



Strasbourg, 27.10.2015
COM(2015) 610 final

**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

Commission Work Programme 2016

No time for business as usual

One year ago, this Commission made a new start. Based on the Political Guidelines¹, we defined the priorities of the Commission and committed to focus on the big things where citizens expect Europe to make a difference. We decided we would change the way we work, and be open and accountable for our actions. And we invited the European Parliament and the Council to work together with us to deliver this change, because delivering results together on the things that really matter is the only way to regain Europeans' trust that our Union is there to serve them.

Citizens will judge the EU by its ability to deliver on the major challenges facing our societies today. The jobs, growth, and investment gap. Refugees fleeing instability and war to seek safe haven. Climate change and the pressure on natural resources. Inequality, intolerance and a sense of insecurity in some parts of our communities. The reality of global interdependence and our lack of self-confidence in Europe's place in an emerging new world order.

The ten priorities set out in the Agenda for Jobs, Growth, Fairness and Democratic Change – which is both the Juncker Commission's mission statement and the basis on which we were elected – address these challenges. The defining events of the last year – from the slower than expected recovery of our economies and the need to restore stability to the Greek economy, to the migratory pressure on our external borders and the insecurity in our neighbourhood which is fuelling it, to the terrorist attacks on Charlie Hebdo and elsewhere on European soil – have only strengthened our resolve to maintain the focus on these priorities, to do different things and to do things differently.

Doing different things

Last year we said we would do different things and concentrate on the big things. Since then we have set out our vision and the concrete measures that need to be taken in the Investment Plan, the Digital Single Market, the Energy Union, the European Agenda on Security, the European Agenda on Migration, the Capital Markets Union, the Action Plan for Fair and Efficient Corporate Taxation, the new Trade Strategy and our most recent proposals to deepen and strengthen our Economic and Monetary Union. This week we present our Single Market Strategy for goods and services², and we will complete the picture with our plans for a sustainable circular economy, labour mobility and better management of our external borders before the end of the year. All these actions are underpinned by the Commission's new Better Regulation Agenda.

Following a continuous dialogue with the European Parliament and the Council launched by the President's State of the Union address of 9 September³, this Work Programme sets out the

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/docs/pg_en.pdf

² COM (2015) 550, 28.10.2015.

³ <http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/soteu>.

See also the Letter of Intent signed by the President and the First Vice-President and addressed to the Presidents of the European Parliament and of the Council. On this basis, meetings took place between the President and the Coreper on 10 September, the First Vice-President discussed with the General Affairs Council on 13 October, the Commission met with the Conference of Committee Chairs on 6 October and the President and the First - Vice-President met with the Conference of Presidents on 20 October.

key initiatives we will take in the next twelve months to deliver on these commitments⁴. Not everything can be done in one year but what we are committing to represents a substantive legislative agenda, and a framework for further actions that will be included in future work programmes, for which preparatory work, including evaluation, consultations and impact assessments, will start in 2016.

We have given priority to the legislative changes which – if agreed quickly – can have a direct impact on jobs and growth, on our environment and social well-being, on our security and the way we engage with an interconnected world.

The directly elected European Parliament and the Council of ministers of each national government, which are the EU's co-legislators, have agreed with unprecedented speed the Commission's proposals for the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), for amending the EU budget for 2015 in order to strengthen financial support in the context of the refugee crisis, for a €35 billion package for jobs and growth in Greece and for the emergency decisions for relocation within the EU of refugees in need of international protection. This joint effort to deliver rapidly where decisions are quickly and most needed should no longer be the exception but must become the norm.

So before designing this Work Programme the Commission has engaged in intensive and constructive discussions with our institutional partners to build a common understanding of where the focus should be. The best proposals will change nothing if they lie on the negotiating table for years without agreement. That is also why we have identified some existing proposals which merit speedy adoption by the co-legislators⁵, and why we intend to withdraw a number of earlier Commission proposals which are no longer relevant, have been blocked or no longer meet the necessary level of ambition, in order to free up space to focus on the priority proposals which do have a good chance of being agreed⁶.

Doing things differently

New challenges require new and ambitious responses, but we must remain just as ambitious in meeting ongoing challenges and, above all, check that where a European response is merited, this is as effective as possible in delivering our common goals. Results are what matter, not good intentions. This Commission's commitment to better regulation is about looking at the evidence and making sure that when the EU intervenes it does so in a way that actually will make a positive difference on the ground. So we need to be constantly attentive to make sure our legislation and spending programmes perform effectively and remain fit for purpose.

