The six policy priorities of the von der Leyen Commission

State of play in autumn 2022

IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS

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This EPRS paper analyses progress in attaining the policy agenda set out by Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, and her College of Commissioners when they took office in December 2019. It looks in particular at the state of play in respect of delivery on its six key priorities.

Concretely, EPRS finds that, ahead of the 2022 State of the Union address, of the over 500 initiatives foreshadowed by the von der Leyen Commission on taking office or since (521), almost two thirds (330) have already been submitted and, on the legislative proposals, the co-legislators have started work. Of those 330, almost half (160) have already been adopted by the co-legislators, or, for the non-legislative initiatives (such as strategies, action plans and other communications, amounting to nearly one in five of the total), by the Commission itself. The great majority of the remainder are either proceeding normally through the legislative process (120) or are close to adoption (16). Conversely, a tenth of them are proceeding very slowly or are currently blocked (34). While the Commission's first priority, the European Green Deal, ranks highest in terms of the number of initiatives planned (130), its third priority, 'An economy that works for people', has seen the highest number of legislative proposals actually adopted so far (34).

Further details of the state of play on the EU legislative proposals tabled by the Commission, including all those mentioned in this paper, can be found in the European Parliament's 'Legislative Train Schedule' website, developed by EPRS and available at http://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/

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Introduction: The European Union facing profound changes

A year ago, we were assessing the European Commission's delivery on the eve of the 2021 State of the Union address against the backdrop of a progressive return to freedom of movement following Covid-19 lockdowns and an economic crisis, chaos in Kabul, and megafires and deadly floods in Europe. This year, we prepare our assessment against the backdrop of growing inflation and an energy crisis, a war on our continent and even more extreme weather phenomena, once again not only severely disrupting everyday life but even causing deaths. The phase of profound changes described last year has not faded: on the contrary, it continues to unfold in Europe and the rest of the world – as analysed in our study on 'Future Shocks 2022' (see References section) – and the situation is becoming increasingly acute for European policymakers, businesses and citizens alike.

The heart of the European project – peace, democracy, and prosperity – is being challenged, and even attacked: peace, with a war leading to major international consequences – from millions of people fleeing their bombed homes and seeking refuge abroad to new alliance outlines – at the European Union's border; democracy, with the unjustified invasion of Ukraine and, at home, interference in our elections and our public debate; and prosperity, through the domino effects of spiralling prices, with European citizens increasingly anxious about heating their homes this winter, having endured a climate catastrophe of record high temperatures, megafires, disappearing glaciers and drought during summer 2022.

These profound changes do not render the European project obsolete – quite the opposite, they make it even more relevant. Peace is the root of the European project – peace among European nations from the ashes of the Second World War, as well as world peace, as encapsulated in the very first words of the Schuman Declaration: 'World peace cannot be safeguarded without the making of creative efforts proportionate to the dangers which threaten it'. Democracy has been at the forefront of the European agenda these past months with the Conference on the Future of Europe coming to its conclusions in May 2022, with its final report submitted to the presidents of the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission. The President of the European Parliament, Roberta Metsola, celebrated 'this unique exercise in active citizenship, in Europe building and in future proofing our foundations', and recalled that Europe means: 'freedom, democracy, the rule of law, justice, solidarity, equality of opportunity'. During the same closing ceremony, President von der Leyen declared that the Commission would 'announce the first new proposals responding to (the) report in (her) state of the Union address', expected just after this publication comes out. Finally, prosperity, which is preconditioned by peace and democracy, is of the essence, with inflation reaching levels unseen since the creation of the euro and a growing awareness of resource scarcity, from energy to water. In this context, ever more Europeans cherish the relevance of the European project, as the latest Parlemeter shows: six in ten people make the defence of European values, such as freedom and democracy, a priority, and the fight against poverty the priority they expect the European Parliament to address. Overall, two thirds of Europeans see EU membership as a good thing.

Advancing the general interest of the Union falls to the Commission, which takes the appropriate initiatives to this end. When she took office in 2019, President von der Leyen set six policy priorities. The Commission's first priority since then has been climate change, an area where President von der Leyen wants Europe to lead globally. On taking office, she also stated that Europe 'needs a geopolitical Commission', which becomes even more necessary with the 'tectonic' magnitude of this year's changes. At home, the ambitions are to help the EU recover from the coronavirus crisis, to turn the EU into a digital continent, followed by aims of promoting the European way of life and a new push for European democracy, notably with the Conference on the Future of Europe.

Our analysis monitors all six of these priorities. It combines a two-page presentation of each priority and a single-page infographic (page 3) illustrating the degree of progress – both overall and under each of the six priorities.

Our assessment is that, of the over 500 initiatives foreshadowed (521), almost two thirds (62 %, 330) have already been submitted and, in the case of legislative proposals, the co-legislators have started work. It is worth noting that almost one in five of the Commission's initiatives are non-legislative in character, such as strategies, action plans and other communications. Among the 330 initiatives, almost half (48 %) have already been adopted (160) – by the legislator in the case of legislative proposals, or simply by the Commission in the case of non-legislative initiatives – while the great majority of the remainder are either proceeding normally through the legislative process (120, or 71 %) or close to adoption (16, or 9 %). Conversely, a certain number are proceeding very slowly or are currently blocked (34, or 20 %).

These numbers reflect the state of play as the Commission will soon enter the fourth year of its five-year mandate, the last full year before the 2024 European elections, a year when the executive typically continues to come forward with new proposals, whilst the twin branches of the legislature (the European Parliament and the Council of the EU) are simultaneously fully engaged in considering and (very often) amending them. The ranking and proportionate progress have remained stable compared with the previous assessment, which is remarkable given the two major crises (the pandemic and the war in Ukraine and their multifaceted consequences) that the European Union has faced since 2020.

With a focus on each of the six policy priorities, our assessment shows how the European Commission is performing at the different stages of announcing and tabling proposals, followed by the three institutions' progress in negotiating and finally adopting legislation. The European Green Deal ranks highest in the number of initiatives planned (125), but the executive has tabled only just over half of them (or 55 %), leading to less than a quarter being adopted by the co-legislators so far (23 %). The third priority, 'An economy that works for people', comes next (99), but this time with more initiatives tabled (77 %) and a third of them adopted (34 %). The digital priority totals 78 initiatives planned, 60 % of which are already submitted (47), and 18 already adopted (23 %). For 'A stronger Europe in the world', an area with relatively few legislative initiatives by definition, and in contrast with the majority of the Commission's priorities, over four in five (85 %) initiatives have already been tabled (see Section 4) and three out of five adopted. A fair amount of work remains to be done for the other priorities: 40 % of the proposals remain to be submitted for 'A Europe fit for the digital age', 28 % for 'Promoting our European way of life' and 45 % for 'A new push for democracy' (see Sections 2, 5 and 6). This latter priority comes lowest in terms of number of initiatives announced (51).

