



Paris, 2 February 2022

POLITICAL OPINION

on the European Commission's 2022 work programme

The Senate European Affairs Committee,

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

Having regard to the speech made by Ms Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, to the European Parliament on 16 July 2019, in which she set forth her political priorities,

Having regard to the response of the European Commission of 31 March 2021 to its political opinion on the Commission's work programme for 2021, COM(2021) 690 final,

Having regard to the European Commission's 2021 strategic foresight report entitled "Enhancing the EU's long-term capacity and freedom to act" of 8 September 2021, COM(2021) 750 final,

Having regard to President of the European Commission Ms Ursula von der Leyen's State of the Union Address delivered before the European Parliament on 15 September 2021,

Having regard to the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions entitled "Making Europe stronger together", COM (2021) 645 final.

Considering the priorities of the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union presented by the French President on 9 December 2021,

Commends the quality of the political dialogue between the European Commission and the national parliaments, in particular on its annual work programmes; receives the work programme for 2022; considers that it must be implemented with due regard for the principle of subsidiarity; insists on the need for regular progress reports in order to produce rapid, tangible results for European citizens;

Recalls that European Union is particularly rich in terms of its linguistic diversity; therefore demands that this multilingualism be effectively taken into account by the European institutions in the writing and translation of important official and informal documents, on the websites of the European institutions, bodies and agencies and also in their internal work;

On the European Green Deal, the Common Agricultural Policy and Fisheries

Recalls that the implementation of the European Climate Law (Regulation (EU) 2021/1119 of 30 June 2021), with the aim of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030 compared to the 1990 levels and achieving carbon neutrality by 2050, will require large-scale investment; notes that the "Fit for 55" package contains a series of ambitious, interdependent measures; draws the Commission's attention to the need to support certain industries that are confronted with significant redeployment challenges and certain territories, whilst taking account of their diversity; also emphasises the necessity of preserving the competitiveness of European businesses and safeguarding the social inclusion of citizens; therefore asks that the impact assessments be updated during negotiations on this package in order to have relevant information to make judgments taking into consideration the possible impacts on all the environmental risks in order to avoid an accumulation of constraints on the economic actors;

Notes that the Commission has put forward a package of four initiatives in the transport field aimed at contributing to the development of "efficient and green" mobility, in particular by increasing long distance and cross-border rail traffic, by creating

new transport corridors integrating rail, road and inland waterways and by introducing urban mobility strategies that promote clean modes of transport and encourage sustainable logistics;

Calls for the examination, at the earliest opportunity, of the new Gas legislative package, whose main objective is to increase the share of renewable and low-carbon gases, especially hydrogen, in the Member States' energy mix;

Requests that the process of drafting a European Directive on soil protection and the prevention of damage to the soil by industrial and mining activities be resumed, in line with the orientations of European Resolution no. 147 adopted by the Senate on 23 July 2021 and forwarded to the French government;

Takes note of the Commission's willingness to propose a framework for action on plastics and supports the principle of a legislative initiative aimed at reducing the quantity of microplastics released into the environment;

Observes that the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) was adopted on the basis of priorities and conditions far removed from those hoped for on several occasions by the Senate; observes that, if it were applied in its current form, the proposal for a regulation on achieving climate neutrality collectively by 2035 in the combined land use, forestry and agriculture sector would lead to an estimated 10% reduction in European agricultural production by 2030, offset by replacement imports with lower standards of quality, which would in the end have serious consequences for the income of European farmers; reiterates that the CAP is intended to guarantee the food self-sufficiency of the European continent and guarantee the health security of European consumers;

Hopes that the European Union will clearly assert its support for the European fishing industry, which abides by the world's most demanding standards; demands firm action by the Commission, in support of France's efforts to obtain the strict application, by the British authorities, of the fisheries provisions in the Trade and Cooperation Agreement signed by the United Kingdom and European Union on 24 December 2020;

On a Europe fit for the digital age and on "Space Europe"

Commends the realisation by the European Union of the importance of the issues relating to digital sovereignty and the urgent need to act;

