
The six policy priorities of the von der Leyen Commission

State of play
in spring 2023



IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS

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This EPRS paper analyses progress made in carrying through the policy agenda set 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 with respect to delivery of the agenda's six key priorities, as we enter the final year running up to the 2024 European elections.

The von der Leyen Commission – either on taking office or more recently – has announced a total of 597 planned initiatives. In concrete terms, EPRS finds that almost two thirds (379) have now been submitted and, for those which are legislative proposals, the co-legislators have started work. Of the 379, almost half (188) 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 fifth of the total), by the Commission itself. The vast majority of the remainder are either close to adoption (28) or proceeding normally through the legislative process (129). On the other hand, almost one fifth are moving slowly or are blocked (34). While the Commission's first priority – the European Green Deal – ranks highest in terms of the number of initiatives planned (148), the third, fourth and fifth priorities – 'An economy that works for people', 'A stronger Europe in the world', and 'Promoting our European way of life' – have higher numbers of initiatives actually adopted so far (38, 40 and 36 respectively).

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 on the European Parliament's '[Legislative Train Schedule](#)' website, developed by EPRS.

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Table of contents

Introduction	1
1. European Green Deal	4
2. A Europe fit for the digital age	6
3. An economy that works for people	8
4. A stronger Europe in the world	10
5. Promoting the European way of life	12
6. A new push for European democracy	14

Introduction

To say that the geo-political climate has been **stormy** since the beginning of this European Commission's mandate would be an under-statement. COVID-19 emerged just as Ursula von der Leyen was starting her tenure as president, and the epidemic was declared a pandemic within her first 100 days. The year 2020 was marked by the outbreak of the pandemic, and 2021 by its continuing impact. The year 2022 will be remembered as the year Russia launched its war on Ukraine. These two major challenges – the pandemic and war on the European continent – combined with further major challenges such as climate change and many others, transformed the conditions in which the Commission had expected to navigate when it began its mandate and set its course in autumn 2019. The pandemic and the war are common threads throughout the different sections of this publication: they have affected all policies, sometimes forcing progress, at other times slowing it down, and at yet others imposing a change of course and the implementation of previously unanticipated measures. The overwhelming importance of the latest challenge, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, is reflected in the choice of photograph on the front cover: the Commission President speaking in the European Parliament's plenary session in a key debate on the first anniversary of Russia's invasion.

Against this backdrop, when assessing how the European Commission has delivered over the past 6 months against its commitments and announcements, it is striking how much the institutional throughput has remained steady. Previous editions of this EPRS analysis have already highlighted that neither the coronavirus pandemic nor the war on Ukraine had hindered progress on the main priorities. As the pandemic enters its fourth year and the war its second, the Commission's pace and volume of delivery remains very close to the level of 6 months ago, when assessed on the eve of the 2022 State of the Union address.

The European Commission is sailing a **steady** course in terms of the number of new initiatives it is producing for each priority, balanced with the number of announced initiatives still to come. The co-legislators' work on the legislative initiatives also continues to progress at a steady rate.

That the rate of progress has remained largely unchanged is to the credit of the European institutions: the Commission in tabling the initiatives, and the European Parliament and Council for their work on the legislative proposals, through to adoption. At a time when building compromise and reaching majorities is a challenge, as seen in the Member States of the European Union (EU) as well as in other democracies across the globe, this is an achievement worth noting, especially with just over a year to go before the next European elections.

This is an important achievement for the European institutions and all parties involved in EU policy-making, and it is also important for observers reading this EPRS assessment of the Commission's delivery against the latter's own announcements. Ultimately, it is important for citizens, who want to know what the EU is doing and how much of the programme they favoured when they elected their representatives in 2019 has been translated into legislation and action. It is also important for institutions in other countries in the world that look to the EU as an example. Among them is the Ukrainian Parliament, for whom this edition of our analysis, along with a selection of other EPRS publications, is exceptionally being translated into Ukrainian.

So the European Commission has delivered on its initial programme and successive updates. The question now is whether that is enough.

Surely but slowly? With just over a year to go before the European Parliament is dissolved for the elections, is it enough that two thirds of the initiatives announced have been submitted to the co-legislators – in other words that one third are still to be tabled? Is it enough that only half of the initiatives submitted have been adopted – in other words, that most of the other half still require substantial work from the co-legislators to find agreement enabling their adoption?

This analysis monitors all six of the Commission's 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.

According to this EPRS analysis, of the nearly 600 initiatives announced (597), almost two thirds (63 %, 379) have now been submitted and, in the case of the 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, for instance strategies, action plans and other communications. Of the 379 initiatives that have been submitted, half (50 %) have already been adopted (188) – by the legislators in the case of the legislative proposals, or simply by the Commission in the case of the non-legislative initiatives – while the vast majority of the other half are either proceeding normally through the legislative process (129, or 67 %) or are close to adoption (28, or 15 %). Conversely, a certain number are proceeding very slowly or are currently blocked (34, or 18 %).

