



Paris, 4 March 2020

## **POLITICAL OPINION**

### **Relating to the European Commission's Work Programme for 2020**

The European affairs committee of the French Senate,

Having regard to Article 12 of the Treaty on European Union,

Having regard to the conclusions of the European Council of 20 June 2019, in particular the new Strategic Programme 2019-2024 for the Union,

Having regard to Ms Ursula von der Leyen's speech to the European Parliament on 16 July 2019, in which she presented her political priorities,

Having regard to the Commission communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 29 January 2020 setting out the Commission's work programme for 2020, "A More Ambitious Union", COM(2020) 37 final,

Approves the European Commission's work programme for 2020, based around the six major ambitions set out in the political guidelines of its President, Ms Ursula von der Leyen; supports the proposal to achieve multi-annual programming between the Commission, the European Parliament and the Council;

Notes the particularly ambitious nature of this work programme; insists therefore on the need for strict programming of

legislative work and regular reporting on its progress, with the aim of achieving rapid and tangible results for European citizens;

Considers that this work programme must be implemented in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, which cannot be presumed solely on the grounds of deepening the internal market, and in accordance with the arrangements set out in its European Resolution No. 106 (2016-2017) of 17 March 2017 on the simplification of European law;

*On the Green Pact for Europe*

Fully endorses the Commission's decision to place combating climate change and protecting the environment at the heart of the European Union's priorities, in the form of the Green Pact for Europe striving for climate neutrality by 2050, designed both as Europe's new growth strategy and as the unifying theme of its annual work programme; considers that the new comprehensive industrial strategy for Europe announced by the Commission must incorporate the climate challenge and the objective of carbon neutrality by 2050; requests that the Commission's plan for a new European target for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 be based on thorough, realistic and indisputable impact studies, in particular with regard to the expansion of the carbon market to the transport and building sectors and the development of low-emission mobility;

Emphasises however the scale of the investment needed to achieve the objective of carbon neutrality by 2050 and the need to support certain regions and sectors facing major conversion challenges; emphasises the need for the European Union not to forego any technology enabling it to achieve the ambitious objectives it has set itself;

Expresses hope that the Green Pact for Europe will pay particular attention to reducing Europe's environmental footprint and to preserving and restoring biodiversity, particularly with regard to microplastics, endocrine disrupters and nanomaterials, the blue economy and the preservation of forests, so as to encourage the emergence of the bio-economy, especially in the outermost regions and overseas countries and territories;

Insists on the effective and rapid implementation of a carbon inclusion mechanism at the borders of the European Union in order

to reduce the risk of carbon leakage, ensure fairness in international trade relations and reconcile the fight against climate change, sustainable development, economic development and social inclusion; calls for progress to be made in the negotiations on the proposal to revise the Energy Taxation Directive so as to modernise it and bring it into line with European climate and energy objectives; expresses hope that, to avoid taking any hasty action on this matter, the strategy for the smart integration of the sectors announced by the Commission will include prior in-depth studies as this project could significantly affect the functioning of the internal electricity and gas markets; emphasises that Member States are free to choose their energy mix in order to achieve European and national climate objectives;

Welcomes the Commission's announcement of a "from farm to table" strategy for the entire food chain; requests that this strategy provide an improvement in consumer information, in particular on the sustainability and traceability of food products, make the "Nutri-Score" supplementary nutrition labelling compulsory (incorporating the specific characteristics of products with a quality mark, whose ingredients and production cannot be analysed in the same way), promote the reduction in the use of plant health and plant protection products and antibiotics, in accordance with the views of the European Food Safety Authority, and ensure the effective strengthening of the importance of producers in the food chain, in the spirit of Regulation (EU) No. 2017/2393 of 13 December 2017, known as Omnibus;

Calls for a rapid conclusion to the negotiations on the multi-annual financial framework 2021-2027 in accordance with its Resolution No. 60 (2019-2020) of 11 February 2020; emphasises in particular its vigilance with regard to the arrangements for implementing the Just Transition Fund, which must not lead to cuts in cohesion funds or appropriations for the Common Agricultural Policy; will pay careful attention to the Commission's proposals for an investment plan under the Green Pact for Europe and for a renewed strategy for sustainable finance, in particular with regard to the linkage of these projects with the new investment plan for Europe, InvestEU, which will also contribute to meeting the European Union's climate and environmental objectives;

Insists that the negotiations on the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy be concluded in accordance with its European