Following the State of the Union address, the Commission will adopt its work programme, in accordance with the 2010 Interinstitutional Agreement between the European Parliament and the European Commission. It has announced its 2023 work programme will be published on 18 October 2022.

Commission delivery in 2023 will be all the more important as we approach the 2024 European elections, when citizens will watch carefully how the EU has responded to today's challenges. Europeans will vote with these profound changes in mind, but also – in a positive note worth noting in the latest Parlemeter – with hope, a dominant feeling in more countries.
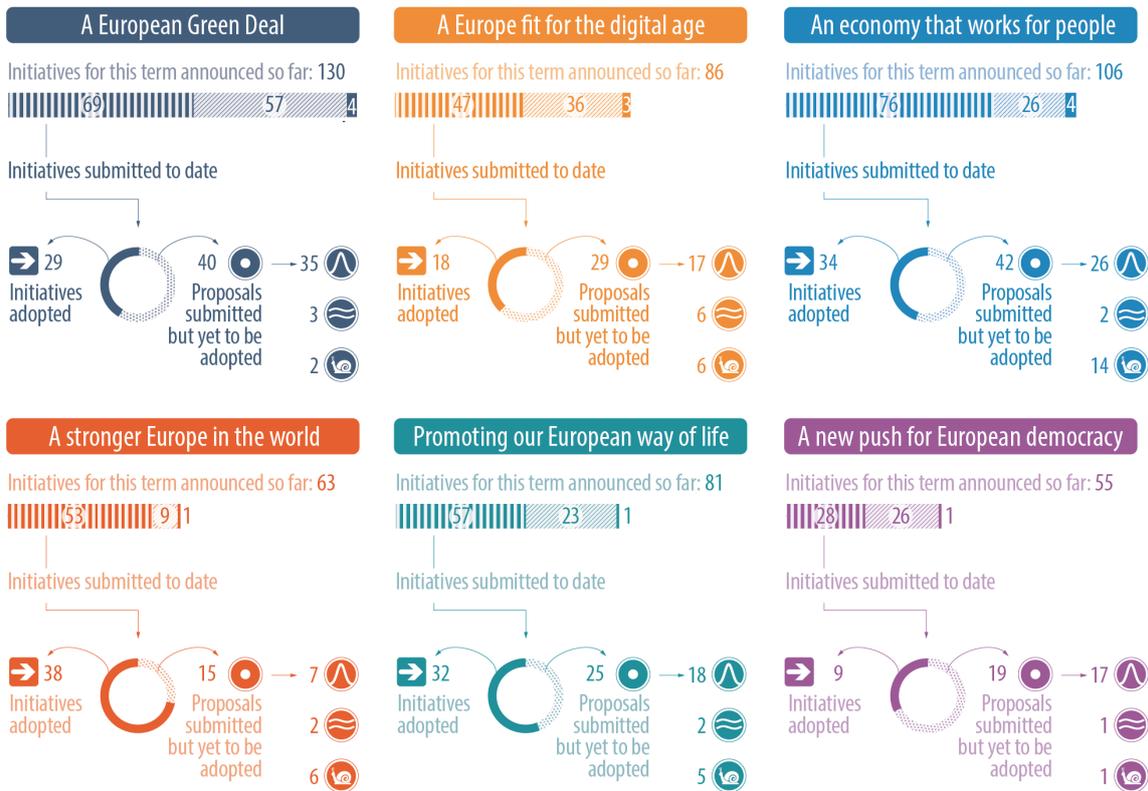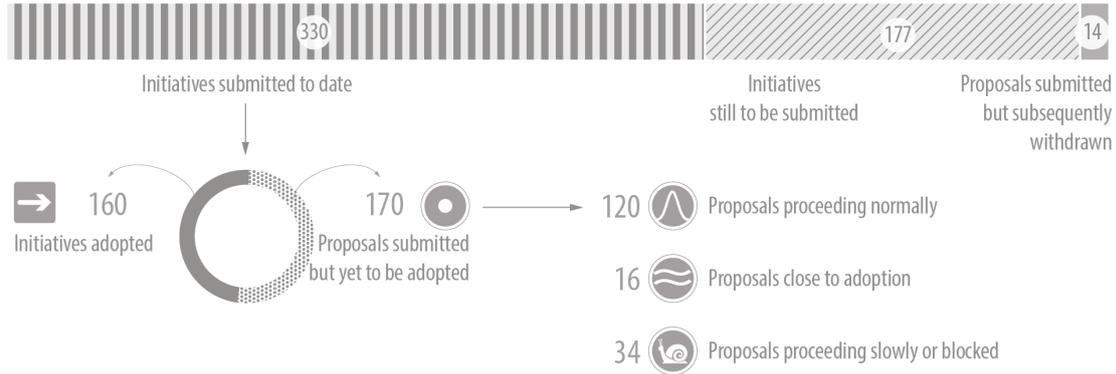
For more information on how the von der Leyen Commission's agenda is proceeding, a proposal-by-proposal assessment is available on the European Parliament's 'Legislative Train Schedule' website, developed by EPRS, at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/

The von der Leyen Commission's six priorities: Legislative and non-legislative delivery to 31 August 2022

Initiatives for this term announced so far: 521

130	86	106	63	81	55
A European Green Deal	A Europe fit for the digital age	An economy that works for people	A stronger Europe in the world	Promoting our European way of life	A new push for European democracy

Initiatives for this term announced so far: 521

330 Initiatives submitted to date

177 Initiatives still to be submitted

14 Proposals submitted but subsequently withdrawn

160 Initiatives adopted

170 Proposals submitted but yet to be adopted

120 Proposals proceeding normally

16 Proposals close to adoption

34 Proposals proceeding slowly or blocked

A European Green Deal
Initiatives for this term announced so far: 130

69 57 4

Initiatives submitted to date

29 Initiatives adopted
40 Proposals submitted but yet to be adopted
35
3
2

A Europe fit for the digital age
Initiatives for this term announced so far: 86

47 36 3

Initiatives submitted to date

18 Initiatives adopted
29 Proposals submitted but yet to be adopted
17
6
6

An economy that works for people
Initiatives for this term announced so far: 106

76 26 4

Initiatives submitted to date

34 Initiatives adopted
42 Proposals submitted but yet to be adopted
26
2
14

A stronger Europe in the world
Initiatives for this term announced so far: 63

53 9 1

Initiatives submitted to date

38 Initiatives adopted
15 Proposals submitted but yet to be adopted
7
2
6

Promoting our European way of life
Initiatives for this term announced so far: 81

57 23 1

Initiatives submitted to date

32 Initiatives adopted
25 Proposals submitted but yet to be adopted
18
2
5

A new push for European democracy
Initiatives for this term announced so far: 55

28 26 1

Initiatives submitted to date

9 Initiatives adopted
19 Proposals submitted but yet to be adopted
17
1
1

08 2022

Data on this page come from the Legislative Train Schedule website of the European Parliament, and represent the situation as of 31 August 2022.