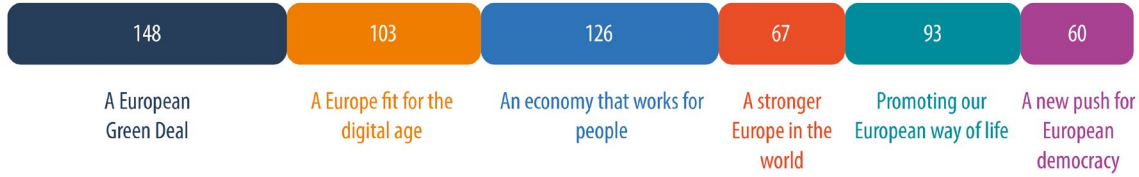
With a focus on each of the six policy priorities, this assessment shows how the European Commission is performing in tabling the proposals and initiatives it has announced, and how the three institutions are progressing in negotiating and adopting legislation. The European Green Deal ranks highest in terms of the number of initiatives planned (148), but the executive has tabled only just over half of them (or 56 %), with fewer than a quarter being adopted by the co-legislators so far (24 %). The third priority, 'An economy that works for people', comes next (126), but more initiatives have been tabled (65 %) and a third of them adopted (30 %). The digital priority totals 103 initiatives planned, 55 % of which have already been submitted (57), and 28 adopted (27 %). For 'A stronger Europe in the world', an area with relatively few legislative initiatives by definition, and in contrast to the majority of the Commission's priorities, almost nine out of ten (88 %) initiatives have already been tabled (see Section 4) and three in five adopted. A fair amount of work remains to be done for the other priorities: 40 % of the proposals have still 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 (60).

This publication and the next will continue to monitor this Commission's delivery in the final year of this legislative term, before the 2024 European elections.

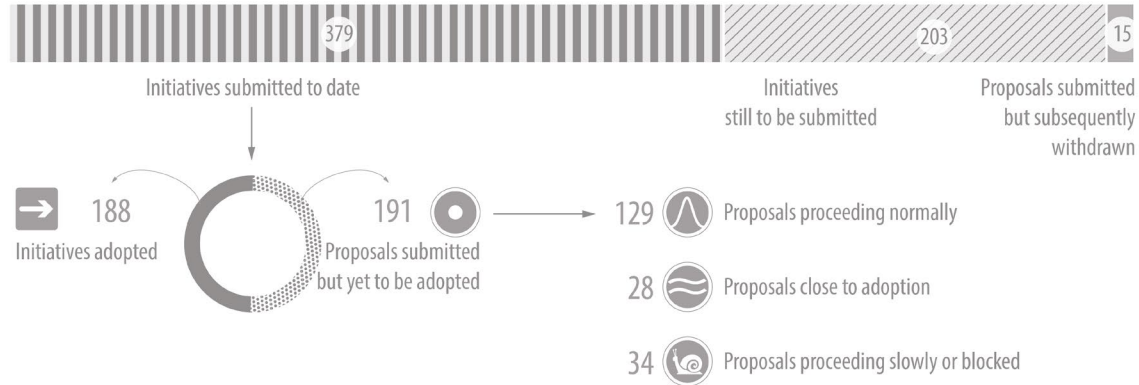
For more information on how the von der Leyen Commission's agenda is proceeding, a proposal-by-proposal assessment is available on the European Parliament's ['Legislative Train Schedule'](#) website, developed by EPRS.

The von der Leyen Commission's six priorities: Legislative and non-legislative delivery as of 28 February 2023

Initiatives for this term announced so far: 597

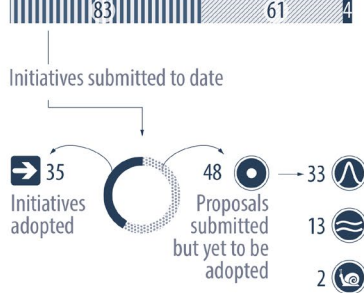


Initiatives for this term announced so far: 597



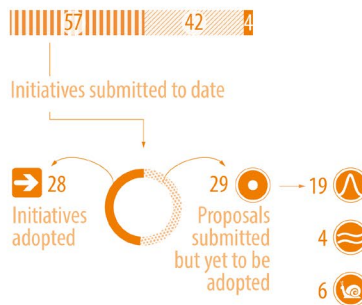
A European Green Deal

Initiatives for this term announced so far: 148



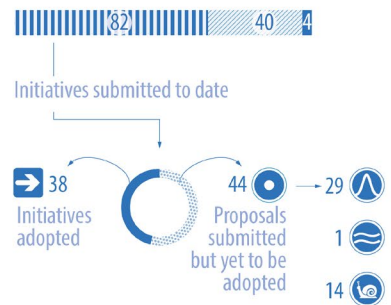
A Europe fit for the digital age

Initiatives for this term announced so far: 103



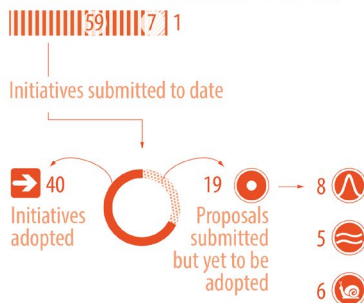
An economy that works for people

Initiatives for this term announced so far: 126



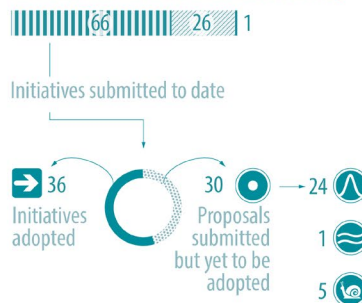
A stronger Europe in the world

Initiatives for this term announced so far: 67



Promoting our European way of life

Initiatives for this term announced so far: 93



A new push for European democracy

Initiatives for this term announced so far: 60



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Data on this page come from the [Legislative Train Schedule](#) website of the European Parliament, and represent the situation as of 28 February 2023.