Resolutions No. 130 (2016-2017) of 8 September 2017, No. 116 (2017-2018) of 6 June 2018 and No. 96 (2018-2019) of 7 May 2019;

*On a Europe fit for the digital age*

Shares the Commission's objective for the European Union becoming a major player in digital and artificial intelligence in all areas; welcomes its plans for the completion of the digital single market; considers that the ultimate aim of the digital single market must be to develop a fair Internet and strengthen the digital sovereignty of the European Union and its Member States;

Considers therefore that respect for citizens' rights on the Internet is a priority, which requires cybersecurity to be strengthened, including the security of connected objects and the adoption of European legislation to combat the dissemination of hate content online and the manipulation of information, while respecting freedom of expression; requests that the arrangements for deploying 5G ensure the strategic autonomy of the European Union and do not undermine the responsibilities of Member States in matters of national security and defence or the capabilities of national law enforcement and intelligence services; attaches great importance to protecting users, particularly minors, and consumers in the digital single market and to improving the working conditions of people employed through online platforms, as announced by the Commission; considers that the process of rebalancing relations between intermediation platforms and companies and of making algorithms and rankings transparent must be actively pursued;

Calls for the establishment of a framework for action to stimulate innovation and competition in the digital sector; considers that the "Horizon Europe" framework programme for research and innovation should allocate a substantial share of its resources to innovation in the digital sector and ensure synergy between it and the space programme; expresses hope that the new industrial strategy and the specific strategy for SMEs announced by the Commission will refocus competition law so as to enable European leaders in digital technology and artificial intelligence to emerge and expand into new markets in Europe and worldwide, and to provide for the regulation of the structuring digital platforms, which have a particular responsibility for the proper

functioning of the digital single market; welcomes the objectives of the new European strategy on non-personal data;

Calls for the ethical development of artificial intelligence tools, in particular for algorithmic transparency; supports the objective of ensuring better online personal data protection and creating a privacy protection framework in the field of electronic communications, in line with the General Data Protection Regulation; calls however for rapid solutions to be found to persistent deficiencies such as targeted and limited exceptions to consent for metadata, the methods for obtaining consent, including for machine-to-machine communications and connected objects, and the codes of conduct proposed by the Commission for the cloud sector;

*On an economy at the service of people*

Restates its commitment to the social market economy; endorses the Commission's plans in the social field, against a backdrop of continuing unemployment, poverty and regional disparities within the European Union and its Member States; considers that the cross-border mobility of workers and climate transition must be accompanied by social protection measures, under conditions that ensure compliance with regulations and help combat fraud and illegal working or concealed employment;

Calls for the rapid and effective implementation of the core of European social rights, while respecting the jurisdiction of Member States and social dialogue, so as to promote social convergence in Europe and turn social Europe into real added value for European citizens; considers therefore that the initiatives announced by the Commission on fair minimum wages for workers in the European Union and on the European unemployment reinsurance scheme must comply with these principles; considers in particular that the establishment of benchmark indicators, which take account of the economic situation in each Member State, would allow an indicative minimum wage target to be set;

Considers that the deepening of Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) must be a high priority for the European Union; requests that the review of the economic governance framework announced by the Commission provide an opportunity to make progress towards the creation of a euro area budget that promotes convergence and stabilisation in the medium term; encourages the

co-legislator to reach a conclusion on the Proposal for a Regulation seeking to establish a governance framework for the Budgetary Instrument for Convergence and Competitiveness (BICC) for the euro area, which is intended to provide euro area Member States with financial support for their reforms and investments aimed at strengthening the coordination of economic policies in the euro area, and whose budget must not be reduced; regrets that the amount of appropriations earmarked for the BICC, and the procedures for allocating appropriations, are at this stage incompatible with the initial objective of establishing a budgetary instrument for macroeconomic stabilisation; considers that the implementation of this governance framework must be brought into line with the European Semester calendar; takes note of the Commission's proposal to integrate the objectives of sustainable development into the European Semester; emphasises however that the European Semester is primarily an instrument of economic and budgetary coordination; considers it essential to deepen the democratic legitimacy of EMU and therefore to involve national parliaments more closely, by modernising the Article 13 Conference of the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance;

Considers that the consolidation of financial stability requires the completion of the Banking Union and the development of a truly sovereign and resilient Capital Market Union;