1. European Green Deal

The von der Leyen Commission adopted the European Green Deal in its first month in office, setting its priority to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent, become a world leader in the circular economy, eliminate pollution, protect biodiversity and mobilise finance for the green transition. The first major crisis for this Commission, the coronavirus pandemic, has not hindered progress on the Green Deal. On the contrary, the EU has used the crisis recovery instruments to advance climate action, by requiring Member States to spend 37 % of EU funding under the Recovery and Resilience Facility on climate investment and reforms. The second major crisis, Russia's war on Ukraine, turned energy efficiency and renewables into critical tools to tackle rising energy prices and energy security challenges. The Commission's RePowerEU initiative of March 2022 seeks to diversify gas supplies and accelerate the transition to clean energy to end the EU's over-dependence on gas imports from Russia. It was complemented by a new regulation on gas storage adopted on 29 June, the EU 'Save Energy' communication of May, and the EU 'Save gas for a safe winter' plan presented in July 2022.

By the end of its third year, the Commission has delivered most of the planned initiatives on EU climate action and continues to deliver the initiatives on the circular economy, plastics, climate and environmental protection from the 2022 Commission work programme, while shaping the EU's response to the challenges to energy supply and prices brought about by Russia's war on Ukraine.

Making Europe the first climate-neutral continent

The adoption of the European Climate Law in June 2021 marked a major milestone in implementing the European Green Deal. It set a legally binding EU target of climate neutrality by 2050 and a binding intermediate target to reduce net greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 55 % by 2030 compared with 1990 levels. In line with the Parliament's position, the European Climate Law establishes an independent scientific advisory board and introduces a carbon budget.

To implement this increased ambition, the Commission presented the 'fit for 55' package in July 2021. The package contained legislative proposals to revise the entire EU 2030 climate and energy framework, including the legislation on effort-sharing, land use and forestry, renewable energy, energy efficiency, emissions standards for new cars and vans, and the Energy Taxation Directive. The Commission also proposed to strengthen the emissions trading system (ETS). A new ETS for road transport and buildings would be complemented by a new social climate fund to address its social impacts. Legislative proposals on clean maritime and aviation fuels are currently under negotiation. To ensure fair pricing of GHG emissions associated with certain imported goods, the Commission proposed a new carbon border adjustment mechanism. A revised Regulation on Fluorinated Greenhouse-gases was proposed in April 2022. Legislative proposals on carbon removal certification and revised CO_2 standards for heavy-duty vehicles are expected later in 2022.

The Commission addressed emissions in the energy system through the strategies on hydrogen and energy system integration adopted in July 2020, the strategies on methane and on offshore renewable energy sources in November 2020, and legislative proposals on energy-related methane emissions, the energy performance of buildings and a revised regulatory framework for the EU gas and hydrogen markets in December 2021, and a solar energy strategy in May 2022.

The European climate pact, a non-legislative initiative launched in December 2020, gathers regional and local authorities, civil society, industry and schools, to agree on commitments to change behaviour, supported by a secretariat under the Commission's lead.

The European Commission tabled a new strategy on adaptation to climate change in February 2021, seeking to mainstream climate adaptation and strengthen the international dimension. The strategy focuses primarily on the interaction with other Green Deal strategies – the circular economy, biodiversity, the renovation wave, and the farm-to-fork strategy – to increase the EU's preparedness for the impacts of climate change.

Becoming a world leader in the circular economy

In March 2020, the Commission adopted a long-term strategy for Europe's [industrial future](#) that is aligned with the European Green Deal. It was [updated](#) in May 2021, to take account of the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, the evolving global competitive context, and the acceleration of the twin green and digital transitions. This was complemented by a [chemicals strategy for sustainability](#), adopted in October 2020, and a proposal for a new [batteries regulation](#) in December 2020.

The March 2020 [circular economy action plan](#) promotes the sustainable use of resources, especially in resource-intensive sectors with high environmental impact, such as electronics, textiles and construction. The Commission tabled legislative proposals on [waste shipment](#) in November 2021, and on [empowering consumers for the green transition](#) and [ecodesign requirements for sustainable products](#) in March 2022. Proposals on the [right to repair](#) and [packaging and packaging waste](#) are planned by the end of 2022. In January 2021, the Commission [launched](#) the transdisciplinary [New European Bauhaus](#) initiative as a bridge between science, technology, art and culture.

Eliminating pollution and protecting biodiversity

The Commission adopted a [zero-pollution action plan](#) for air, water and soil in May 2021 and tabled proposals to revise the [Industrial Emissions Directive](#) and the [Ozone Regulation](#) in April 2022. A proposal on air pollutant emissions standards for road vehicles is expected in October 2022. The 2020 [biodiversity strategy for 2030](#) supports the key objective of mainstreaming biodiversity across all policy areas. In June 2022, the Commission tabled proposals for regulations on [nature restoration](#) and on [pesticides](#). The Commission adopted a new [EU forest strategy](#) in July 2021, and a [legislative proposal](#) aimed at minimising the risk of deforestation and forest degradation associated with products placed on the EU market in November 2021. Initiatives for 2022 concern chemicals, mercury, air quality, microplastics, water management and waste water.

Further key initiatives of the European Green Deal have included the ['farm-to-fork' strategy](#) for sustainable food, tabled in May 2020, a [renovation wave](#) for the building sector, a [sustainable and smart mobility strategy](#) in December 2020, and an [action plan for organic food production](#) in March 2021. In March 2022, the co-legislators adopted the eighth [environment action programme](#).

Financing the European Green Deal

According to President von der Leyen's political guidelines, record amounts of public funds were to be invested in advanced research and innovation, complemented by a strategy for green financing. EU funding for the European Green Deal is provided through the EU multiannual financial framework (MFF) and the Next Generation EU (NGEU) instrument, with 30 % of expenditure dedicated to climate objectives. In addition, the European Investment Bank (EIB) has [aligned](#) its investment activities with climate objectives. In January 2020, the Commission adopted a communication on the [sustainable Europe investment plan](#) (often referred to as the European Green Deal investment plan). It was designed to increase funding for the transition by mobilising €1 trillion for sustainable investment over the next decade through the EU budget and associated instruments such as [InvestEU](#), and to create an enabling [framework for sustainable investment](#). In April 2021, the Commission presented its proposal for a [corporate sustainability reporting directive](#), revising and strengthening the existing rules, introduced by the [Non-Financial Reporting Directive](#), on companies' disclosure of social and environmental performance and impacts. The European Commission adopted a [renewed sustainable finance strategy](#) in July 2021.