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, has 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 the [EU 'Save Energy'](#) communication of May 2022, a new [regulation on gas storage adopted](#) in June, and the [EU 'Save gas for a safe winter'](#) plan presented in July 2022.

The Commission has delivered half of the planned initiatives on EU climate action and is continuing to deliver the initiatives on waste, sustainable freight and transport, healthy soils and a sustainable food system from the [2023 Commission work programme](#), while shaping the EU's response to the [challenges](#) to energy supply and prices posed by Russia's ongoing war on Ukraine. In 2023, the Commission is taking initiatives to boost the competitiveness of EU industry in the transition to climate neutrality through its [Green Deal industrial plan](#). This comes in response to the United States [inflation reduction act](#) and its support for clean energy and green technologies.

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 established an independent scientific advisory board and 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.

To implement this increased ambition, the Commission presented the ['fit for 55' package](#) in July 2021. Trilogue negotiations on the key climate files in the package were concluded in 2022, while negotiations on the energy-related files are still ongoing. 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) and establish a new ETS for road transport and buildings, 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 the 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. The Commission presented a legislative proposal on [carbon removal certification](#) in November 2022 and proposed revised [CO₂ standards for new trucks and buses](#) in February 2023.

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 Commission presented a proposal for reform of the [EU electricity market design](#) on 14 March 2023.

The European Commission launched the [European climate pact](#), a non-legislative initiative in December 2020, and tabled a new [strategy on adaptation to climate change](#) in February 2021, seeking to mainstream climate adaptation and strengthen the international dimension.

Becoming a world leader in the circular economy

In May 2021, the Commission [updated](#) its March 2020 long-term strategy for Europe's [industrial future](#) that was aligned with the European Green Deal. The strategy was complemented by a [chemicals strategy for sustainability](#), adopted in October 2020, and proposals for a new [batteries regulation](#) in December 2020 and on [construction products](#) in March 2022. The February 2023 [Green Deal industrial plan](#) aims to strengthen the competitiveness of the EU's 'net zero' industries through a favourable regulatory environment, access to finance, development of skills and open trade for resilient supply chains. A proposal for a [net-zero industry act](#) was presented on 16 March 2023.

The March 2020 [circular economy action plan](#) promotes the sustainable use of resources, especially in resource-intensive sectors with a high environmental impact, such as electronics, [textiles](#) and construction. The Commission tabled legislative proposals on [waste shipment](#) in November 2021, on [empowering consumers for the green transition](#) and [ecodesign requirements for sustainable products](#) in March 2022, and on [packaging and packaging waste](#) in November 2022. Proposals on the [right to repair](#) and on substantiating green claims are [announced](#) for March 2023. The transdisciplinary [New European Bauhaus](#) initiative, [launched](#) in January 2021 as a bridge between science, technology, art and culture, has so far [invested](#) over €100 million in more than 100 projects.

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](#) was presented in November 2022. The 2020 [biodiversity strategy for 2030](#) supports the key objective of mainstreaming biodiversity across all policy areas. 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 in November 2021. In 2022, the Commission tabled proposals for legislation on [nature restoration](#), [pesticides](#), [air quality](#), [water pollution](#) and [waste water](#). Initiatives for 2023 concern [chemicals](#), [mercury](#), [microplastics](#), [food and textiles waste](#), and [soil protection, management and restoration](#).

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 Ursula 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 presented the [sustainable Europe investment plan](#) to increase funding for the transition by mobilising €1 trillion and to create an enabling [framework for sustainable investment](#). In April 2021, the Commission presented its proposal for a [corporate sustainability reporting directive](#). It adopted a [renewed sustainable finance strategy](#) and proposed a voluntary [EU green bond standard](#) in July 2021.

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 the 2021-2027 period. 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. To foster the EU market for clean hydrogen, the Commission plans a €800 million auction for renewable hydrogen production in autumn 2023 and [intends](#) to launch an [EU hydrogen bank](#) in the third quarter of 2023.

2. A Europe fit for the digital age

As the legislative cycle is well into its second half, the European Commission has presented just over half of the initiatives to steer Europe towards digital transformation. Important pieces of legislation have been adopted and entered into force, notably the Digital Services Act ([DSA](#)), the [Digital Markets Act \(DMA\)](#), and the [Directive on a high common level of cybersecurity \(NIS2\)](#). Others, such as the [data act](#), [revision of the eIDAS regulation](#) or the [chips act](#), are in legislative deliberation. A number of [new](#) proposals are expected in 2023, both legislative (e.g. critical raw materials and net-zero industry acts) and non-legislative (e.g. virtual words).

Shaping the digital future of Europe

To complement the NIS2 Directive, in September 2022 the Commission presented a legislative proposal on an [EU cyber-resilience act](#), which would introduce mandatory cybersecurity requirements for products with digital elements. The proposal would cover a broad range of devices connected either directly or indirectly to another device or network, including hardware, software and ancillary services. It would impose duty of care obligations on manufacturers, importers, and distributors of these products across their entire life cycles. The proposal aims to guarantee better protection for consumers by obliging manufacturers to provide security support and software updates to address identified vulnerabilities, and by providing consumers with information about products' cybersecurity. The act would establish a single set of cybersecurity rules for companies in the EU and would increase transparency and privacy protection for consumers.

