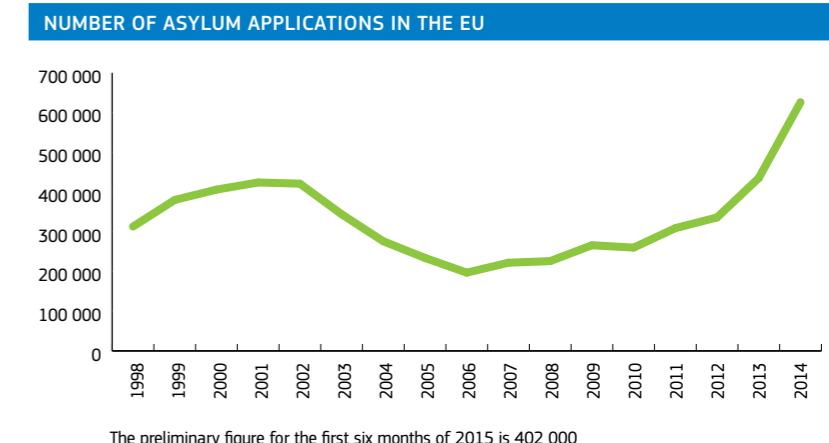
Towards a new policy on migration

The world has been shocked by the plight of thousands of migrants putting their lives in peril to enter the EU. No EU country can or should have to face huge migratory pressures on its own. The EU is stepping up its efforts to save lives, fight human trafficking and cooperate with countries of origin and transit. Even more fundamentally, the Commission wants to tackle the root causes that force people to escape and migrate: poverty, wars, persecutions, violations of human rights and natural disasters.

The sudden rise in the number of people who are forced to flee their homes to escape violence and seek refuge, in their own countries or abroad, is a test for the European Union. Europe's response has been comprehensive and decisive in the past months:

- an extra € 1.7 billion were made available in September, bringing the total EU budget to address the refugee crisis to **€ 9.2 billion** in 2015 and 2016;
- the EU is the **number one donor in the global efforts to alleviate the Syrian refugee crisis**. Around **€ 4 billion** have been granted by the European Commission and Member States in assistance to Syrians in their country and to refugees;
- Member States have **agreed to relocate 160 000 people in clear need of international protection** from the Member States most affected to other EU Member States. 22 000 refugees will also be resettled from camps outside the EU;
- presence at sea has been tripled since May**. Over 122 000 lives have been saved since then;
- efforts to tackle smugglers** and dismantle human trafficker groups have been redoubled.

In a recent survey of public opinion in the EU, 73 % of Europeans said they were in favour of a common European policy on migration. When asked to identify the two most important concerns facing the EU, immigration was at the top of the list ahead of the economic situation and unemployment. It was the most frequently cited concern in 20 of the 28 Member States.



The increase in the number of people wanting asylum in the EU calls for common European solutions.

While the refugee crisis has put the spotlight on immediate needs and is the current top priority, it has also revealed much about the structural limitations of EU migration policy and the tools at its disposal. The European Agenda for Migration presented by the Commission in May 2015 set out a comprehensive approach to migration management building on four pillars:

- reducing the incentives for irregular migration;
- saving lives and securing external borders;
- a strong common asylum policy;
- a new policy on legal migration.

Further reading and latest developments:
http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/migration/index_en.htm

A stronger global actor

The political crisis in Ukraine and the unrest in the Middle East have made it clear that the EU needs a stronger common foreign policy.

The EU is a key player on many foreign policy issues, ranging from Iran's nuclear programme and stabilising the Horn of Africa to global warming. Its joint foreign and security policy, designed to resolve conflicts and foster international understanding, is based on diplomacy, while trade, aid, security and defence all play a complementary role. As the world's largest donor of development finance, the EU is uniquely well-placed for cooperation with developing countries. The EU also deals with subjects like environment, education, crime-fighting and human rights in its relations with the rest of the world.

The EU is currently focusing on supporting the comprehensive reform process underway in the Ukraine, notably through the implementation of an unprecedented support package of € 11 billion. Against the background of the crisis in eastern Ukraine, the EU supports all efforts to create a lasting peaceful solution.

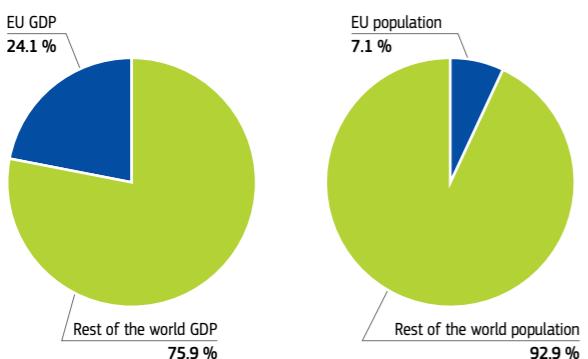
The Syrian crisis has become the world's worst humanitarian and security disaster. The EU and its constituent countries are leading the international response. As the largest donor, they have mobilised over € 4 billion in development and humanitarian aid since the conflict began.