In many areas a common approach at European level is needed if we are to achieve our ambitious policy goals – a high level of environmental protection, high social and employment standards, energy security, a thriving economy that benefits all, a migration policy that reflects our common values. But rules which are outdated or are too heavy or too complex to be applied in practice will not achieve their objectives.

⁴ Annex I.

⁵ Annex III.

⁶ Annex IV.

Checking that our rules actually deliver on our ambitions in these areas is not something to be feared but an opportunity to improve them – a chance to make sure that in areas such as health and safety legislation the rules are workable and will be enforced, so the high standards we have set are actually applied in workplaces everywhere, to the benefit of workers across the Union.

That is why we have decided to include in this Work Programme our plans to review key areas of existing legislation and to make sure they are fit to make a real difference on the ground⁷. And we are proposing to repeal some laws that are no longer relevant⁸. In the same spirit we are highlighting for the information of citizens and businesses the new EU legislation that will apply for the first time in the course of next year⁹.

Monitoring and where necessary enforcing the application of European legislation is one of the Commission's most important responsibilities, but has not always had the political attention it merits. We are changing that and stepping up enforcement activities in the areas which matter most, for example our common rules on asylum which must work properly if there is to be confidence in the Schengen area without internal borders. Applying our common European rules on the ground means working in close partnership with actors at all levels – national, regional and local.

We are determined to leverage all the tools at our disposal to deliver on our objectives. At a time when resources are under more demand than ever, the EU budget must be geared to results. The mid-term review of the Multi-annual Financial Framework will look at how better to target funding on the priorities we face, such as the internal and external dimensions of the refugee crisis. Furthermore the Commission will propose a strategy on 'An EU budget focused on results' to ensure that future financing has a stronger focus on achieving results. More can be done to facilitate the use of innovative financial instruments, and there is considerable scope for simplification (in particular in agriculture, the European Structural and Investment Funds and further efforts on research), performance-enhancement and measures linking effectiveness of funds to sound economic governance.

In this second year of our mandate this Commission's focus remains clear: being big on the big things, and better in how we deliver them¹⁰; and remaining small and modest on small things which do not require common EU action. With this Work Programme, structured around the ten priorities set out by President Juncker at the start of our mandate, we reaffirm our commitment to work with our partners in the European Parliament and the Council to deliver the results Europeans expect. Given the challenges Europe faces today, this is no time for business as usual.

⁷ Annex II.

⁸ Annex V.

⁹ Annex VI.

¹⁰ In this context, the Commission will focus its communication work in 2016 on the priorities of the Commission, on the basis of the corporate communication action in 2016 under the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020 (C(2015) 7346 of 27.10.2015).

1. A New Boost for Jobs, Growth and Investment

History has shown that Europeans have an inherent capacity to work hard, innovate, to create and to sell their ideas to the world. We cannot afford to lose a generation of this talent and potential. The Commission will continue helping Member States in their efforts to get people back to work. We have frontloaded €1 billion to speed up the implementation of the Youth Employment Initiative to help up to 650,000 young people find jobs, apprenticeships, traineeships or continued education across Europe. We have proposed guidance to Member States to better help long-term unemployed return to work.

We need to equip Europeans to adapt to the needs of the rapidly changing world and emerging labour markets. Our New Skills Agenda will promote life-long investment in people, from vocational training and higher education through to digital and high-tech expertise and the life skills needed for citizens' active engagement in changing workplaces and societies. Special attention will be paid to work-life balance of working families, with a view to increasing women's participation in the labour market. The Women on Boards Directive should be adopted in 2016 and the Commission will continue its practical work to promote gender equality.

We also want to see European companies make the most of the opportunities of the Single Market, to grow and compete on a global scale. For that they need stable financing, a sound business environment, and modern infrastructure. The Investment Plan for Europe is now up and running. The European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) is operational and delivering high quality investments to further boost the European economy, including in research. We now will focus on improving the investment environment and deepening the Single Market so it delivers better outcomes for Europeans, fewer barriers for businesses and the right environment for innovation.

We need to start work now to secure Europe's future sustainability. We will present a new approach to ensuring economic growth and social and environmental sustainability beyond the 2020 timeframe, taking into account the Europe 2020 review and the internal and external implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Optimising the use of resources is essential to ensure that growth is green and inclusive. Starting next year, we will implement an Action Plan on the Circular Economy to create a single market for the re-use of materials and resources, supporting the move away from a linear economy. This will require action in all parts of the economic cycle, from sourcing to production, consumption, waste and recycling and innovation to harness economically and environmentally efficient business opportunities.