The [artificial intelligence act proposal](#), currently under negotiation, was complemented by a proposal for a directive on adapting non-contractual civil liability rules to artificial intelligence (AI) – the '[AI liability directive](#)' – in September 2022. The proposal would facilitate claims for compensation by victims of AI-related damage. It would deal with issues relating to the burden of proof and compensation of damage for justified claims. In parallel, the Commission adopted a [proposal to revise the Product Liability Directive](#); this would cover manufacturers' liability for defective products. The proposal aims to modernise the EU's product liability regime for products in the digital age, to enhance circular economy business models, address global value chains, and alleviate the burden of proof for victims under certain circumstances.

As far as public administration is concerned, the Commission tabled its proposal for a regulation laying down measures for a high level of public sector interoperability across the Union ([interoperable Europe act](#)) in November 2022. The proposal aims to help public administration across the EU exchange and share data and digital solutions securely and cooperate more effectively, ensuring seamless delivery of public services across borders, sectors, and organisational boundaries. It would encourage public sector innovation and public-private 'GovTech' projects and introduce a new interoperability cooperation framework for the public sector.

The proposal for a [gigabit infrastructure act](#), a revision of the Broadband Cost Reduction Directive (BCRD), was presented in February 2023, to meet growing bandwidth demand by upgrading the digital infrastructure. The proposal aims to enable faster, cheaper and more efficient deployment of very high capacity networks across the EU, to help hit the [2025 connectivity targets](#).

Supporting industry and small and medium-sized enterprises

In February 2023, the Commission presented a [green deal investment plan for the net-zero age](#), to boost the EU's clean-tech industry against the backdrop of third countries adopting massive industrial support packages. The plan has four pillars: improving the competitiveness of the EU's net-zero industry (under this pillar the Commission adopted a reform of the [electricity market design](#) on 14 March 2023, and a '[net-zero industry act](#)' and a '[critical raw materials act](#)' on 16 March 2023); increasing and speeding up access to public and private funding (the Commission intends to give Member States more flexibility under EU competition policy to grant State aid for certain sectors

and on a temporary basis); developing a suitably skilled workforce for the net-zero industry; and addressing global cooperation and international trade to improve the resilience of supply chains. In July 2022, the Commission approved two important projects of common European interest (IPCEI) on the hydrogen value chain ([Hy2Tech](#) and [Hy2Use](#)), and in October 2022, launched a new [solar photovoltaic industry alliance](#).

In November 2022, the Commission published a [proposal](#) to recast [Directive 98/71/EC](#) on the legal protection of designs of industrial products and a [proposal](#) for a regulation amending Council [Regulation 6/2002/EC](#) on Community designs, to adapt them to the digital age. The Commission has not yet adopted the revision of the legislation on supplementary protection certificates (SPCs), [announced](#) for fourth quarter of 2022 (intellectual property rights extending patent protection for specific medicinal and plant protection products).

In January 2023, the Commission put forward a communication on [harnessing talent](#) in Europe's regions promoting reskilling and upskilling to support the resilience and competitiveness of the EU. The Commission has not yet put forward the two proposals for recommendations on improving the provision of digital skills in education and training, and on the enabling factors for digital education, both [announced](#) for the third quarter of 2022. The same goes for the legislative proposal on multimodal digital mobility services, aimed at helping passengers and/or intermediaries to plan and buy tickets for multimodal journeys, [planned](#) for the fourth quarter of 2022, and for the proposal for regulation on a European defence investment programme [announced](#) for the third quarter of 2022.

Improving the functioning of the single market

In September 2022, the Commission put forward a proposal for a regulation on a single market emergency instrument (SMEI) package. It includes a main proposal for a regulation establishing a SMEI, and two accompanying proposals amending harmonised product legislation to ensure that strategic goods can be marketed quickly to address shortages in the event of market crises. The main proposal establishes measures for contingency planning, such as an early warning system.

In October 2022, the Commission amended the [State aid temporary crisis framework](#), adopted in March 2022 at the start of Russia's war on Ukraine, prolonging it until 31 December 2023. In February 2023, the Commission published the [list](#) of Member State measures approved under the framework, and consulted Member States on a [proposal](#) to broaden the current framework into a temporary crisis and transition framework aimed at enhancing investment and financing for clean tech production in Europe. The Commission [adopted](#) this framework on 9 March 2023. On the same day, it amended the [general block exemption rules](#) to support the twin transitions more effectively.

Under the [ongoing review](#) of EU competition tools, the Commission launched a [public consultation](#) on a draft revised merger implementing regulation and a draft revised notice on simplified procedure, which closed in June 2022. The final versions of both documents, [announced](#) in the second quarter of 2022, have not yet been published. In December 2022, the Commission adopted the revised [guidelines on State aid for broadband](#), used by the Commission when it assesses the allocation of State aid for the deployment and take-up of broadband networks to reduce the digital divide. A public [consultation](#) on the [draft](#) revised market definition notice used by the Commission in antitrust and merger cases ended on 13 January 2023. The revised notice [announced](#) in the fourth quarter of 2022, has not yet been published. The Commission [explained](#) that it was planning to have the new market definition notice in place in the third quarter of 2023. In December 2022, the Commission extended until the end of June 2023 the period of application of Regulation 1217/2010/EU, to give the Commission time to complete the process for the revision of the block exemption regulation for research and development agreements. This revision was [announced](#) in the fourth quarter of 2022.