Stresses the relevance of the legislative initiative on cyber-resilience, in order to establish common European standards on cybersecurity for goods and services and to confirm the pioneering role of the European Union in this field;

Reasserts its attachment to the rapid adoption of the legislative initiative on digital services (*Digital Services Act* or *DSA*), which aims to better protect citizens' and consumers' rights online, by creating a solid framework for transparency and the accountability of online services, as well as the proposal for a Regulation on digital markets (*Digital Market Act* or *DMA*), which aims to foster fairness and contestability in the digital internal market by regulating the activity of operators in a position of "controlling access", in accordance with the orientations set out in the political opinions adopted by the Senate European Affairs Committee on 7 October 2021 and 8 December 2021;

Commends the Commission's proposal for a Regulation to establish a set of harmonised European rules on artificial intelligence, with a view to reconciling the protection of people, legal security and innovation; takes note of the imminent publication of a proposal for a European framework on data (*Data Act*) with the aim of facilitating the sharing of data in the private sector and with public authorities to improve their use;

Stresses the need to protect the users of the European cloud under construction against any exposure to laws or practices allowing unauthorised access to their data, in particular by non-European actors; calls for special attention to be paid to interoperability and data portability to avoid lock-in effects, stimulate innovation, reinforce competition and enable the emergence of new actors;

Reasserts the relevance of a European framework on the chip sector (*European Chips Act*), which is due to be presented in 2022, as it will enable Europe to reduce its current dependency and produce 20% of the world's computer chips by 2030;

Calls for the rapid adoption of an ambitious new Directive on communication privacy providing a high level of protection of citizens' privacy;

Notes the importance of the issues relating to the digitalisation of education and calls for the rapid presentation of two recommendations relating, firstly, to the improvement of digital skills in the field of education and training and, secondly, to the factors fostering the development of digital education;

Insists on the need for France and the European Union to maintain autonomous access to space and to develop an ambitious and credible space policy; reiterates the need for the European Union to develop a dual approach – i.e. civilian and military – in space-related matters; consequently supports the European Union's strategy on Space Traffic Management and the setting up of a European space-based secure communication system;

On an Economy that works for people and social Europe

Considers that the implementation of the Multi-annual Financial Framework 2021-2027 and *NextGenerationEU* recovery instrument constitute valuable assets that will enable the European Union to cope with the economic and social consequences of the public health crisis and to increase its resilience; nevertheless calls for an effort to avoid excessive bureaucracy in the procedures for implementing and monitoring this instrument;

Commends the proposals for the legislative instruments presented by the Commission on 22 December 2021, which provide for the introduction of three new categories of own resources for the European Union budget, based on revenues from the European Union Emissions Trading System (EU-ETS), resources generated by the planned European Union carbon border adjustment mechanism, as well as a share of the residual profits of multinational enterprises; observes, however, with some concern, firstly that the expected amounts of these own resources will not cover all the expenditure incurred as part of the European recovery plan and, secondly, that the timetable for their implementation remains uncertain; stresses, in this regard, for the revenues from the emissions trading system and the carbon border adjustment mechanism, that they are closely linked to the "Fit for 55" package;

consequently calls on the Commission to alert the Council and the European Parliament once more to the necessity of rapidly adopting the legislative instruments that will allow these new own resources to effectively come into force; finally requests that the national parliaments, called upon to ratify the Council's decision on the own resources system, be closely involved in the process of setting up these new own resources;

Takes note of the extension of the suspension of the Stability and Growth Pact decided to cope with the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, and also of the ongoing reflections on its revision to allow the investments necessary to ensure the success of the technology transition and the climate transition;

Calls upon the Commission and the Member States to strengthen the economic and monetary union to guarantee the long-term survival of the euro area, by finalising the transposition of the "Basel III" standards, proposing the setting up of a single deposit guarantee scheme to complete banking union, and continuing the deepening of the capital markets union;

