

Conclusions of the Brussels European Council (26 and 27 June 2014)

Caption: The Heads of State or Government, meeting in Brussels on 26 and 27 June 2014, agree to propose Jean-Claude Juncker to the European Parliament as candidate for President of the European Commission. In this context, the European Council approves the strategic agenda of key priorities for the next five years and invites the EU institutions and the Member States to fully implement these priorities in their work.

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EUROPEAN COUNCIL

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COVER NOTE

from : General Secretariat of the Council

to : Delegations

Subject : **EUROPEAN COUNCIL
26/27 JUNE 2014**

CONCLUSIONS

Delegations will find attached the conclusions of the European Council (26/27 June 2014).

EUCO 79/14

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The European Council agreed to propose Jean-Claude Juncker to the European Parliament as candidate for President of the European Commission. In this context, it agreed the strategic agenda of key priorities for the next five years. It invited the EU institutions and the Member States to fully implement these priorities in their work.

The European Council defined the strategic guidelines for legislative and operational planning for the coming years within the area of freedom, security and justice (see below under Chapter I) and also addressed some related horizontal issues. It concluded the 2014 European Semester and called for additional efforts to strengthen Europe's capacity to grow and create more jobs. The European Council took stock of progress made towards a final decision in October on the 2030 climate and energy policy framework and supported the immediate implementation of a set of most urgent measures to strengthen Europe's resilience and increase its energy security. As part of the preparations for the October European Council meeting, the Council was asked to further analyse other medium to long-term measures to enhance the EU's energy security.

The European Council welcomed the signature of the Association Agreements, including Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas, between the European Union and Georgia and the Republic of Moldova, as well as the signature of the remainder of the Association Agreement and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, between the European Union and Ukraine.

I. FREEDOM, SECURITY AND JUSTICE

1. One of the key objectives of the Union is to build an area of freedom, security and justice without internal frontiers, and with full respect for fundamental rights. To this end, coherent policy measures need to be taken with respect to asylum, immigration, borders, and police and judicial cooperation, in accordance with the Treaties and their relevant Protocols.
2. All the dimensions of a Europe that protects its citizens and offers effective rights to people inside and outside the Union are interlinked. Success or failure in one field depends on performance in other fields as well as on synergies with related policy areas. The answer to many of the challenges in the area of freedom, security and justice lies in relations with third countries, which calls for improving the link between the EU's internal and external policies. This has to be reflected in the cooperation between the EU's institutions and bodies.

3. Building on the past programmes, the overall priority now is to consistently transpose, effectively implement and consolidate the legal instruments and policy measures in place. Intensifying operational cooperation while using the potential of Information and Communication Technologies' innovations, enhancing the role of the different EU agencies and ensuring the strategic use of EU funds will be key.
4. In further developing the area of freedom, security and justice over the next years, it will be crucial to ensure the protection and promotion of fundamental rights, including data protection, whilst addressing security concerns, also in relations with third countries, and to adopt a strong EU General Data Protection framework by 2015.
5. Faced with challenges such as instability in many parts of the world as well as global and European demographic trends, the Union needs an efficient and well-managed migration, asylum and borders policy, guided by the Treaty principles of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility, in accordance with Article 80 TFEU and its effective implementation. A comprehensive approach is required, optimising the benefits of legal migration and offering protection to those in need while tackling irregular migration resolutely and managing the EU's external borders efficiently.
6. To remain an attractive destination for talents and skills, Europe must develop strategies to maximise the opportunities of legal migration through coherent and efficient rules, and informed by a dialogue with the business community and social partners. The Union should also support Member States' efforts to pursue active integration policies which foster social cohesion and economic dynamism.

7. The Union's commitment to international protection requires a strong European asylum policy based on solidarity and responsibility. The full transposition and effective implementation of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) is an absolute priority. This should result in high common standards and stronger cooperation, creating a level playing field where asylum seekers are given the same procedural guarantees and protection throughout the Union. It should go hand in hand with a reinforced role for the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), particularly in promoting the uniform application of the acquis. Converging practices will enhance mutual trust and allow to move to future next steps.