The [Just Transition Fund](#), adopted in June 2021, has a budget of €17.5 billion to support the people and regions most affected by the transition towards climate neutrality. It is part of a just transition mechanism that cuts across different funds and financing instruments and should mobilise at least €100 billion in public and private investment. The [LIFE programme](#), adopted in April 2021, is the only EU fund entirely dedicated to environmental and climate objectives, with a budget of €5.4 billion in current prices for 2021-2027.

2. A Europe fit for the digital age

As the legislative cycle is in its second half, of the initiatives to steer Europe towards digital transformation, half have already been presented. The co-legislators have reached a political agreement on notably the digital services act (DSA), the digital markets act (DMA), and a high common level of cybersecurity (NIS2 directive). A few initiatives have been delayed, some of which are planned by the end of 2022.

Shaping the digital future of Europe

On 11 May 2022, the Commission adopted two proposals aimed at protecting children online – one of its top priorities. In view of increasing cases of child sexual abuse online and the inadequacy of the current system for companies to voluntarily detect and report it, the Commission proposed legislation that would replace the interim regulation with permanent rules. The proposal would make detection, reporting, and removing of child sexual abuse material mandatory for providers of online services and oblige them to assess and mitigate the risk of misuse of their services, and take measures proportionate to that risk and subject to robust conditions and safeguards. It would establish an independent EU centre on child sexual abuse to facilitate service providers' efforts by acting as a hub of expertise. Alongside the new legislation, the Commission put forward a new European strategy for a better internet for kids (BIK+), part of the 2021 EU strategy on the rights of the child. The strategy aims at improving age-appropriate digital services and proposes actions along three pillars: (1) safe digital experiences, to protect children from harmful content; (2) digital empowerment, to equip children with appropriate skills and competences to make responsible decisions online; and (3) active participation, giving children a say in the online environment.

While the legislative process on the artificial intelligence (AI) act proposal is well on its way, the liability rules, fit for AI, to ensure consumer protection regarding AI-based products and services, are expected to be presented in a specific legislative proposal by the end of September 2022.

Regarding the cybersecurity strategy, on 22 March 2022, the Commission adopted a proposal for a regulation to establish common measures across the EU institutions, bodies, offices and agencies. It aims at improving their resilience and incidence response capacities, as well as ensuring that a resilient and secure EU public administration is the foundation for digital transformation in general, in a global landscape facing an increase of harmful cyber activities. The Commission plans to present a legislative proposal on a European cyber resilience act, aiming to set common cybersecurity standards for digital products and ancillary services, during the September Parliament plenary session. Secure and borderless public sector data flows and services are expected to be defined by the EU governments' interoperability strategy. This strategy, aiming at ensuring cross-border coordination of interoperable digital public services, is expected later in 2022.

Supporting industry and small and medium-sized enterprises

In their Versailles Declaration of 11 March 2022, EU leaders asked the Commission to propose measures to strengthen the European defence industrial and technological base. The Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR/VP) adopted a joint communication on defence investment gaps on 18 May 2022. To address the defence industry's high fragmentation along national borders and dependence on third countries for some key defence equipment, the communication sets up a defence joint procurement task force to support Member States' coordination. The Commission announced it would table a proposal establishing a €500 million instrument to reinforce defence industrial capabilities through joint procurement, to support Member States cooperate in filling the most urgent and critical gaps, based on the work of the task force. It also committed to adopt a proposal for a regulation on a European defence investment programme. This regulation would establish the conditions for Member States to form European defence capability consortia (EDCC). Within an EDCC, Member States would jointly

procure, for the use of participating Member States, defence capabilities that are developed in a collaborative way within the EU and would benefit from VAT exemption.

In line with the partnership approach to governance promoted in the EU's new industrial strategy, the Commission launched a new industrial alliance for zero emission aviation on 24 June 2022, with an aim to prepare the aviation industry for hydrogen- and electric-powered aircraft. On 23 March 2022, the Commission released DigiComp 2.2, an updated version of the EU-wide framework for improving and measuring citizens' digital competences (DigiComp). Furthermore, on 20 June 2022, the Commission published the 2022 small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) performance report. The report reviews how SMEs performed in 2020 and 2021, and expected performance in 2022. It also discusses their state of digitalisation and environmental sustainability.

On 5 July 2022, the Commission adopted a new European innovation agenda to make the EU a global leader in innovation (in particular in the new wave of 'deep-tech innovation' based on breakthrough R&D and large capital investment). The agenda sets out 25 actions, under 5 flagship areas: (1) improving access to finance for EU start-ups and scale-ups; (2) establishing rules to facilitate innovation through experimental approaches to regulation; (3) promoting the setting up of 'regional innovation valleys'; (4) attracting and retaining tech talent in the EU; and (5) improving monitoring and evaluation of innovation policy.

The Commission announced its intention to revise Directive 98/71/EC on the Legal Protection of Designs and Regulation (EC) No 6/2002 on Community Designs, to adapt them to the digital age. The Commission proposals, initially expected by June 2022, have not yet been published.

Improving the functioning of the single market

On 23 March 2022, the Commission adopted a temporary crisis framework for State aid measures to support the economy following Russia's aggression against Ukraine, providing Member States with a toolbox to address the consequences of the current crisis and to support severely impacted companies and sectors. In contrast, on 12 May 2022, the Commission announced that it would not extend the temporary Covid-19 State aid framework beyond its 30 June 2022 expiration date, with some exceptions.

Under the ongoing review of EU competition tools, to enhance the single market's resilience and enable EU industries to lead in the green and digital transitions, the Commission adopted the Vertical Block Exemption Regulation ('VBER') on agreements within supply chains, accompanied by the guidelines on vertical restraints on 10 May 2022. The revised rules, which entered into force on 1 June 2022, aim to help companies to assess the compatibility of their supply and distribution agreements with EU competition rules, in a context of growing e-commerce and online sales. The Commission also launched a public consultation on a draft revised Merger Implementing Regulation and a draft revised Notice on Simplified Procedure, open from 6 May to 3 June 2022. The final versions of both documents, as well as the final version of the revised guidelines on State aid for broadband networks, expected in the second quarter of 2022, have not yet been published.