A sustainable future also means foreseeing and mitigating threats to a healthy environment. The Commission will continue its work to help Member States address the challenge of anti-microbial resistance and contribute to global efforts to tackle this threat. We will also launch preparatory work and will enhance consultation on Health Technology Assessment to improve the functioning of the single market for health products. We will conclude the complex preparatory work already under way to protect Europeans from the dangers of

endocrine disruptors¹¹ and follow up on it. Our review of the existing occupational health and safety legislation, including on carcinogens and mutagens, will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of an EU framework for protecting workers.

2. A Connected Digital Single Market

A thriving digital economy can expand markets and create new sources of employment. Europe can lead here if we can overcome fragmentation, improve the offer to European consumers and open up new opportunities for business. That is why the Commission proposed the Digital Single Market Strategy in May 2015. Our aim is to present all relevant proposals before the end of 2016 so that the Union can achieve a fully functional Digital Single Market during the mandate of this Commission.

In December we will present our vision for a more modern, more European approach on copyright to take account of the digital revolution. We will also present proposals on digital contract rights. Further initiatives on copyright, geo-blocking, free flow of data, the cloud, and VAT for electronic commerce will follow in the course of 2016.

Following the agreement on the Connected Continent proposals, including an end to roaming charges by 2017, we are working on a comprehensive review of the telecoms regulatory framework. Further to the respective REFIT reviews, we will revise the audio-visual and media services directive, the satellite and cable directive, and the regulation on consumer protection cooperation to make sure the system actually delivers for citizens. We will work with the co-legislators to reach agreement by the end of the year on the data protection reform and the network and information security directive – two essential elements for building trust and security in the growing digital single market.

Our ambitious aim is and remains¹² to break down national silos in telecoms regulation, in copyright and data protection legislation, in the management of frequencies and in the application of competition law, taking full account of cultural diversity. By creating a connected Digital Single Market, we can generate up to €250 billion of additional growth in Europe in the course of the mandate of this Commission, thereby creating hundreds of thousands of new jobs, notably for younger job-seekers, and a vibrant knowledge-based society.

3. A Resilient Energy Union with a Forward-Looking Climate Change Policy

In our Energy Union Strategy the Commission has set out the key actions needed to secure Europe's energy supply and reduce import dependency, to integrate national energy markets, to put energy efficiency first, to de-carbonise the economy and to promote research, innovation and competitiveness. In 2016 we will bring forward the bulk of the items foreseen

¹¹ Endocrine disruptors are chemicals that, at certain doses, can interfere with the hormone system in mammals.

¹² http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/docs/pg_en.pdf

in the Energy Union roadmap. We will report on the progress made and what still needs to be done in a regular State of the Energy Union report.

The EU being a lead player in the Paris climate talks, the implementation of the 2030 energy and climate package will be a key priority next year to ensure the targets are duly met. In 2016, the Commission will come up with an effort-sharing proposal for sectors outside the Emission Trading Scheme (ETS), such as buildings, agriculture, and the de-carbonisation of transport. We will be promoting the use of non-discriminatory road charging schemes based on the polluter-pays and user-pays principles and efforts to create a single European transport area, allowing a more efficient use of the existing road infrastructure and a more flexible use of fleet capacity. To accelerate the energy transition, the Commission will also propose initiatives on a new energy market design, on reaching the 15% electricity interconnection target by 2030, on energy security of supply, on renewables and energy efficiency. Finally, we will develop an integrated strategy for Energy Union research, innovation and competitiveness in order to tap into the jobs and growth potential of the low-carbon economy.

4. A Deeper and Fairer Internal Market with a Strengthened Industrial Base

The Single Market is Europe's greatest and unique asset. It allows people, products, services and capital to move more freely. It ensures more choices and lower prices for consumers. It enables people to live, work and study where they wish. It offers opportunities for professionals and businesses, by reducing the red tape they would otherwise face when operating across borders. It is the bedrock for the competitiveness of our European industries.