On 16 March 2023, the Commission adopted two communications: one on the occasion of the [30th anniversary of the single market](#) and the other on the '[Long-term competitiveness of the EU: looking beyond 2030](#)'.

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 Russia's invasion of Ukraine, two thirds of the scheduled initiatives have been tabled as well as several additional ones.

Supporting enterprises' investment and financing

To support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the Commission and the EU Intellectual Property Office ([EUIPO](#)) launched a €47 million [EU SME Fund](#) in January 2022, which will offer vouchers for SMEs to protect their intellectual property rights. In December 2022, the Commission adopted a legislative proposal to facilitate SMEs' access to capital, also known as the [listing act](#).

Deepening economic and monetary union

On 9 November 2022, the Commission adopted a communication setting out orientations for a [reform of the EU economic governance](#) framework, geared towards greater national ownership; better EU enforcement; and more gradual adjustment supported by reforms and investments.

The completion of banking union ([BU](#)) has remained a key priority. 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 the second half of 2021, it adopted proposals in the area of financial markets ([MiFID](#), [MiFIR](#)), investment funds ([UCITS](#) and [AIFMD](#)), and insurance ([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](#), with the aim of simplifying requirements for the settlement of financial instruments, and the rules for the organisation of central securities depositories. On 26 October 2022, the Commission published a legislative proposal on instant credit transfers in euros (also known as [instant payments](#)), designed to allow citizens and businesses to transfer money at any time of any day within 10 seconds. On 7 December 2022, the Commission put forward a package to further develop CMU, namely on EU [clearing services](#), and harmonise certain [corporate insolvency rules](#) across the EU.

Helping recovery and resilience to external shocks

To address the major economic shocks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the von der Leyen Commission has taken economic measures to boost recovery and make the economy more resilient, while staying aligned with the 2019 political guidelines (such as the green transformation of the economy). The Commission proposed Next Generation EU ([NGEU](#)), financing it through supranational debt; it is expected to [borrow](#) up to around €800 billion from the capital markets by the end of 2026, of which up to €250 billion (or 30 % of NGEU) by issuing green bonds. According to the Commission's presentation made to the Committee on Budgets (BUDG) on 31 January 2023, [€170.8 billion in long-term debt](#) has been issued for NGEU purposes since 2021 (of which €36.4 billion in [green bonds](#)). Under the [Recovery and Resilience Facility](#), about €97 billion in grants, and €47 billion in loans have been already disbursed to Member States. They are financing investments in six areas (pillars): green transformation; digital transformation; smart, sustainable and inclusive growth; social and territorial cohesion; health, and economic, social and institutional resilience; and policies for the next generation.

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 - for repayment of NGEU), while the latter is under review by the co-legislators.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the EU economy led also to the decision in March 2020 to temporarily suspend the stability and growth pact (SGP) by activating the [general escape clause](#). In reaction to the economic consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Commission has [decided](#) to continue applying the general escape clause until the end of 2023.

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). On 25 January 2022, the Commission published a communication and a proposal for a Council recommendation on [strengthening social dialogue](#), in the just transition to a digital and climate neutral economy. 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 worldwide in February 2022, with a focus on eradicating child labour and forced labour worldwide, as well as promoting decent work in third-country domestic markets and in global supply chains.

On 23 February 2022, the Commission adopted a [proposal](#) for 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. On 28 September 2022, the Commission adopted a proposal for a directive on the [protection of workers](#) from risks relating to exposure to asbestos at work.

Promoting fair taxation

On 22 December 2021, the Commission presented a draft Council directive on ensuring a global [minimum rate of corporate taxation](#) for multinational groups, following the OECD international agreement on a 15 % tax rate. As part of its [EU strategy on business taxation](#), on 11 May 2022, the Commission proposed a debt-equity bias reduction allowance (DEBRA). On 8 December 2022, the Commission presented the value added tax (VAT) in the digital age [package](#), consisting of three elements: improving and expanding single VAT registration for businesses through a VAT one-stop shop, updating VAT rules for the platform economy, and introducing real-time digital VAT reporting.

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 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU), which provides for specific measures to support them. On 3 May 2022, the Commission adopted a [renewed strategy](#) for these regions, aiming to unlock their potential through appropriate investment and reform. The Council adopted its [conclusions](#) on the strategy on 21 June 2022.

4. A stronger Europe in the world

One year into the war in Ukraine, the EU and its partners are demonstrating their unity, resilience and capacity to develop what von der Leyen has defined as 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 the President of the Commission [stated](#) in the European Parliament's plenary session in March 2022, the invasion of Ukraine by Russia 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. In her [State of the Union address](#) on 14 September 2022, the Commission President [stressed](#) that the response to this crisis will determine 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. Consequently, the EU's main foreign policy priorities now are to respond to the military aggression against Ukraine, bolster the external dimension of energy resilience, accelerate EU enlargement, and support global trade, peace and security.

Responding to Russia's military aggression against Ukraine

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 nine cycles of heavy [sanctions](#) against Russia's financial system, industry, and people and entities who have facilitated the war in Ukraine and the harmful activities of the Russian government. The [10th package](#) of sanctions – [presented](#) by the Commission on 15 February 2023 and [adopted](#) by the Council on 25 February – [proposed](#) further export bans, worth more than €11 billion, to deprive the Russian economy of critical technology and industrial goods, including 47 new electronic components that can be used in Russian weapons systems.

