

Europe in May 2019

Preparing for a more united,
stronger and more democratic
Union in an increasingly
uncertain world

ANNEX III

The Top 20 EU achievements
2014-2019



FUTURE OF EUROPE

The Top 20 EU achievements 2014-2019

1 The European Fund for Strategic Investments

To support recovery after the financial and economic crisis and create the conditions for jobs and growth, the Juncker Commission launched the Investment Plan for Europe in 2014, commonly known as the Juncker Fund for the Investment Plan for Europe. At its core is the European Fund for Strategic Investments, or EFSI. The objectives were three-fold: to reverse the downward investment trend by removing obstacles to investment; to provide visibility and technical assistance to investment projects; and to make more efficient use of scarce public financial resources by mobilising private investment via a public guarantee.

Europe's economy has now grown for six consecutive years. EFSI has already leveraged €392.6 billion in investments in small and medium-sized enterprises and in key areas such as infrastructure, research, renewable energy, environment and digital and social projects. The 2020 target is €500 billion, leading to the overall creation of 1.4 million new jobs in the EU. The InvestEU programme is set to build on this success in the next long-term budget.

2 Making use of the Stability and Growth Pact's flexibility

In its Communication of January 2015, the Commission set out how it intended to use the flexibility built into the Stability and Growth Pact's rules. This approach was supported by the Council of Ministers and has helped Europe's economic recovery by striking the appropriate balance between pursuing sound fiscal policies and supporting growth, notably through reforms and investment. Estimates suggest that the use of this flexibility has boosted the EU's gross domestic product by 0.8% over the last four years and helped create

1.5 million jobs. At the same time, government debt decreased by 6.8 percentage points between 2014 and 2018, and the EU deficit decreased on average from about 3% to 0.6%.

3 Saving Greece's membership in the euro area

The Juncker Commission took office in the wake of a new Greek debt crisis. In addition to facilitating negotiations between all actors, the Commission launched in July 2015 a plan to help Greece stabilise its economy and maximise its use of EU funds to boost jobs, growth and investment, by mobilising up to €35 billion for Greece under various European Union funding programmes for the period 2014-2020. At the same critical juncture, a short-term loan of €7 billion was mobilised as bridge financing under the European Financial Stabilisation Mechanism, effectively preventing Greece from crashing out of the euro area. The Commission also offered far-reaching technical support to help build the necessary administrative support through the Commission's Structural Reform Support Service created in 2015.

In August 2018, Greece emerged from its three-year stability support programme, which provided a total of €61.9 billion in loans based on the implementation of a comprehensive and unprecedented reform programme. Growth is now positive and, at about 2%, it is reaching its highest levels in ten years. While still too high, unemployment has also gone down significantly since its peak. Enhanced monitoring is in place to maximise EU support and ensure that this progress is pursued.

4 Paris Climate Agreement

The EU played a leading role in brokering the historic, ambitious and global Paris Climate Agreement. 195 countries agreed on a simple goal: to hand over to future generations a healthier planet and more prosperous, modern and fair societies. The EU is the only large economy in the world that has fully translated into legislation the steps to meet its Paris Agreement pledges and will cut at least 40% of its greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 preparing for a climate-neutral economy.

This is an investment in our prosperity and in preparing for a sustainable, climate neutral and circular economy.

5 Ban on single-use plastics

To reduce the 25 million tons of plastic waste produced annually and increase the recycling rate for plastics, currently at just 30%, the EU adopted the world's first comprehensive Plastics Strategy. As part of the Strategy, strict measures were introduced for the 10 plastic products most often found on our beaches as well as abandoned fishing gear. This includes a ban on certain single-use plastics where alternatives are readily available, such as plastic cotton buds, cutlery, plates, straws, drink stirrers, or sticks for balloons. The measures will avoid the emission of 3.4 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent, reduce ocean litter and its negative environmental effects and bring us closer to a truly circular economy.

6 EU trade agreements with Japan and Canada

The EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement is the biggest trade agreement ever negotiated by the EU and the first ever trade deal to include a commitment to the Paris Climate Agreement. The EU and Japan together account for nearly one third of global gross domestic product and the agreement will create an open trade zone covering over 600 million people. This agreement was complemented by the conclusion of a mutual adequacy arrangement with Japan that created the world's largest area of free data flows, based on a high level of protection.

The EU has also concluded a modern trade agreement with Canada that opens up Canada's goods, services and public procurement markets to European companies and helps protect labour rights and the environment. Particularly for smaller EU firms, the agreement will make it easier and cheaper to export more to Canada.

The customs duties abolished by both agreements bring savings of up to €1.59 billion per year to European companies.

7 25 July 2018 Joint EU-U.S. Statement

Following rising trade tensions, President Juncker and President Trump launched a new phase in the EU-United States trade relationship at the White House on 25 July 2018.