On 29 June, the Commission published the 2022 edition of its 'blue guide' on the implementation of EU product rules, including new developments since 2016. The guide is aimed at promoting the uniform application of EU product rules across sectors throughout the single market. On 31 March 2022, the 'wise persons' group on challenges facing the customs union presented a report including 10 proposals to make the EU customs union fit for the new geopolitical context. They will feed the interinstitutional debate on the future of the EU customs union. On 25 April 2022, the Commission published its annual report on the EU rapid alert system for dangerous non-food products ('safety gate'). The report covers alerts notified in 2021 and national authorities' responses.

To address the pandemic's disruption of the single market, the Commission announced a proposal for a regulation on a single market emergency instrument for the first quarter of 2022, to ensure the free movement of goods, services and people in times of crisis, with improved transparency and coordination. Delayed, it is now expected to be adopted on 13 September 2022.

3. An economy that works for people

In her 2019 political guidelines, Ursula von der Leyen promised that the transition towards a green social market economy would be fair for all, and committed to fostering an 'economy that works for people'. Despite the economic shocks caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, most initiatives have been tabled as scheduled and several new ones proposed.

Two proposals scheduled for the second quarter of 2022 have been delayed: a proposal for an EU-wide instant payments scheme, already in the 2020 retail payments strategy and the Refit revision of the European Statistics on Population (ESOP) legislative framework. This new regulatory framework should gather demographic, migration and census data, currently collected from Member States separately, and with different periodicities and legal bases.

Supporting enterprises' investment and financing

To support small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the Commission and the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) launched a €47 million EU SME Fund on 10 January 2022, which will offer vouchers for SMEs in the EU to help them protect their intellectual property (IP) rights.

Deepening economic and monetary union

To achieve a more growth-friendly fiscal stance in the euro area, the Commission initially announced its intention to further deepen economic and monetary union (EMU). Following up on this commitment, in February 2020, the Commission presented a communication to review the current framework for economic and fiscal surveillance, especially the six-pack and two-pack reforms. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the EU economy led to the decision to temporarily suspend the stability and growth pact (SGP) by activating the 'general escape clause' and to the consultation being relaunched and extended until 31 December 2021. The clause remains active today and the Commission has not yet published the results of the consultation.

The economic crisis caused by the pandemic has also revived supranational debt instruments as a solution for avoiding a symmetrical exogenous shock producing asymmetric effects between Member States. In this vein, the European Commission is expected to borrow up to around €800 billion from the capital markets by the end of 2026, to finance Next Generation EU (NGEU). To repay the funds raised to finance the grant component of NGEU, the Commission adopted two proposals: the first would introduce new own resources, through the extended EU ETS, a carbon border adjustment mechanism (CBAM) and the reallocated profits of very large multinational companies (based on Pillar 1 of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/G20 agreement); the second would amend the 2018 Financial Regulation, to align the financial rules to the provisions of the 2021-2027 multiannual financial framework (MFF) and the NGEU. The former is with the Council, where technical and sectoral work is taking place (Parliament has repeatedly raised the alarm regarding the consequences of delays – let alone non-adoption - on the repayment of NGEU), while the latter is under review by the co-legislators.

The completion of banking union (BU) has remained a key priority, as restated at the 25 June 2021 Euro Summit, when leaders reiterated their full commitment to the completion of the BU and invited the Eurogroup, in its inclusive format, to 'agree without delay on a stepwise and time-bound work plan'. On 27 October 2021, the Commission published two proposals, amending the Capital Requirements Directive and the Capital Requirements Regulation, to strengthen the risk-based capital framework, further harmonise supervisory powers and tools and improve access to institutions' data for prudential requirements. The proposals are currently being negotiated.

The Commission gave further impetus to another important project, capital markets union (CMU). In addition to the proposals adopted in the second semester of 2021 in the area of financial markets (MiFID, MiFIR) investment funds (UCITS and AIFMD) and the insurance sector (Solvency II and

insurance [recovery and resolution](#)), currently before the co-legislators, on 16 March 2022, the Commission published its proposal amending its 2014 Regulation on [Central Securities Depositories](#). The original regulation established requirements for the settlement of financial instruments, the rules for the organisation of central securities depositories (who operate the infrastructure that enables securities settlement) and the conduct of their business. The proposal's goal is to simplify these requirements and reduce the disproportionate costs and burdens arising from them.

Implementing the social pillar and promoting equality

Following the commitment made in the political guidelines and [reiterated](#) in January 2020, the Commission adopted an [action plan](#) for the implementation of the principles of the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) in March 2021. The action plan sets three headline targets for the EU, to be reached by 2030, on employment, skills, and social protection, in line with the United Nations sustainable development goals ([SDGs](#)). Following a [strategy](#) on the rights of persons with disabilities (2021-2030) and a [recommendation](#) for active support for employment following the Covid-19 crisis in 2021, the Commission adopted a [communication](#) on promoting decent work for all in February 2022, which reaffirms the EU commitment to eradicating child labour and forced labour worldwide, as well as to promoting decent work in third-country domestic markets and in global supply chains.

On 23 February 2022, the Commission [proposed](#) a directive on corporate sustainability due diligence, under which Member States would adopt national legislation obliging companies established under their law or operating in the EU to conduct human rights and environmental due diligence. To give teeth to the proposal, the directive would also establish sanctions for non-compliance, and ensure that companies are liable for damages if they fail to comply with their obligations.

Promoting fair taxation

As part of its [EU strategy on business taxation](#), on 11 May 2022, the Commission proposed a debt-equity bias reduction allowance, (['DEBRA'](#)). Currently, companies can deduct interest attached to debt financing, but not the costs related to equity financing. This can incentivise them to take on debt rather than increase equity to finance their growth, which results in high levels of debt, which in turn can increase their vulnerability in uncertain economic environments such as today's. To change this, the measure would either disallow the deductibility of interest payments on debt, or create an allowance for equity.

The EU and its outermost regions

Nine EU regions located in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, in the Caribbean basin and in South America, the [outermost regions](#) have a special status under Article 349 TFEU that provides for specific measures to support them, including the tailored application of EU law and access to EU programmes. On 3 May 2022, the Commission adopted a [renewed strategy](#) for these regions, aiming to unlock their potential through appropriate investment and reform. In its General Affairs configuration, the Council adopted its [conclusions](#) on the strategy on 21 June 2022.