For the first time ever, the EU is jointly delivering military equipment to a country under attack. In February 2022, the EU [agreed](#) to allocate a first package of assistance measures worth €500 million from the European Peace Facility ([EPF](#)) – an off-budget mechanism designed, inter alia, to support EU partner military forces – to Ukraine. The [seventh package](#) of assistance measures, adopted on 2 February 2023, brings this EU contribution to a total of €3.6 billion.

On 15 November 2022, the European Union military assistance mission Ukraine (EUMAM) was launched for a period of 2 years. 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 has complemented 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. In addition, on 17 January 2023, the European Commission [disbursed](#) €3 billion to Ukraine, the first tranche of an €18 billion support package for 2023, the EU's largest ever macro-financial assistance package for a third country.

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 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 in economic support in May 2021, once a democratic transition has taken place in Belarus.

Bolstering the external dimension of energy resilience

The conflict in Ukraine has accentuated the external dimension of energy resilience, as Russian gas and oil have emerged as tools of [hybrid war](#). On 18 May 2022, the Commission presented a [strategy](#) for an [EU external energy engagement](#) as part of the joint European action for more affordable, secure and sustainable energy ([REPowerEU Plan](#)). On 25 May 2022, the Commission set up the [EU](#)

[energy platform](#) to aggregate energy demand at regional level and facilitate future joint purchasing of both gas and green hydrogen, to ensure the best use of infrastructure so that gas flows to where it is most needed, and to reach out to international supply partners. Through REPowerEU, the EU [confirmed](#) its objective to achieve independence from Russian fossil fuels well before the end of the decade. As part of that objective, the EU-US task force on energy security was launched with the aim of bolstering strategic energy cooperation for security of energy supply; the task force held its latest meeting in November 2022. The Commission has also sped up the building of new liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals and work on interconnectors. The first LNG terminal in Germany, the Uniper LNG terminal in Wilhelmshaven, [opened](#) on 17 December 2022.

Accelerating EU enlargement

One [geopolitical priority](#) of the Commission is to accelerate EU enlargement. On 28 February 2022, Ukrainian 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](#), on 23 June 2022 EU leaders [decided](#) to grant Ukraine and Moldova 'candidate country' status, and Georgia 'pre-candidate country' status, allowing them to advance towards EU membership. On 3 February 2023, at the 24th EU-Ukraine summit, leaders [reconfirmed](#) the will 'to rebuild a modern, prosperous Ukraine firmly anchored on our common European path'. Von der Leyen had already [welcomed](#) the Council's decision to open accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia in 2020. On 19 July 2022, the two countries opened [accession negotiations](#). On 15 December 2022, EU leaders decided to grant [candidate country status](#) to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Subsequently, the most critical task in the region is to complete the comprehensive agreement within the [Belgrade-Pristina dialogue](#).

Supporting global trade, peace and security

In her political guidelines, von der Leyen expressed her intention to conclude important trade deals and technology partnerships with global partners, assuming the conditions were right. On 6 February 2023, the Commission President and Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the [EU-India Trade and Technology Council](#). With [New Zealand](#), the EU concluded negotiations for a comprehensive and ambitious trade deal on 30 June 2022. Modernisation of the trade agreement with [Chile](#) was agreed in December 2022. Importantly, the [International Procurement Instrument](#), a key part of the Commission work programme aimed at securing the reciprocal opening of public procurement markets in third countries, entered into force in August 2022. With China, the 38th session of the [EU-China human rights dialogue](#) was held in Brussels on 17 February 2023. Engagement with [Asia and the Indo-Pacific region](#), 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 2023-2027.

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](#)). Von der Leyen had underlined the importance of Iran [returning](#) to the nuclear deal in January 2020; however, EU efforts to revive nuclear talks have stalled. On 17 January 2023, von der Leyen [backed](#) listing Iran's Revolutionary Guards (IRGC) as a terrorist organisation to respond to the trampling of fundamental human rights in the country. This call was supported by the [European Parliament](#). On 23 January 2023, the [Council](#) included 18 persons and 19 entities linked to the Iranian security forces and the IRGC on the EU sanctions list.

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 actions in these areas have been strongly influenced by the recent crises triggered by the coronavirus pandemic and Russia's 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. To [assist](#) Ukrainians seeking refuge in EU countries, the EU activated the 2001 [Temporary Protection Directive](#) for the very first time, providing harmonised rights for refugees across the Union. 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 – in line with the [gradual approach](#) on the pact proposed by the French Presidency. Interinstitutional negotiations have resumed on the Eurodac proposal and are about to start on the screening proposal. 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 has also advanced on the reform of the Schengen system, with the revised [Schengen evaluation mechanism](#) entering into force in October 2022. Work continued on the proposal to revise the [Schengen Borders Code](#) with the Parliament expected to adopt its report in April 2023. 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. In response to a crisis at the EU border with Belarus, the Commission [proposed](#) a regulation to address situations of instrumentalisation of migrants – it is still in the early stages of the legislative process.

In April 2022, the Commission presented a package of measures on [legal migration](#). This 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, step up operational cooperation and facilitate access to the EU labour market for those displaced by the war in Ukraine.