Takes note of the initiatives announced by the Commission for a communication on company taxation for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and an action plan to combat tax fraud and simplify taxation; considers that these proposals should contribute to strengthening tax convergence in Europe, ensuring the competitiveness of the European economy and safeguarding public revenue, in a spirit of loyal cooperation; calls therefore for the Council voting rules on tax matters to be redefined from unanimity to qualified majority voting; is in favour of more effective measures to combat tax optimisation, in line with the G20 guidelines and the work of the OECD; requests that tax measures be introduced to improve the contribution of the giants of the digital sector to public charges;

Regrets the absence of any mention of the cohesion policy in the Commission's work programme, despite the fact that this policy is essential for the European Union; calls for the swift conclusion of the negotiations on the Structural Funds in line with

its European Resolution No. 131 (2017-2018) of 2 July 2018; emphasises the need for the cohesion policy to take the specific characteristics of the outermost regions into consideration; considers that the mobilisation of the cohesion policy to support the climate transition must not detract from its original objectives of strengthening economic, social and territorial cohesion and reducing the gap in the level of development between European regions;

*On a stronger Europe on the international stage*

Shares the Commission's ambition to encourage the European Union to adopt a more geopolitical vision and act in a more united and coherent manner in order to have greater influence in world affairs; considers that, without prejudice to the jurisdiction of Member States, the European Union must be able to react rapidly to external crises according to sufficiently flexible management arrangements;

Supports the objectives of the European Neighbourhood Policy; emphasises that this policy must be implemented independently of the European Union's enlargement policy; reaffirms its strong commitment to maintaining the financial balances achieved for the allocation of the appropriations for the European Neighbourhood Policy, two thirds of which are earmarked for the southern shore of the Mediterranean and one third for the east of the continent;

Requests that the appropriations for the European Neighbourhood Policy benefiting the south be targeted, as a priority, on climate and environmental protection, the development of trade and migration; considers that sub-Saharan Africa and the southern shore of the Mediterranean must be at the heart of the European Union's foreign policy, taking into account both development needs and migration and security issues; approves therefore the announcement of the development of a new global strategy with Africa; considers that this new strategy must make support for the Sahel countries a priority for the European Union; requests that the negotiations to replace the Cotonou Agreement preserve the existing association agreements with the countries of North Africa; considers that the Union for the Mediterranean is an appropriate forum for strengthening the Mediterranean dialogue;

Reaffirms clearly the European perspective of the Western Balkan countries; approves therefore the Commission's intention to deepen its partnership with them; calls for a thorough and rapid implementation of the commitments made by the parties to stability, economic development, security and the rule of law;

Takes note of the debates on the need to reform the methodology behind the enlargement of the European Union; considers that the enlargement is an important political decision to be made by the European Council; considers that this reform should lead swiftly to a rigorous, individualised and reversible procedure;

Restates its support for the Eastern Partnership as a forum for political dialogue and concrete achievements for the benefit of all parties; considers however that the Eastern Partnership does not open up a European perspective for the countries concerned; takes note of the Commission's plan to propose a new Eastern Partnership with new strategic objectives; requests that this new Eastern Partnership take greater account of climate and environmental issues, young people and the fight against inequalities and ensure the successful implementation by the partner countries of comprehensive and deep free trade agreements and of the criteria for visa liberalisation;

Supports the Commission's determination to modernise the functioning of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), which is part of a broader international framework; considers that this reform should lead in particular to the modernisation of the rules on subsidies by strengthening transparency and notification requirements and by clarifying the rules applicable to horizontal industrial subsidies; calls for a rapid solution to the deadlock in the WTO Dispute Settlement Body; calls for an easing of trade relations between the United States and China through dialogue, without however foregoing a firm response in the event of additional duties being imposed by third countries;

Approves the Commission's intention to strengthen the economic and financial sovereignty of the European Union; considers that this objective can be achieved by asserting itself as a commercial power, focused on defending its interests, including against non-European players benefiting from state aid, by using in particular the trade defence tools at its disposal, by promoting its standards and by working towards balanced reciprocity in



accessing public procurement and in direct investment; requests that the Commission take all measures to neutralise extra-territorial sanctions imposed by third countries;

*On the promotion of our European way of life*

Approves the initiatives announced by the Commission to improve the health of Europeans, whether through the European plan to combat cancer or the pharmaceutical strategy for Europe; insists that, out of respect for the principle of subsidiarity, these measures focus above all on supporting the actions of Member States; makes the same observations with regard to the Commission's forthcoming proposals on skills, education and inclusion and with regard to the protection of children, including in the context of the European Union's external action; considers that intervention in these areas must focus on the creation of genuine European added value;