4. A stronger Europe in the world

In November 2019, Ursula von der Leyen stated her intention to head a ['geopolitical Commission'](#) that stabilises its neighbourhood, accelerates enlargement and champions [multilateralism](#) and a rules-based global order, through a more active role and stronger voice for the EU in the world. As President von der Leyen [stated](#) before the European Parliament Plenary on 1 March 2022, the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation is 'a moment of truth for Europe'. It is also the biggest military operation in Europe since the Second World War, threatening the [peace](#) and prosperity of the continent. The response to this crisis determines not only the EU's geopolitical status in the coming years, but also the nature of the international relations and tools deployed in [safeguarding peace](#), European values and principles. In consequence, the EU's main foreign policy priority has become enhancing the [EU's resilience](#), peace and security, and supporting its neighbours by working together with global partners.

Responding to the Ukrainian crisis

The Commission's 2019 [political guidelines](#) state that European leadership 'will always be guided by our values and our respect for international law'. Echoing this pledge, the EU has adopted seven cycles of heavy [sanctions](#) against Russia's financial system, industries, and people and entities who facilitate the war in Ukraine and the harmful activities of the Russian government. Furthermore, the ['maintenance and alignment' package](#) adopted on 21 July 2022 introduced new prohibitions on purchasing or importing Russian gold. The package also extends the list of controlled items that may contribute to Russia's military and technological enhancement or the development of its defence and security sector, thereby reinforcing export controls on dual use and advanced technology. On 11 August 2022, the 27 EU Member States [stopped](#) importing Russian coal.

For the first time ever, the EU is using the European budget to purchase and deliver military equipment to a country that is under attack. On 28 February 2022, the EU [agreed](#) to allocate a first package of €500 million from the European Peace Facility ([EPF](#)) – an off-budget mechanism designed, inter alia, to support EU partner military forces – to Ukraine. The EPF support was [extended](#) to €2.5 billion as of 22 July 2022. Furthermore, the EU has [allocated](#) €500 million from the EU budget to deal with the humanitarian consequences of this war, both in the country and for refugees. This decision complements the activation of the [temporary protection mechanism](#) that provides refugees with a secure status and access to education, medical care and work in EU Member States, as well as [temporary trade liberalisation](#) under the EU/Ukraine Association Agreement. Finally, the Commission [disbursed](#) €1 billion in macro-financial assistance (MFA) for [Ukraine](#). In July 2022, to support EU defence industrial capacities, the Commission [proposed](#) to reinforce the European defence industry through a common procurement act (EDIRPA) for 2022-2024, which would create an instrument of €500 million to support joint procurement.

On the second anniversary of the fraudulent presidential elections in Belarus, the EU's determination to support the people of [Belarus](#) remains unwavering. On 3 June 2022, the Council [adopted](#) a new round of restrictive measures against an additional 12 individuals and 8 entities for their role in the ongoing internal repression and human rights abuses in Belarus. Since August 2020, the EU has [allocated](#) about €65 million in support for the people of Belarus. The Commission has also adopted an outline for a comprehensive plan to mobilise €3 billion of economic support ([presented](#) in May 2021), once a democratic transition has taken place in Belarus.

Bolstering the external dimension of energy resilience

The Commission's 2019 political guidelines also underlined the necessity for a green transition towards renewable energy sources, the [interconnection](#) of electricity grids and other energy infrastructure, as well as the EU's heavy dependence on Russian energy and hydrocarbon imports. The conflict in Ukraine accentuated the external dimension of energy resilience, as Russian gas and

oil emerged as tools of hybrid war. On 18 May 2022, the Commission presented a strategy for an EU external energy engagement as part of its REPowerEU Plan. On 25 May 2022, the Commission set up the EU energy platform to aggregate energy demand at the regional level and facilitate future joint purchasing of both gas and green hydrogen, to ensure the best use of infrastructure so gas flows to where it is most needed, and to reach out to international supply partners. Following EU support, Ukraine and Moldova's electricity grids are now synchronised with the continental European grid. The EU also decided to speed up the building of new liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals and work on interconnectors.

Accelerating EU enlargement

One von der Leyen Commission geopolitical priority is to accelerate EU enlargement. On 28 February 2022, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy announced Ukraine's official request for 'immediate accession via a new special procedure'. Following Ukraine, both Georgia and Moldova also signed requests to join the EU. Considering the Commission's positive opinions, European leaders decided to grant Ukraine and Moldova 'candidate country' status and Georgia 'pre-candidate country' status, allowing them to advance towards EU membership on 23 June 2022.

President von der Leyen had already expressed 'full support' for the proposal to open accession negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania in 2019. On 19 July 2022, the two countries opened accession negotiations. President von der Leyen called this decision a 'historic moment', allowing Albania and North Macedonia to engage in practical cooperation with the EU, and to join the activities, among others, of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and Frontex. Subsequently, the most critical task is the completion of the comprehensive agreement within the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue and the stabilisation of the internal political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is expected to hold general elections on 2 October 2022.

Supporting global trade, peace and security

In her political guidelines, President von der Leyen expressed the intention to conclude important trade deals with global partners, assuming conditions are right. With India, President von der Leyen and Prime Minister Narendra Modi agreed to launch the EU-India Trade and Technology Council on 25 April 2022. With New Zealand, the EU concluded negotiations for a comprehensive and ambitious trade deal on 30 June 2022. With China, also in June 2022, the co-legislators adopted the international procurement instrument, which aims to promote reciprocity in access to international public procurement markets – a longstanding Commission priority strongly linked to establishing a level playing field.

Engagement with Asia and the Indo-Pacific region, which features high on the Commission agenda, has also been furthered through the participation, on 5 August 2022, of the High Representative/Vice-President of the Commission (HR/VP), Josep Borrell, at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum, which endorsed the plan of action to implement the ASEAN-EU strategic partnership for 20232027. With regard to peace and security in the region, the EU has engaged in multilateral efforts. In August 2022, it participated in the G7 Foreign Ministers' meeting and endorsed the statement on 'Preserving Peace and Stability Across the Taiwan Strait', which 'encourage(s) all parties to remain calm, exercise restraint, act with transparency, and maintain open lines of communication to prevent misunderstanding'.

Separately, but linked to global peace and security, the EU negotiation team submitted a 'final text' on 8 August 2022, at talks to salvage the 2015 Iran nuclear deal (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, JCPOA). President von der Leyen had underlined the importance of Iran returning to the nuclear deal in January 2020.

5. Promoting the European way of life

The 'Promoting our European way of life' priority covers a wide range of issues, encompassing not only migration, asylum and internal security policies, but also education, social integration and health. Policy action in these areas has been highly influenced by the multiple crises that Europe has faced recently, from the coronavirus pandemic to the Russian war on Ukraine. The ongoing humanitarian crisis at the EU's eastern borders has propelled the reform of EU migration and asylum policy to the top of the EU agenda. These crises have also had an impact on EU internal security policy, calling for a greater focus on addressing cyber and hybrid threats, building resilience, modernising law enforcement and bringing cooperation and information-sharing to a new level.