Regrets the timidity of the process of modernising and adapting European competition policy undertaken by the Commission; reiterates the need to better articulate this policy with the priority objective of promoting Europe's economic and industrial sovereignty; requests, in order to address this objective, that the Commission take account of the following imperatives: strategic autonomy; competitiveness; safeguarding of jobs; protection of the environment; personal data protection;

Supports the proposal for a Regulation on foreign subsidies distorting the internal market, which is in line with the policy of strengthening the European Union's Open Strategic Autonomy, and considers that it must be reaffirmed in the terms used by the Senate European Affairs Committee in its political opinion dated 8 December 2021, and adopted without delay;

Calls upon the Commission to present, in February 2022, the European framework on the Corporate Duty of Vigilance, which has been announced and postponed several times, adopting a proportionate approach taking account of the size of the company, its business segment and the procedures already in force;

Insists on the relevance of setting up a Single Market Emergency Instrument in case of future crises threatening to compromise its operation, in order to contribute to guaranteeing greater solidarity, to prevent the risks of shortages of goods and to reinforce cooperation in public procurement;

Commends the update to the European Industrial Strategy of 5 May 2021 which aims in particular to deal with the European Union's strategic dependencies and to learn the lessons of the Covid-19 pandemic; asks the Commission, in this connection, to facilitate the actions of the European health industries to limit the European Union's dependency on third countries in the production of active ingredients for medicines;

Stresses the importance of the objectives of the action plan on the European Pillar of Social Rights and invites the Commission to continue implementing it in full cooperation with the European institutions, the national and local authorities, the social partners and civil society;

Requests the effective and rapid implementation of the European Rural Agenda presented on 30 June 2021, so that the essential role and the demographic and spatial weight of European rural areas can be fully integrated into the European Union's policies and funding, in accordance with the orientations of Resolution no. 26 adopted by the Senate on 4 November 2021;

Calls for the outermost regions (OMR) and the overseas countries and territories (OCT) to be taken into account, in a way appropriate to their specific nature and challenges, in the implementation and funding of European policies;

On a stronger Europe in the world

Observes that the threats to the Union European and the Member States have increased; considers that in spite of some real developments, for example with the effective implementation of Permanent Structured Cooperation and the setting up of the European Defence Fund, European action on a common security and defence policy is not up to dealing with these threats; fervently hopes that the design of the Strategic Compass, which should be finalised in the first quarter of 2022 under the French Presidency of

the Council of the European Union, will provide a lucid assessment of the risks which can serve as a basis for a shared approach and responses;

Stresses that the European Neighbourhood Policy allows privileged cooperation with neighbouring third countries, which benefit in the economic and trade fields, as well as in matters of security and migration policy;

Encourages a particular intensification of this policy, with pragmatism, with regard to the countries of the Western Balkans, which are candidate countries, and better control of the use of the European funding granted to them; approves the implementation of the new European programme in favour of the countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean whilst regretting the lack of any notable progress in the European Union's relations with these countries over the course of the last few months;

Deplores the resurgence of tensions and the persistence of external interference in the Eastern Partnership countries and reasserts the relevance of the Partnership;

Hopes that the European Commission will clarify the modalities of the implementation, as of 2022, of the new European strategy announced on 1 December 2021 by the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, known as the Global Gateway, which aims to develop smart, clean, safe investments in the digital, energy and transport sectors and reinforce health, education and research systems around the world, to support a sustainable global recovery, taking account of our partners' needs and the European Union's own interests; considers that this strategy constitutes an asset in the renewed, ambitious partnership with Africa sought by the European Union;

Approves the Commission's general approach aimed at promoting an open, sustainable and assertive trade policy and genuinely making it a tool to strengthen the European Union's strategic autonomy; considers that the Union must assert itself as a trading power, focusing on the defence of its interests, including against non-European actors benefiting from State aid, in particular by using the trade defence instruments it has at its disposal, by promoting its own standards, guaranteeing fair competition and fair and equal conditions for businesses and working to establish

reciprocity in public procurement and direct investments; welcomes the proposal for a Regulation to counter the use of economic coercion presented on 8 December 2021, which constitutes a response to third-country extraterritorial sanctions; reiterates the observations made in its political opinion of 28 October 2021 relating to the public consultation launched by the Commission entitled "Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD) Review"; asks for particular care to be taken, in the implementation of the carbon border adjustment mechanism, an indispensable measure to prevent carbon leakage, but which must avoid penalising European exporters; also requests the revision of the negotiating methodology used for international trade agreements in order to involve the national parliaments more in the negotiating process;