Both sides agreed that no new tariffs would be imposed, while working towards the elimination of all existing industrial tariffs, and that cooperation in a number of sectors, including energy and regulatory issues, would be further developed. An EU-U.S. Executive Working Group established on that occasion is already working on implementing the Joint Statement.

8 EU-Turkey Statement

Following the EU-Turkey Statement, both sides committed to providing humanitarian assistance to refugees – notably for those fleeing the Syrian civil war. Due to the improved management of migration flows, in 2018 arrivals in the Eastern Mediterranean were down 90% compared to 2015. In parallel, the EU supported refugees in Turkey with €3 billion in 2016-2017 and already made €1.2bn of a further €3 billion instalment available to continue providing this vital support in the future.

9 Resettlement of refugees and EU Regional Trust Fund

Since 2015, successful EU resettlement programmes have helped over 50,000 of the most vulnerable people from around the world find refuge in the EU. By working together, Member States were able to target priority regions such as Syrian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey or refugees evacuated from Libya. Last year, Member States made the largest collective commitment on resettlement the EU has ever seen, under the new EU 50,000 place, voluntary resettlement scheme proposed by President Juncker.

To provide education, protection, health and socio-economic support to over two million Syrians, the EU Regional Trust Fund has mobilised €1.5 billion to fund 46 projects in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey.

10 Securing EU borders

The new European Border and Coast Guard Agency means that more than 1,600 border guards are now deployed to help patrol the Union's external borders in Bulgaria, Greece, Italy and Spain. The next step, now that agreement has been reached on the Commission's proposal, is to scale up the Agency yet further and reinforce it with its own equipment and a standing corps of 5,000 border guards as of 2021 and 10,000 by 2027 at the very latest, as well as a stronger mandate to carry out returns. A set of new improved and interoperable information systems will keep our borders both safer and more convenient for travelers. The Entry/Exit System will speed up procedures for bona fide travelers and identify where there are doubts, and the European Travel Information and Authorisation System will allow for more efficient pre-travel checks on visa-free visitors. All relevant information will be exchanged between Member States in real time to ensure that the rules are properly applied.

11 Emergency Trust Fund for Africa and External Investment Plan

The €4.2 billion Emergency Trust Fund for Africa is one of the EU's most effective tools to finance migration-related projects and address the root causes of irregular migration. So far 193 projects have been approved with a broad focus ranging from economic development and governance to healthcare and migration, including targeted life-saving assistance for people in need of protection. In addition, the External Investment Plan, building on the experiences of the Juncker Fund, is set to mobilise over €44 billion in both public and private investments by 2020 in Africa and in the EU neighbourhood. The External Investment Plan and its European Fund for Sustainable Development focus on boosting investments in a number of priority areas such as: clean energy; the financing of micro, small and medium enterprises; agriculture; and digitalisation for inclusive development.

12 RescEU, the new EU Civil Protection Mechanism

The European Union has faced a large number of increasingly frequent and complex disasters resulting in loss of life and other damaging consequences for citizens, businesses, communities and the environment. In 2018, almost 100 people were killed by natural disasters in Europe, and we witnessed wildfires in some European regions that had never been affected before. The economic costs are huge: close to €10 billion in damages in Europe were recorded in 2016. The EU must respond to this challenge and better protect its citizens from these disasters, increasing and improving prevention and preparedness. In 2018, countries from the EU requested assistance nearly 10 times, mainly for forest fires, medical support and marine pollution. RescEU provides civil protection capacities for those struck by disaster and most in need of help in Europe and across the world. This reserve of assets is to be used when countries require rapid assistance to cope with a disaster. These include fire-fighting planes as well as other means to respond to situations such as medical emergencies. In 2017 and 2018, the EU Civil Protection Mechanism was activated 52 times.

13 General Data Protection Regulation

The General Data Protection Regulation, which entered into application on 25 May 2018, has not only made Europe fit for the digital age, it has also set a new global standard for privacy. This single, pan-European law safeguards citizens' fundamental right to data protection while enabling individuals and companies to fully seize the opportunities of the digital single market without having to go through 28 different costly and bureaucratic procedures. The benefits are estimated at €2.3 billion per year.

Citizens can now rely on stronger rights, such as the right to access their data, the right to rectification, the right to be forgotten and the right to data portability. With tough sanctions, the new rules protect Europeans from their personal data being abused, for instance in the context of the European election campaign.

For businesses, the reform provides clarity and consistency of the rules they have to apply and helps restore consumer trust. On an international scale, the EU is starting to shape data privacy rules: It has created the world's largest area of free and safe data flows with Japan, while Argentina, Uruguay, Canada, Mexico, India, Israel, California and New Zealand have all started to work on privacy laws inspired by the new European standard.