8. Addressing the root causes of irregular migration flows is an essential part of EU migration policy. This, together with the prevention and tackling of irregular migration, will help avoid the loss of lives of migrants undertaking hazardous journeys. A sustainable solution can only be found by intensifying cooperation with countries of origin and transit, including through assistance to strengthen their migration and border management capacity. Migration policies must become a much stronger integral part of the Union's external and development policies, applying the "more for more" principle and building on the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility. The focus should be on the following elements:
 - strengthening and expanding Regional Protection Programmes, in particular close to regions of origin, in close collaboration with UNHCR; increase contributions to global resettlement efforts, notably in view of the current protracted crisis in Syria;
 - addressing smuggling and trafficking in human beings more forcefully, with a focus on priority countries and routes;
 - establishing an effective common return policy and enforcing readmission obligations in agreements with third countries;
 - fully implementing the actions identified by the Task Force Mediterranean.

9. The Schengen area, allowing people to travel without internal border controls, and the increasing numbers of people travelling to the EU require efficient management of the EU's common external borders to ensure strong protection. The Union must mobilise all the tools at its disposal to support the Member States in their task. To this end:
- Integrated Border Management of the external borders should be modernised in a cost efficient way to ensure smart border management with an entry-exit system and registered travellers programme and supported by the new Agency for Large Scale IT Systems (eu-LISA);
 - Frontex, as an instrument of European solidarity in the area of border management, should reinforce its operational assistance, in particular to support Member States facing strong pressure at the external borders, and increase its reactivity towards rapid evolutions in migration flows, making full use of the new European Border Surveillance System EUROSUR;
 - in the context of the long-term development of Frontex, the possibility of setting up a European system of border guards to enhance the control and surveillance capabilities at our external borders should be studied.

At the same time, the common visa policy needs to be modernised by facilitating legitimate travel and reinforced local Schengen consular cooperation while maintaining a high level of security and implementing the new Schengen governance system.

10. It is essential to guarantee a genuine area of security for European citizens through operational police cooperation and by preventing and combating serious and organised crime, including human trafficking and smuggling, as well as corruption. At the same time, an effective EU counter terrorism policy is needed, whereby all relevant actors work closely together, integrating the internal and external aspects of the fight against terrorism. In this context, the European Council reaffirms the role of the EU Counter Terrorism Coordinator. In its fight against crime and terrorism, the Union should back national authorities by mobilising all instruments of judicial and police cooperation, with a reinforced coordination role for Europol and Eurojust, including through:
- the review and update of the internal security strategy by mid 2015;
 - the improvement of cross-border information exchanges, including on criminal records;
 - the further development of a comprehensive approach to cybersecurity and cybercrime;
 - the prevention of radicalisation and extremism and action to address the phenomenon of foreign fighters, including through the effective use of existing instruments for EU-wide alerts and the development of instruments such as the EU Passenger Name Record system.
11. The smooth functioning of a true European area of justice with respect for the different legal systems and traditions of the Member States is vital for the EU. In this regard, mutual trust in one another's justice systems should be further enhanced. A sound European justice policy will contribute to economic growth by helping businesses and consumers to benefit from a reliable business environment within the internal market. Further action is required to:
- promote the consistency and clarity of EU legislation for citizens and businesses;
 - simplify access to justice; promote effective remedies and use of technological innovations including the use of e-justice;

- continue efforts to strengthen the rights of accused and suspect persons in criminal proceedings;
 - examine the reinforcement of the rights of persons, notably children, in proceedings to facilitate enforcement of judgements in family law and in civil and commercial matters with cross-border implications;
 - reinforce the protection of victims;
 - enhance mutual recognition of decisions and judgments in civil and criminal matters;
 - reinforce exchanges of information between the authorities of the Member States;
 - fight fraudulent behaviour and damages to the EU budget, including by advancing negotiations on the European Public Prosecutor's Office;
 - facilitate cross-border activities and operational cooperation;
 - enhance training for practitioners;
 - mobilise the expertise of relevant EU agencies such as Eurojust and the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA).
12. As one of the fundamental freedoms of the European Union, the right of EU citizens to move freely and reside and work in other Member States needs to be protected, including from possible misuse or fraudulent claims.
13. The European Council calls on the EU institutions and the Member States to ensure the appropriate legislative and operational follow-up to these guidelines and will hold a mid-term review in 2017.