On promoting the European way of life

Emphasises that the establishment of a policy on immigration, asylum and the management of the external borders that is effective and respectful of human dignity is a priority for the European Union and the Member States; consequently commends the global approach defended by the Commission with the presentation of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum in September 2020; however, regrets the lack of any real progress in the ongoing negotiations in 2021; consequently calls upon the Member States and the European institutions move forward in these negotiations by showing flexibility and an ability to listen, and to implement the external dimension of this Pact without further ado in order to negotiate mutually beneficial agreements with migrants' countries of origin and the transit countries;

Notes that, since the presentation of the Pact, the Schengen Area, the area of free movement that is one of the most precious achievements of the European Union, has been weakened by irregular, and sometimes artificial, migratory movements, some of them orchestrated by third countries as part of previously unseen hybrid attacks; consequently supports the principle of adapting the rules of the Schengen Area to ensure effective controls at the European Union's external borders; furthermore, calls for increased European Union intervention, particularly by Frontex, in the surveillance of the Channel, which has become an external border of the European Union, and requests the opening of negotiations on

a European-British treaty to clarify the modalities of the surveillance and management of this border, as an extension of the French-British Le Touquet Agreement and Sandhurst Treaty;

Welcomes the effective establishment of the European Public Prosecutor's Office, whose work must be evaluated during the first semester of 2022, and supports the reinforcement of the judicial cooperation framework in connection with the protection of vulnerable adults in cross-border situations;

Supports the speedy implementation of Europe's Beating Cancer Plan whilst maintaining the financial resources initially planned;

Expresses its support for the New European Bauhaus programme put forward in the European Commission Communication of 15 September 2021, and calls for an extension of the European Heritage Label created by the Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 November 2011;

Supports the European Union's efforts in research and calls for careful monitoring of the implementation of Horizon Europe programmes;

Recalls that academic freedom is not mentioned in the treaties, but insists on the need for the European Union to make a concrete commitment in favour of this freedom, in accordance with the orientations set out in its political opinion adopted on 9 December 2021 and its European Resolution no. 72, which became final on 14 January 2022;

Emphasises the success of the Erasmus+ European mobility scheme for students, trainees and apprentices and the increase in the budgetary resources allocated to it for the period 2021-2027; takes note of the Commission's ambitious goal of having ten million more people benefit from the Erasmus+ scheme over this period; consequently calls on the Commission to identify, in cooperation with the Member States, the sources of blockages, material and linguistic in particular, that could hold back the development of this scheme;

On a new push for European democracy

Approves the proposal to make 2022 European Year of Youth and hopes to see a concrete implementation of this priority in the fields of education, training, employment and the fight against inequalities; stresses, as the President of the Commission did in her State of the Union address, that the European Union needs its young people and that it must involve them in the preparation of the responses to the coming challenges;

Requests the introduction of a right of initiative for the national parliaments enabling them to positively contribute to the European legislation (green card); will argue for this proposal to be included in the conclusions of the Conference on the Future of Europe ;

Takes note of the second annual European Commission Rule of Law Report; laments the deterioration of the situation of journalists in the European Union; therefore calls upon each Member State to take all the measures necessary to enable them to do a job that is essential to democracy, and supports the principle of European legislation guaranteeing media freedom;

Reasserts its attachment to the adoption of a European legislative framework allowing the application of principle of equal remuneration of men and women for equal work or work of equal value and contributing to a better gender balance among the non-executive directors of publicly listed companies;

Finally, reiterates that the seat of the European Parliament is in Strasbourg, symbol of French-German reconciliation and a united Europe; consequently requests the resumption of the Parliament's normal activities in Strasbourg as soon as possible.