EU foreign and security policy has developed gradually over many years and enables the EU to speak and act as one in world affairs. Acting together gives the EU's 28 Member States far greater authority than they would have if each pursued its own policies. The sheer demographic and economic weight of the 28-nation bloc makes it a major power. It is the world's biggest trader, with the world's second largest currency, the euro. The trend towards joint foreign policy decisions further strengthens its position.

The EU maintains partnerships with the world's key players, including emerging powers. It seeks to ensure that these relationships are based on mutual interests and benefits, with rights and duties on both sides. The Commission's current objectives include:

- creating more synergies between Member States in defence procurement;
- bringing peace and stability to the European neighbourhood by continuing ongoing enlargement negotiations, notably with the Western Balkans. This will take time, so no further enlargement is foreseen during the term of the Juncker Commission (i.e. before the end of 2019);
- pooling of defence capabilities by those national governments that wish to do so, thus enabling them to participate in joint EU missions — and thereby avoiding duplication of programmes and saving money.

THE EU'S SHARE OF THE WORLD ECONOMY



Even if the EU only has around 7 % of the world's population, its economic share counts for over 24 % of the world's GDP.

Further reading and latest developments:
http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/global-actor/index_en.htm

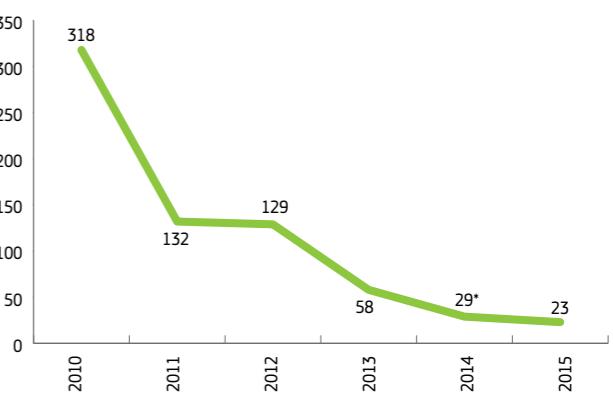
A union of democratic change

There has been a growing perception in recent years, reflected in the results of European elections, that the EU is distant from its people and is overly bureaucratic. Citizens expect the EU to make a difference on the important economic and social challenges. The Juncker Commission's work programmes reflect this by considerably reducing the number of new initiatives, scrapping certain former proposals for new laws and reexamining existing laws.

The Commission is committed to democracy and reform. Its main objectives include:

- proposing new laws only when they are needed and providing a clear European added value once the public has been consulted. The work programme for 2015 only includes 23 new initiatives;
- being fully transparent about what the Commission is doing (for example, Commissioners and senior officials publish details of their meetings: unprecedented transparency has been introduced for international trade negotiations);
- examining existing laws and adjusting them where needed;
- removing unnecessary red tape at both European and national levels;
- creating a mandatory register for organisations and individuals lobbying the Commission, Parliament and Council;
- finding ways to deepen cooperation between national parliaments and the Commission.

NUMBER OF NEW EU LAWS PROPOSED BY THE COMMISSION



The Commission is focusing on a small number of priorities.

The Commission will open up its policymaking process to further public scrutiny and input, with new public consultations when it comes to assessing new proposals or evaluating existing policies. There will also be new opportunities for public comments throughout the entire lawmaking procedure. After the Commission has adopted a proposal, any interested citizen will have 8 weeks to provide feedback or suggestions which will feed into the legislative debate before Parliament and Council.

Existing laws will be evaluated, partly through the regulatory fitness and performance programme (REFIT). This assesses existing legislation to make it more effective and efficient without compromising policy objectives. The Commission is already working to reduce burdens for business in areas such as value-added tax (VAT), public procurement, business statistics and chemicals. Comprehensive evaluations in other fields are also under way.

The Commission is also renewing its commitment to listen to the views of any stakeholder at any time by means of an online tool called '**Lighten the Load — Have Your Say**'.

Further reading and latest developments:
http://ec.europa.eu/priorities-democratic-change/index_en.htm

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The European Union



There are European Commission and Parliament representations and offices in all the countries of the European Union. The European Union also has delegations in other parts of the world.

Ten priorities for Europe

A new start for Europe:
an EU agenda for jobs, growth,
fairness and democratic change

Find out more

- ▶ **The ten priorities of the European Commission:** http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/index_en.htm
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