Towards a security union 2.0

EU action on internal security in the 2020-2025 period 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. The Directive on the [Resilience of Critical Entities](#), one of the Commission's initiatives to increase the EU's resilience to cyber- and hybrid threats, entered into force in January 2023. Other measures include setting up a [joint cyber unit](#) and a [legislative proposal](#) on a European cyber-resilience act, which was presented in September 2022. 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 to address child sexual abuse.

When it comes to building an EU security ecosystem, one important development is the entry into force of the [revised Europol Regulation](#) in June 2022, which 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 third element of the package, a [recommendation](#) on operational police cooperation, was adopted by the Council in June 2022. In December 2022, the Commission presented two legislative proposals revising the rules on the collection and transfer of advance passenger information (API), aimed at [enhancing security](#) and [improving external border controls](#). The European Commission [announced](#) a proposal on [reciprocal access to security-related information](#) for front-line officers, between the EU and key third countries, for the fourth quarter of 2022 but has not yet tabled it.

The [revised](#) Directive on Security of Network and Information Systems (NIS2) and the [new Directive](#) on the Resilience of Critical Entities entered into force in January 2023. The co-legislators have reached a political agreement on the proposals (for a [regulation](#) and a [directive](#)) to facilitate access by law enforcement to electronic evidence. Work continues on the 2021 package of proposals to strengthen the [EU's anti-money-laundering and countering the financing of terrorism rules](#). In addition to previous initiatives to address specific forms of crime still pending, the Commission presented a [proposal](#) to revise the 2011 Anti-trafficking Directive in December 2022.

Towards a European health union

The coronavirus pandemic boosted the Commission's ambition to build a [European health union](#). Work advanced on the longer-term plan to strengthen the EU's [health security](#) framework. In December 2022, the European Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA), a key pillar of the European health union, marked its first anniversary. Following the adoption of reinforced mandates for the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), in November 2022, a [Regulation on serious cross-border threats to health](#) was adopted. Other initiatives included the update of the [Council recommendation on cancer screening](#) (in December 2022) and the adoption of a [European care strategy](#) (in September 2022). In May 2022, the Commission adopted the proposal for a regulation on the [European health data space](#), aiming to give citizens control over their health data while facilitating the re-use of health data for research, innovation and public policy purposes. In July 2022, the Commission put forward a proposal for a regulation on standards of quality and safety for substances of human origin intended for human application. The Commission announced the adoption of a pharmaceutical package for March 2023, with proposals for the revision of the EU [pharmaceutical legislation](#) and of the [EU legislation on medicines for children and rare diseases](#), a Council recommendation on stepping up EU actions to combat [antimicrobial resistance](#) in a one-health approach, as well as a follow-up to the [pharmaceutical strategy for Europe](#).

A European education area for quality and inclusive education

Several European education area (EEA) initiatives have been carried out, contributing towards the achievement of the [EEA](#) by 2025. The Council adopted a recommendation on [blended learning approaches](#) for high quality and inclusive primary and secondary education in November 2021. In June 2022, the Council adopted two recommendations on [learning for the green transition and sustainable development](#) and on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability. Moreover, in November 2022, the Council recommendation on [pathways to school success](#), aiming at enhancing the inclusive dimension of education, was adopted. The Commission [tabled](#) the long-awaited [European strategy for universities](#) in January 2022. The Commission also put forward a proposal for a Council [recommendation](#) on building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation; this was [adopted](#) by the Council in April 2022.

6. A new push for European democracy

By the beginning of 2023, the Commission had adopted all but one of the initiatives announced in its [work programme](#) for 2022 under 'A new push for European democracy', presenting legislative proposals in three main areas: media pluralism, parenthood, and equality bodies. The proposal on transfer of criminal proceedings is now [announced](#) for April 2023, delayed from autumn 2022.

Protecting media pluralism

On [16 September 2022](#) the Commission adopted a proposal for the [European media freedom act](#), a legislative initiative for the protection of media pluralism and transparency, in line with the objectives of the [European democracy action plan](#). The [proposal for a regulation](#) would establish a common framework for media services in the internal market (European media freedom act) and amend [Directive 2010/13/EU](#). It would be based on a number of [innovations](#): fostering cross-border activity and investment in media services; regulatory cooperation and convergence through guidelines and common approaches to promote media pluralism and media independence; support of media quality and reduction of undue public and private interference in editorial freedom; and transparency and fairness of audience measurement. The proposal would also introduce a European board for media services, comprised of national media authorities and tasked with ensuring the consistent application of the EU media law framework by assisting the Commission in preparing guidelines on media regulation.

Clarifying rules on parenthood

In the framework of the [LGBTI equality strategy](#) and after having run a public consultation in 2021 on cross-border family situations, on 7 December 2022 the Commission adopted a [proposal for a regulation](#) on jurisdiction, applicable law, recognition of decisions and acceptance of authentic instruments in matters of parenthood and on the creation of a European certificate of parenthood. The proposal was accompanied by an impact assessment and subsidiarity grid. The [proposal](#), consisting of private international law rules, would have as main focus the interests and rights of the child and be based on the principle, established by the Court of Justice of the EU, that once established in one Member State, parenthood should be recognised in all the other Member States for the same purposes. The proposal would bring clarity in the matter through the introduction of legal rules affecting: i) the determination of the applicable jurisdiction related to parenthood in the best interests of the child; ii) the designation of the applicable law to the establishment of parenthood, normally the law of the state of habitual residence; iii) rules on recognition of parenthood, which in principle should be subject to the principle of mutual recognition; and iv) the creation of a European certificate of parenthood with a common template.