Between May 2018 and January 2019, 95,180 complaints were notified to data protection authorities in Europe. High fines can be issued when the rules are not respected: in Austria, a sports betting café was fined €5,280 for unlawful video surveillance; in Germany, a social network operator had to pay €20,000 for failing to secure users' data; and in France, Google had to pay €50 million for not asking for consent to advertisements.

14 The end of roaming charges

Since 15 June 2017, all Europeans can call, send text messages and use mobile Internet without any extra charges when travelling in the EU. The complete end of roaming fees followed a decade of drastic and progressive price cuts, driven by the Commission's roaming proposal. Between 2007 and 2016, roaming prices dropped by more than 90%. Europeans immediately seized the benefits of 'Roam like at home': the use of mobile data has grown 12 times while the number of phone calls made by travellers has doubled compared to the habits before June 2017.

As of 15 May 2019, the costs for calls abroad within the EU will follow suit and decrease dramatically, too: to a maximum of 19 cents per minute for a call and 6 cents per SMS, plus VAT - up to 10 times cheaper than before.

15 Reform of the Posting of Workers Directive and the European Labour Authority

Workers should earn the same pay for the same work in the same place. To guarantee that this basic principle, enshrined in the European Pillar of Social Rights, also applies to the more than 2 million workers temporarily posted to a different Member State, the rules on the Posting of Workers were reformed.

To make sure that all EU rules on labour mobility are enforced in a fair, simple and effective way, a new European enforcement body was created. This European Labour Authority will support cooperation between EU countries in the cross-border enforcement of relevant Union law, including facilitating joint inspections. It will also facilitate access for individuals and employers to information on their rights and obligations as well as to relevant services.

16 European Public Prosecutor's Office

The European Public Prosecutor's Office, which will help safeguard EU taxpayers' money, is currently being set up with 22 Member States participating. It has a mandate to investigate and prosecute criminal cases where the EU's financial interests are at stake, such as the misuse of EU funds or cross-border value added tax fraud that cost taxpayers every year at least €50 billion of lost revenues to national budgets. This revolutionises the EU's role in this area by giving it a strong tool to act in law enforcement for the first time.

The Commission also put forward an initiative to task the European Public Prosecutor's Office with an additional mandate to pursue cross-border terrorist crimes. As terrorism knows no borders, Europe needs to be able to prosecute terrorists in a more coordinated and effective way.

17 Reform of the Gas Directive

The European Union's dependency on imported natural gas is growing. This trend is likely to continue due to falling domestic gas production, which is only partly offset by falling gas demand due to energy efficiency and decarbonisation policies. The share of net gas imports as compared to the EU's total gas consumption was 74.4% in 2017.

The reform of the Gas Directive ensures that the same rules are applied across EU territory (land and sea) and provides for effective oversight on the application of EU internal market rules. It improves transparency and cooperation among national authorities. This is a major step towards a well-functioning, transparent and competitive EU internal gas market where all suppliers act under the same EU rules.

18 Permanent Structured Cooperation and European Defence Fund

Lack of cooperation between Member States in the field of defence is estimated to cost between €25 billion and €100 billion every year. There are 178 weapons systems in Europe compared to 30 in the United States, making defence spending much less efficient. This is why the EU is stepping up its role as a security and defence provider and building a European Defence Union. Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) was launched to strengthen Europe's security and defence, with 25 of the EU's Member States participating. The European Defence Fund is up and running, with first projects fostering cross-border investments in state-of-the-art and fully interoperable defence technology and equipment in areas such as encrypted software and drone technology.

19 North Macedonia agreement

In June 2018, Athens and Skopje reached a bilateral agreement (the 'Prespa Agreement') on the settlement of the differences between their countries, including on the name, resolving one of the oldest conflicts in the region. The Republic of North Macedonia formally notified the EU of the entry into force of the agreement in February 2019.

The European Union strongly supported this historic agreement signed by Prime Ministers Tsipras and Zaev, following negotiations under the auspices of the UN. This would not have been possible without the EU's work in the country and the new incentive and impetus of the Western Balkan Strategy in 2018. It took political courage, leadership and responsibility on all sides to resolve one of the most entrenched disputes in the region. Both countries have seized this unique opportunity, which sets an example of reconciliation for Europe as a whole and will give a further boost to the European prospects of the region.

20 Reform of the European Citizens' Initiative

Over 9 million Europeans have supported a European Citizens' Initiative to date and the Commission has taken concrete action, including by proposing legislation, to follow up on initiatives that gathered at least 1 million signatures. The reformed rules will make this participatory instrument much more accessible and user-friendly. It will be easier for citizens to set up initiatives and sign them. An online collaborative platform was set up to provide advice and allow citizens from across Europe to get in touch to prepare their initiatives. The Commission will also provide a free service to organisers for the online collection of signatures.