In adopting the Single Market Strategy this week, we have stressed the need to build on these strengths and further unleash our internal market's full potential, adapting to changing economic conditions and making it the launch pad for our companies and industry to thrive in the global economy. Now we will focus on concrete measures, from helping start-ups to grow, to releasing the potential of new business models emerging from the collaborative economy, to facilitating the cross-border provision of services, to upgrading our standards system and ensuring that Single Market legislation is properly applied and enforced in practice. We will work to remove legal and technical access barriers to the road transport market and to strengthen the enforcement of applicable social legislation. We are focused on helping SMEs and start-ups to grow by addressing regulatory obstacles and facilitating access to finance. We will table a new initiative on preventive restructuring procedures and to give a second chance to entrepreneurs after bankruptcy.

Implementing the Capital Markets Union is a key part of this work, since achieving a single market for capital, funding and savings will play a critical role in removing investment bottlenecks and helping businesses to grow across the Single Market. It will be important that the co-legislators swiftly agree on the Commission's proposal on securitisation. Later this year, the Commission will also put forward a proposal to review the Prospectus Directive to make it easier for small firms to list and access market funding, as well as further measures to assist the creation of venture capital funds and develop a new venture capital culture to create opportunities for entrepreneurship.

To help Europeans make the most of the job opportunities in the Single Market, we have already proposed measures to strengthen the European job mobility portal (EURES) and cooperation between employment services. The Labour Mobility proposals we will present later this year will include measures to tackle abuse by means of better enforcement and coordination of social security systems, and we will present a targeted revision of the Posting of Workers Directive to address unfair practices leading to social dumping and brain drain by ensuring that the same work in the same place is rewarded by the same pay.

We will also put a particular emphasis on improving access to selected goods and services for people with disabilities.

In 2016 we will also look more closely at a few selected sectors either because of their growth potential or because they face specific challenges. We will present a strategy for releasing the full benefits of the European space programmes such as Galileo and Copernicus for the European economy and citizens. We will develop and implement a European action plan to ensure that our defence market is ready to meet future security needs. We will deliver the follow-up to the aviation strategy that will be presented later this year. And given developments in the agricultural sector, we will bring forward our report on the functioning of the milk market already to next year.

The Commission will present an action plan on VAT with further steps towards an efficient and fraud-proof definitive regime and initiatives on VAT rates and e-commerce in the context of the Digital Single Market. We also intend to withdraw a number of VAT proposals on the table that have made little progress in the Council or where their significant simplification potential has been unacceptably watered down, as is the case for the standard VAT declaration.

We also want to make further progress towards fair, efficient and growth-friendly corporate taxation, based on the principle that companies should pay taxes in the country where profits are generated. We will present a set of measures to enhance transparency of the corporate tax system and fight tax avoidance, including by implementing international standards on base erosion and profit-shifting. We intend to withdraw the blocked proposal for a Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base and replace it with proposals for a staged approach starting with agreeing a mandatory tax base. This will improve the Single Market for businesses whilst closing loopholes and ensuring that all companies pay their fair share of tax.

5. A Deeper and Fairer Economic and Monetary Union

The Commission has just tabled key elements of the first stage of the process to complete Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) as set out in the Five Presidents' Report¹³. We have proposed a renewed approach to the European Semester and an improved toolbox for economic governance, including the introduction of national Competitiveness Boards and an advisory European Fiscal Board. We propose to build a better dialogue between the Commission and the European Parliament to improve the democratic accountability of our

¹³ http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/economic-monetary-union/docs/5-presidents-report_en.pdf

economic governance system. We also call for a more unified representation of the euro area within international organisations (notably the IMF). By the end of the year we will present a European bank deposit scheme based on a reinsurance mechanism and set out ways to further reduce risk and ensure a level playing field in the banking sector.

These measures represent an important step forward towards a more resilient and prosperous EMU. In that context, the 2016 European Semester will also put a stronger focus on the economic and fiscal situation in the euro area as a whole, enhance further the emphasis on Member States' employment and social performance, and promote convergence, including by removing national barriers to investment.

The development of a European pillar of social rights will contribute to this. The Commission will pursue two complementary work strands: firstly, modernising and addressing the gaps in existing social policy legislation to take account of today's work environment and to ensure that new models of work maintain a fair balance in the relationship between employers and workers; and secondly, identifying social benchmarks, notably as concerns the flexicurity concept, built on best practices in the Member States with a view to upwards convergence, in particular in the euro area, as regards the functioning of the labour market, skills and social protection.

We will take this work forward in enhanced dialogue with the European Parliament, Member States, national Parliaments and social partners. To prepare the transition from stage 1 to stage 2 of completing the EMU and the Commission White Paper scheduled for spring 2017, the Commission will launch a wide consultation and debate across the EU. We will also draw on analytical input from a High Level Expert Group which we will set up in summer 2016. The European Parliament will be closely involved in all these preparatory steps.