A new pact on migration and asylum

Russia's war on Ukraine has forced millions of people to flee, creating a major humanitarian crisis and unprecedented challenges for the EU. To assist Ukrainians seeking refuge in EU countries, the EU has activated the 2001 Temporary Protection Directive for the very first time, providing harmonised rights for refugees across the Union (residence permit, access to employment, education, housing and healthcare). By the end of August 2022, over 4 million persons fleeing Ukraine had registered for temporary protection across Europe (EU Member States plus Norway and Switzerland). The Commission supports Member States in providing emergency assistance to people fleeing the war, notably through the new 'cohesion's action for refugees in Europe' (CARE).

Against this background, progress has accelerated on some major initiatives under the new pact on migration and asylum, proposed by the Commission in September 2020. In June 2022, the Council approved negotiation mandates on the screening and Eurodac regulations – the main elements of the first stage of the European policy reform on asylum and migration, according to the gradual approach agreed by the Council under the French Presidency. In addition, 18 EU Member States and 3 associated countries adopted a declaration, creating a voluntary solidarity mechanism that plans for relocations or financial contributions. Work also advanced on reform of Schengen, with the Council's adoption of the regulation on the Schengen Evaluation Mechanism (after consulting Parliament) and of its general approach on the proposal to amend the Schengen Borders Code, both in June 2022. In contrast, no notable progress has been made on other legislative proposals included in the migration and asylum pact, with the exception of the Regulation on the European Union Agency for Asylum, already adopted in December 2021.

Last but not least, in April 2022, the Commission presented the long-awaited package of measures on legal migration, first announced in its 2021 work programme. It includes two legislative proposals to revise the Long-term Residents Directive and the Single Permit Directive, as well as initiatives to establish an EU talent pool, to step-up operational cooperation, e.g. through talent partnerships, and to facilitate access to the EU labour market for those displaced by the war in Ukraine.

Towards a security union 2.0

The EU's action on internal security during 2020-2025 is framed by the EU security union strategy. Taking evolving cross-border and global threats into account, the strategy focuses on the interconnections between the physical and digital environments, as well as internal and external security. In this context, the proposal for a directive to enhance the resilience of critical entities, one of the Commission's initiatives to increase the EU's resilience to cyber and hybrid threats, is now close to adoption, following an agreement reached by co-legislators in June 2022. Other measures include setting up a joint cyber unit and adopting a legislative proposal on a European cyber resilience act, planned for the third quarter of 2022. Moreover, in May 2022, the Commission issued a proposal for permanent rules to combat child sexual abuse (initially envisaged for 2021), intended to replace the previously adopted temporary derogation to the e-Privacy Directive. The proposed

regulation would set mandatory measures to detect and report child sexual abuse online and create a new independent EU centre on child sexual abuse (see Section 2).

When it comes to building an EU security ecosystem, one important development is the June 2022 adoption of the Regulation on Strengthening Europol's Mandate. This provides Europol with tools to cooperate more effectively with private parties, analyse big data sets and conduct research and innovation activities. As to improving information-sharing and cooperation between law enforcement authorities, work continues on two main proposals of the EU police cooperation code: a directive on information exchange between law enforcement authorities and a regulation on automated data exchange (Prüm II). The Council adopted a recommendation on operational police cooperation (the third element of the package) in June 2022. Two other legislative proposals are to be issued before the end of 2022, on advance passenger information and on reciprocal access to security-related information for front-line officers between the EU and key third countries.

The Commission adopted several initiatives to address specific forms of crime, such as strategies and action plans against trafficking in human beings, firearms trafficking, drugs, organised crime and child sexual abuse online. It is currently evaluating the EU rules on preventing and combating human trafficking, to propose, if deemed necessary, a revision of the 2011 Anti-trafficking Directive.

Towards a European health union

The coronavirus pandemic boosted the Commission's ambition to build a European health union. From the start of the public health crisis, the Commission undertook to coordinate Member States' responses while also launching long-term initiatives to make the EU more resilient in the future. These coordination efforts translated into the adoption of an EU vaccines strategy, later complemented by an EU strategy on Covid-19 therapeutics, as well as of the EU digital Covid certificate facilitating the free movement of people in the EU during the pandemic. In June 2022, the co-legislators agreed to extend the certificate by one year, until 30 June 2023.

In a longer-term perspective, work advanced on strengthening the EU's health security framework. Following earlier approval of reinforced mandates for the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), co-legislators reached a political agreement in June 2022, on the proposal for a regulation on serious cross-border threats to health. In May 2022, the Commission published the proposal for a regulation on the European health data space, aiming at giving European citizens control over their health data while facilitating its re-use for research, innovation and public policy purposes. Other initiatives still expected in 2022, include updating the 2003 Council recommendation on cancer screening, adopting a European care strategy, as well as revising pharmaceutical legislation and the EU legislation on medicines for children and rare diseases, as a follow-up to the pharmaceutical strategy for Europe.

A European education area fit for the digital age

Over recent months, the Commission has tabled several initiatives to fulfil its objective to make a European education area a reality by 2025. In June 2022, the Council adopted two recommendations: on individual learning accounts and on a European approach to micro-credentials, two key proposals issued in December 2021 to improve lifelong learning and employability. Also in June 2022, the Commission adopted a proposal for a Council recommendation on pathways to school success, aiming at enhancing the inclusive dimension of education. The Commission tabled the long-awaited European strategy for universities in January 2022, together with a proposal for a Council recommendation on building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation (adopted by the Council in April 2022). The strategy paves the way for some ambitious initiatives, such as expanding the European Universities initiative, scaling-up the European student card, creating a legal statute for university alliances, or a joint European degree.

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6. A new push for European democracy

The first half of 2022 was crucial for the Conference on the Future of Europe, as the process reached its conclusion. On the rule of law, the Commission published its third report in July 2022, which indicates that there is still much progress to be made in this area by several Member States.

The Conference on the Future of Europe: What's next?

After the four European citizens' panels adopted 178 recommendations and conveyed them to the Conference plenary, debates took place between all components of the Conference within the nine plenary working groups. Basing their work on the citizens' panels' recommendations, the working groups synthesised these with proposals from the multilingual digital platform and national citizens' panels, a crucial role that allowed thematic examination by representatives of all components in public and constructive exchanges. The plenary adopted the resulting proposals by consensus among representatives of Parliament, Council, Commission, national parliaments, and EU citizens.