Strengthening equality bodies

On [7 December 2022](#), as part of the equality package, the Commission adopted two proposals to strengthen equality bodies: one proposal on equality between men and women, with Article 157(3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) as the legal basis (subject to the ordinary legislative procedure); the other, on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age and sexual orientation, with Article 19(1) TFEU as the legal basis (subject to the consent procedure). The two proposals were accompanied by an analytical document and subsidiarity grid.

Follow-up to the Conference on the Future of Europe

In her State of the Union address on 14 September 2022, Ursula von der Leyen declared that 'the moment has arrived for a European Convention'; she announced that the citizens' panels that were central to the Conference on the Future of Europe would be included in the Commission policy-making toolbox so that they could make recommendations ahead of certain key policy proposals.

The announcement was implemented with the work on food waste in [December 2022](#). As a first practical follow-up to the conference's proposals, the [Commission work programme for 2023](#) of 18 October 2022 contained 43 new initiatives directly or indirectly following up on the conference's proposals. On 2 December 2022, a citizens' [feedback event](#) on the conference took place in the European Parliament in Brussels, bringing together the original groups from the conference plenary. In the meantime, the issue of whether to launch a convention to revise the Treaties – as requested by Parliament in its resolution of [9 June 2022](#) – remains open, as the Council has not yet sent Parliament's proposals to the European Council. Within the General Affairs [Council](#), many Member States remain in favour of leveraging the existing possibilities offered by the current Treaty framework. Ministers suggested waiting for the conclusion of Parliament's work in the Committee on Constitutional Affairs ([AFCO](#)) on identifying proposals for Treaty change.

Upholding the rule of law and other EU values

Following the third annual rule of law report [published](#) by the Commission in July 2022, the Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) has tabled a motion for a resolution on the report. The [text](#) notes that the Commission has partly followed Parliament's previous resolutions (of [24 June 2021](#) on the first rule of law report, and of [19 May 2022](#) on the second report), but calls on the Commission to address Parliament's requests in their entirety, for instance with regard to setting up a panel of independent experts, including on fundamental rights, in the scope of the reporting exercise, or providing Member States with deadlines to implement the Commission's recommendations. The motion for a resolution welcomes the fact that, for the first time, the report addresses [country-specific recommendations](#) to each individual Member State on how to enhance judicial independence, media freedom, the fight against corruption, and constitutional checks and balances. It nevertheless highlights that the recommendations are often vague and lack specificity.

The motion also addresses the on-going Article 7 (Treaty on European Union, TEU) procedures, noting that Council has failed to make any meaningful progress. On [27 April 2022](#), the Commission triggered the [conditionality mechanism](#) with regard to Hungary, and on 18 September 2022 it [proposed](#) to the Council an implementing decision to suspend 65 % of commitments under three operational programmes of the cohesion policy concerning Hungary. On [12 December 2022](#), the Council adopted an [implementing decision](#), effectively deciding to suspend 55 % of the three cohesion policy programmes, amounting approximately to €6.3 billion in budgetary commitments to Hungary. Following the triggering of the conditionality mechanism by the Commission, Hungary adopted a number of remedial measures that the Commission did not consider fully satisfactory to meet the Conditionality Regulation's objective. In parallel, the rule of law remains a contentious issue when it comes to unblocking Poland's recovery and resilience plan (RRP). It was [approved](#) by the Council in June 2022, on the condition of Poland fulfilling a number of [judicial reforms](#) aimed at restoring full judicial independence in line with EU standards. A legislative proposal intended to address the Commission's concerns has not been signed by the President of the Republic but has been sent to the Constitutional Court for judicial review, pending which it cannot enter into force. Similarly, with regard to Hungary, the RRP was finally [approved](#) by the Council in December 2022, but any payments will be dependent on the Commission's assessment of the fulfilment of milestones concerning, in particular, the rule of law.

Other initiatives

In January 2023, the Commission launched the [rural observatory](#), which provides information on issues such as population density, broadband speed and average distance to health facilities. Concerning the proposal on digitalisation of cross-border judicial proceedings, the Committees on Legal Affairs (JURI) and on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE), jointly responsible for the file, have put forward a [negotiating mandate](#), which will serve as a basis for hammering out a final compromise with the Council.

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This EPRS paper analyses progress made in carrying through the policy agenda set 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 with respect to delivery of the agenda's six key priorities, as we enter the final year running up to the 2024 European elections.

The von der Leyen Commission – either on taking office or more recently – has announced a total of 597 planned initiatives. In concrete terms, EPRS finds that almost two thirds (379) have now been submitted and, for those which are legislative proposals, the co-legislators have started work. Of the 379, almost half (188) 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 fifth of the total), by the Commission itself. The vast majority of the remainder are either close to adoption (28) or proceeding normally through the legislative process (129). On the other hand, almost one fifth are moving slowly or are blocked (34). While the Commission's first priority – the European Green Deal – ranks highest in terms of the number of initiatives planned (148), the third, fourth and fifth priorities – 'An economy that works for people', 'A stronger Europe in the world', and 'Promoting our European way of life' – have higher numbers of initiatives actually adopted so far (38, 40 and 36 respectively).

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