6. A Reasonable and Balanced Free Trade Agreement with the US

International trade and investment are key drivers for the European economic recovery. The EU is uniquely well-placed to ensure the opportunities of globalisation are made to work for the benefit of Europeans, in a transparent and socially and environmentally responsible manner. An active trade policy will ensure that we connect to new emerging centres of global growth and are part of new digital and global value chains. This will provide openings for our businesses and create high-quality jobs without compromising on our European values or standards.

The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership Agreement (TTIP) with the United States remains a top priority for 2016. We are committed to negotiating a fair and balanced deal with the US, with a new approach to investment protection. We plan to step up cooperation with the Asia-Pacific region, for example through the EU-Japan Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations and an EU-China investment agreement, by requesting authorisation to negotiate FTAs with Australia and New Zealand, as well as opening free trade negotiations with the Philippines and with Indonesia, once the conditions are right. This ambitious bilateral trade

agenda, which already covers 27 negotiating partners, complements the multilateral World Trade Organisation system which remains at the heart of the EU approach.

In 2016 the Commission aims to see the provisional application of a number of new agreements, including those ones with Canada and with several African, Caribbean and Pacific regions. We will closely monitor existing agreements such as those with our Eastern Neighbourhood. Work will begin on modernising some of our existing agreements in light of new economic realities, including with countries like Turkey, Mexico and Chile.

With the new Trade and Investment Strategy we presented earlier this month, we aim to update the tools of trade policy and gear it more to services, digital trade, mobility, access to natural resources, innovation and other drivers of jobs and growth. We will work more on implementation and enforcement, to ensure that the opportunities created by trade agreements deliver real results, while paying particular attention to SMEs and helping workers adapt to change. We will also take forward our work on enhancing transparency for stakeholders and citizens about our trade negotiations.

7. An Area of Justice and Fundamental Rights Based on Mutual Trust

Terrorism and radicalisation, organised crime, and cybercrime threaten the security of Europeans and are by nature transnational and require an EU response. The Commission will focus on the implementation of the European Agenda on Security, with proposals such as a revision of the Framework Decision on terrorism to address the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters and a proposal on combatting fraud and counterfeiting on non-cash means of payment. Work will continue to overhaul the legislative framework for controlling firearms. We will pay increased attention to developing the operational cooperation and tools which underpin the mutual trust that is essential for effective cross-border law enforcement work, whilst fully respecting fundamental rights.

The data protection reform (Regulation and Directive) and the proposal on EU Passenger Name Records should be agreed by the co-legislators by the end of the year. The Commission aims to conclude a solid agreement with the United States on transfer of personal data for law enforcement purposes which provides the necessary guarantees including judicial review for individuals. In the light of recent case-law we will work towards a new framework ensuring proper protection of personal data stored by companies in the US.

In 2016 it will be important that the co-legislators move forward on the European Public Prosecutor's Office and the reform of Europol. The Commission will also take forward work to clarify access to justice in environmental matters.

The Commission will also pursue the work towards the accession of the EU to the European Convention on Human Rights, taking full account of the Opinion of the Court of Justice¹⁴.

¹⁴ OJ C 65, 23.2.2015, p. 2

8. Towards a New Policy on Migration

Addressing the refugee crisis and managing the migratory pressure on our external borders is the most pressing priority the Union faces today, and instability, war and poverty in our neighbourhood mean that this issue will need to remain at the top of the political agenda for some years to come.

The European Agenda on Migration which we presented in May 2015 provides a comprehensive approach to migration management based on the principles of solidarity and responsibility. Two emergency schemes to relocate 160,000 people in need of international protection from the Member States most affected to other EU Member States are already operational. Every day the Frontex Joint Operations Poseidon and Triton are rescuing people shipwrecked in the Mediterranean Sea. Migration management support teams in "hotspot" areas are now helping national authorities in Greece and Italy with the identification, registration and processing of new arrivals. Efforts have been stepped up to tackle people smuggling and dismantle human trafficker groups. Action is being taken to return more people who are not in need of international protection.

The EU has already mobilised €4 billion in humanitarian, development, economic and stabilisation assistance to Syrians in their country and in host communities in Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Turkey and Egypt. An additional €1.8 billion will be used to set up an 'Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa'. Stronger and deeper cooperation with third countries of origin and transit is key to managing migration better, including a concerted effort to provide support for the growing number of refugees and internally-displaced persons in third countries.