The Conference's final report, containing 49 proposals encompassing more than 320 measures, was presented to the three co-presidents on 9 May 2022 (Europe Day) at the Parliament in Strasbourg. The Conference's recommendations are ambitious on several aspects of European integration. The three EU institutions are now bound to implement them within their respective competences and according to a commitment sealed at the outset of the Conference. All three reacted in June 2022. The Council performed a first evaluation of the recommendations in a preliminary technical assessment, where it gave a legal perspective on the appropriate follow-up to the recommendations, identifying around 22 cases which would require changes to the current Treaties. The Council will continue to debate the implementation of the Conference conclusions within the General Affairs Council. For its part, the Commission adopted a communication giving an overview of the different strands of work identifying: i) existing initiatives that address the proposals; ii) existing proposals that the co-legislators are called upon to adopt; iii) planned proposals; and iv) new initiatives or areas of work inspired by the Conference proposals. The Commission is expected to announce a first set of proposals to be included in the 2023 work programme at the State of the Union address in September 2022.

In a resolution of 9 June 2022, Parliament welcomed the outcome of the Conference and called on the Council to agree to start the process for a convention to revise the Treaties under the ordinary revision procedure (Article 48 TEU). The resolution already outlined a number of proposals for Treaty changes that concern, inter alia: qualified majority voting for Council decisions instead of unanimity in relevant areas (sanctions, *passerelle* clauses and emergency situations); adaptation of Union competences in the areas of health and cross-border health threats, the completion of the energy union, defence and social and economic policies; providing Parliament with full co-decision rights on the EU budget, and with the right to initiate, amend or repeal legislation; strengthening protection of EU values and clarifying determination and consequences of breaches of fundamental values (Article 7 TEU and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union). Parliament's Constitutional Affairs Committee is currently working on a report to further develop these proposals and prepare Parliament's position, expected to be voted in January 2023. The coming months will be crucial to understand the direction the EU institutions will decide to take: engaging in a broad and deep reform process, or acting upon recommendations with individual proposals.

Strengthening the EU's democratic fabric and ability to protect

In the framework of the European democracy action plan, the Commission adopted a proposal for a directive that would safeguard journalists and human rights defenders against abusive litigation in April 2022, with measures such as allocating judges the power to require a security for procedural costs and damages where the claim is suspected to be abusive, to decide an early dismissal upon the defendant's request, to order to bear the costs and to impose penalties on the 'abusive' claimant.

Concerned by citizenship or residence by investment schemes (CBI/RBI) Parliament called for a Commission proposal to phase them out. In March 2022, the Commission recommended that Member States thoroughly check their schemes and repeal them, particularly in the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This should be carried out in compliance with European Court of Justice (ECJ) case law and the protection of human rights, and naturalisation should be withdrawn where a person is subject to restrictive measures and significantly supports the war in Ukraine, the Russian Government or the Lukashenko regime in Belarus.

In March 2022, the Commission proposed a directive that would criminalise specific forms of cyber-violence, such as cyber-stalking, cyber-harassment, non-consensual sharing of intimate images, and cyber incitement to hatred and violence. Victims of cyber-violence would be entitled to support, including advice on how to seek legal help and how to remove online content. The proposal also criminalises rape based on lack of consent and female genital mutilation and introduces gender-sensitive procedures to tackle under-reporting of violence against women and domestic violence.

Upholding the rule of law and other EU values

The third annual rule of law report was published on 13 July 2022, analysing judicial independence, media freedom and the fight against corruption, and the functioning of constitutional checks and balances in all 27 EU Member States. Responding to repeated calls from the European Parliament (see resolutions of 24 June 2021 on the first rule of law report and of 19 May 2022 on the second report), the Commission, for the first time, enriched the report with concrete recommendations to each individual Member State on how to enhance judicial independence, media freedom, the fight against corruption, and constitutional checks and balances. The 4-8 succinct bullet point recommendations are explicitly added to the commitments already made by each Member State under the relevant national recovery and resilience plan with regard to the rule of law.

Following repeated European Parliament resolutions calling upon the Commission to activate the conditionality mechanism without any further delay (resolutions of 25 March 2021, 10 June 2021, 8 July 2021, 10 March 2022), the Commission finally triggered the mechanism against Hungary by a formal letter of 27 April 2022. The General Conditionality Regulation, which entered into force on 1 January 2021, allows for the suspension or withdrawal of EU funding for those Member States that breach the principles of the rule of law in a way that hampers the proper implementation of the EU budget and affects EU financial interests. However, the Commission had initially committed it would not apply the regulation whilst awaiting the ECJ ruling on its legality –handed down on 16 February 2022 – and before preparing its own 'guidelines' on its application (not envisaged in the regulation itself). These the Commission published only on 2 March 2022, over a year after the regulation had entered into force and was legally binding and applicable.

The rule of law features prominently in the Commission proposal for a Council implementing decision on the approval of the assessment of the recovery and resilience plan for Poland. Among the country-specific recommendations whose fulfilment by Poland is required for the funds from the recovery and resilience plan to be paid out to that Member State, is the full implementation of relevant ECJ case-law, notably its judgment of 15 July 2021. To this end, Poland must introduce necessary reforms of its judicial system inter alia to ensure that disciplinary cases against judges are no longer heard by the Disciplinary Chamber and that disciplinary responsibility of judges is not incurred for verifying the regularity of a judicial appointment or for the content of judicial decisions or for submitting preliminary references to the ECJ. The Council adopted the proposal on 17 June 2022, including the annex relating to judicial reforms. The Commission is yet to evaluate whether Poland's newly adopted law of 9 June 2022 disbanding the Chamber actually meets the relevant country-specific recommendations.

Following its 2020 communication on the digitalisation of justice, the Commission has pursued initiatives for the digitalisation of cross-border judicial cooperation, notably by adopting a proposal for a regulation in December 2021.

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This EPRS paper analyses progress in attaining the policy agenda set out by Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, and her College of Commissioners. It looks in particular at the state of play in respect of delivery on its six key priorities.

Concretely, EPRS finds that, ahead of the 2022 State of the Union address, of the over 500 initiatives foreshadowed by the von der Leyen Commission on taking office or since (521), almost two thirds (330) have already been submitted and, on the legislative proposals, the co-legislators have started work. Of those 330, almost half (160) have already been adopted by the co-legislators, or, for the non-legislative ones (such as strategies, action plans and other communications, amounting to nearly one in five of the total), by the Commission itself. The great majority of the remainder are either proceeding normally through the legislative process (120) or are close to adoption (16). Conversely, a tenth of them are proceeding very slowly or are currently blocked (34). While the Commission's first priority, the European Green Deal, ranks highest in terms of the number of initiatives planned (130), its third priority, 'An economy that works for people', has seen the highest number of legislative proposals actually adopted so far (34).

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