Requests that the Commission show ambition and determination with regard to the new European Union Security Union Strategy against a backdrop of multifaceted threats of a cross-border nature; considers that this strategy should focus in particular on: combating terrorism, its financing and its spread on the Internet; developing training activities between the specialised services of the Member States, including the intelligence services; finalising the interoperability of European information systems; strengthening the exchange of information between law enforcement agencies and cooperation with Europol; improving the monitoring, both within the Schengen area and when crossing the European Union's external borders, of those individuals suspected of having left to fight in jihad areas; allocating sufficient resources to cybersecurity and stepping up the fight against cybercrime;

Supports the Commission in its commitment to present a new Pact on Migration and Asylum, in particular regarding the link it establishes between the internal and external aspects of these issues, following the failure of the European Union to provide lasting solutions to the migration crisis that began in 2015; considers that this new pact should strengthen solidarity within the Schengen area, in relation to both countries of first entry and Member States of destination, which are experiencing an exceptional influx of asylum seekers or are faced with the challenge of carrying out rescues at sea, strengthen the protection of the common external borders so as to be able to distinguish

rapidly between those who are eligible for international protection and those who should be removed, introduce an evaluation mechanism involving the competent European agencies so as to provide objective diagnoses to better inform decision-making, and reform the governance of the Schengen area;

Is paying careful attention to Frontex's strengthened mandate, in particular the optimal allocation of resources to enable the ramp-up of the new European border and coastguard agency, which will help to strengthen the control of the European Union's external borders;

Requests the rapid creation of a genuine European Asylum Agency, whose mandate would enable it in particular to supervise the correct application of the Common European Asylum System by Member States, support Member States at the various stages of the procedure and have a pool of experts at its disposal;

Reiterates its support for the commitments made at the Valletta (Malta) and Abidjan Summits regarding cooperation with countries of origin and transit; emphasises the importance of improving the structures and conditions for the reception of migrants in Libya and of more effectively guaranteeing respect for their fundamental rights; is in favour of strengthening cooperation with the Sahel countries, in partnership with the G5 Sahel, in order to prevent the flow of irregular migrants; supports the negotiations between the European Union and countries of origin and transit with a view to entering into readmission agreements and establishing a link between issuing visas and readmission cooperation;

Requests that the future Pact on Migration and Asylum promote a European policy for the reception and integration of refugees and include provisions on legal migration channels that are safe, defined and agreed, bearing in mind the diversity of labour markets;

Considers it essential for the future relationship between the European Union and the United Kingdom to ensure a high level of security, in particular through the continued intensive exchange of information and participation by the British in Europol;

*On a new impetus for European democracy*

Shares the Commission's concern about the many challenges facing democracy in the European Union and its Member States, with the threats being both external and internal; reiterates its commitment to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union; notes the lack of real progress under the procedure laid down in Article 7 of the Treaty on European Union; supports therefore the need for a review of the mechanism for protecting the rule of law, already proposed by the Commission, which should involve all Member States and whose legitimacy would be based on an impartial implementation and reliable data; considers that the first annual report on the rule of law, announced by the Commission, should result in a detailed and objective follow-up of the recommendations made to Member States;

Emphasises the importance of resolutely combating the various forms of discrimination, whether they affect women, who are victims of both economic and social inequality and gender-based violence, or minorities such as the Roma and LGBTI people; emphasises that elderly people, in the context of an ageing population, and people with disabilities must receive appropriate care measures; considers it essential to evaluate regularly and objectively the concrete results achieved in these areas;

Encourages the Commission in its determination to present a new consumer agenda, which will improve consumer protection, in particular in cross-border and online transactions; looks forward to the conclusion of negotiations on the Proposal for a Directive that would ensure that Member States comply with the fundamental principles of civil procedure and provide appropriate guarantees to guard against a rising number of disputes whose objective is far removed from consumer protection;

Calls for the European Union and the Council of Europe to strengthen their co-operation in favour of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, avoiding any duplication of their activities; welcomes the resumption of negotiations for the accession of the European Union to the European Convention on Human Rights and calls for the rapid conclusion of an accession agreement that preserves the autonomy of European Union law and the exclusive jurisdiction of the Court of Justice of the European Union to interpret it;

Insists that a right of initiative of national parliaments be established to enable them to make a positive contribution to the preparation of the Commission's work programme;

Requests that national parliaments, which are essential stakeholders in the construction of Europe, be fully involved in the work of the Conference on the Future of Europe.