The crisis has shown that beyond these immediate steps, we need to fundamentally rethink the way we manage our common external border and our European asylum framework. Later this year the Commission will present proposals for a European Border and Coast Guard, building on a significant strengthening of Frontex.

We will overhaul our common asylum system to correct the gaps and weaknesses exposed in the Dublin system and to strengthen the role of the European Asylum Support Office. We will press for the Action Plan on return to be fully and quickly put into operation, and for agreement on the pending proposals implementing the European Agenda on Migration. We will also present proposals for a structured system for resettlement so that those in need of protection can be given safe passage into the EU, without risking their lives in the hands of smugglers, together with better protection schemes in neighbouring regions.

And to meet Europe's future demographic and labour market needs, we will present a renewed approach on legal migration, including measures to improve the Blue Card Directive.

9. A Stronger Global Actor

In an increasingly connected, contested and complex world marked by dynamic changes, the coherence of the EU's external action and our ability to use all available instruments in a joined up manner to achieve our objectives and complement our internal policies are ever more important. Challenges such as migration, access to energy and other resources, and climate change demonstrate the need for an effective external dimension to deliver on major internal policy objectives and to allow the EU to take advantage of opportunities to advance its values, such as democracy, human rights, equality and solidarity, as well as European history and culture, in the wider world. The Commission will therefore make a substantive contribution in support of the work of the High Representative/Vice-President on a new Global Strategy on foreign and security policy.

In addressing acute crisis such as the conflicts in Syria, Libya and Ukraine, the Commission will continue to be pro-actively engaged in support of international actors such as the United Nations and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, drawing on the full range of policies, financing and other tools at its disposal. We will review and further develop our instruments to enhance security and development in partner countries, and will bring forward measures to support them in improving security sector governance and capacity building.

Following the ongoing public consultation, we will present a new post-Cotonou policy framework to govern relations with African, Caribbean and Pacific countries and regions. The Commission's development policy, as well as the new Trade and Investment Strategy, will also promote economic development, support social and environmental protection, defend human rights, tackle corruption, and improve migration management whilst addressing its root causes.

The Commission will continue to work towards a further concretisation of the accession perspective of the candidate countries. In this context, we will strengthen our partnership with Turkey, including by implementing the action plan on migration and modernising the customs union. The new European Neighbourhood Policy will provide a more focussed and tailor-made framework for the support of the stabilisation and democratic development of the countries in the Eastern and Southern neighbourhood.

We will also support the High Representative/Vice-President in deepening bilateral relations with the EU's key partners. Tailored strategic approaches will need to be regularly updated, with the EU policy on China being a first example. Following on from the successful conclusion of the nuclear negotiations with Iran, a renewed framework for the EU's engagement with the country could be envisaged subject to the full implementation of the agreement.

10. A Union of Democratic Change

The Commission will work in partnership with the European Parliament and the Council to ensure that the negotiations on a new Inter-institutional Agreement on Better Regulation can

conclude by the end of the year, to strengthen our common commitment to better regulation as a tool for better results, increase transparency about how European decisions are made, and equip the three institutions to better work together in the future.

We will bring forward in 2016 our proposal for an Inter-institutional Agreement on a mandatory transparency register for interest representatives seeking to influence policy making in the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission.

In the past year we have stepped up the Commission's engagement and dialogue with national Parliaments, both in terms of meetings and exchanges of view with parliamentary committees, and by a renewed commitment to the political dialogue on draft proposals. We plan to build on this further in 2016 with further steps to ensure that national parliaments have a strong voice in European policy-making.

Finally, we will continue to expand our 'Citizens' Dialogues' which allow the Members of the Commission to listen directly to citizens in their own regions and reply on the issues that matter most to them.

The European Union is at a defining moment. We are facing several unprecedented challenges: the refugee crisis, unemployment and the jobs and growth gap, the need to deepen our Economic and Monetary Union, climate change, instability in our Eastern and Southern neighbourhood, and a fair deal for the UK within a European Union committed to the four freedoms of the single market and the values which all 28 Member States share.

This is therefore no time for business as usual, which is why in this Work Programme the Commission commits to bold, focussed and pragmatic action that will allow us to overcome these challenges and emerge stronger in a spirit of European solidarity and responsibility. We look to our partners in the European Parliament and the Council to engage with us to bring about swiftly the results Europeans expect their Union to deliver.