II. GROWTH, COMPETITIVENESS AND JOBS

A. THE EUROPEAN SEMESTER

14. Recent signs of economic recovery are encouraging and demonstrate that the joint efforts of Member States and EU institutions are bearing fruit. Growth has started to return and there is a modest rise in employment, even though in many parts of Europe, unemployment - in particular youth unemployment - is still at unprecedented and unacceptable levels. Poverty and social exclusion remain major concerns.
15. Thanks to the efforts of the Member States, the correction of macroeconomic imbalances has progressed and public finances continue to improve. The European Council welcomes the abrogation of the excessive deficit procedure for several Member States. The possibilities offered by the EU's existing fiscal framework to balance fiscal discipline with the need to support growth should be used. Given the persistently high debt and unemployment levels and the low nominal GDP growth, as well as the challenges of an ageing society and of supporting job-creation, particularly for the young, fiscal consolidation must continue in a growth-friendly and differentiated manner. Structural reforms that enhance growth and improve fiscal sustainability should be given particular attention, including through an appropriate assessment of fiscal measures and structural reforms, while making best use of the flexibility that is built into the existing Stability and Growth Pact rules. In this context, the Commission will report to the European Parliament and to the Council on the application of the EU governance framework by 14 December 2014, as foreseen in EU law ('6-Pack' and '2-Pack').
16. The recovery remains fragile and uneven and efforts to implement growth-enhancing structural reforms must continue and be enhanced in order to strengthen Europe's capacity to grow and create more and better jobs. Increased action is needed to reduce the tax wedge on labour, to reform product and services markets and public administrations, to improve the business and RDI environment, facilitate access to finance, to enhance the functioning of network industries and to reform education systems.

17. Against this background, the European Council generally endorsed the country-specific recommendations (CSR) and thus concluded the 2014 European Semester. Their implementation is key to accelerate growth. Based on the principles of national ownership and social dialogue, Member States should respect the recommendations in their forthcoming decisions on budgets, structural reforms and employment and social policies. The Council and the Commission will further monitor CSR implementation and take action as required.

Regulatory fitness

18. The European Council reviewed progress made in the area of regulatory fitness and performance on the basis of the Commission Communication. A lot of progress has been achieved in the implementation of the REFIT programme by the Commission, the other EU institutions and Member States; this has led to an effective reduction of the regulatory burden. The European Council considers that regulatory fitness should remain a priority in the work of the institutions. This requires a strong commitment to regulatory simplification and burden reduction in legislative work and better use of impact assessment and ex-post evaluation throughout the legislative cycle, at the EU and national level.
19. Regulatory fitness measures at the European level should be complemented by initiatives for regulatory fitness by the Member States. In this respect Member States should make full use of regulatory flexibility provisions for the benefit of small and medium-sized enterprises in the implementation of EU legislation.
20. The European Council calls on the Council to proceed to a detailed examination of the Commission Communication. The Commission, the other EU institutions and the Member States are invited to continue the implementation of the REFIT programme in an ambitious way, taking into account consumer and employees protection as well as health and environment concerns.

B. CLIMATE AND ENERGY

21. The European Council took stock of progress made towards a final decision in October on the 2030 climate and energy framework in line with its March 2014 conclusions. In that context, it stressed the importance of swiftly developing the key elements of the framework, and looks forward, in particular, to the Commission presenting by July a review of the Energy Efficiency Directive and how energy efficiency can contribute to the 2030 climate and energy framework. It reaffirms the importance of the UN Climate Summit in September 2014 and confirms that the specific EU target for 2030 for greenhouse gas emission reductions will be fully in line with the agreed ambitious EU objective for 2050.
22. The European Council welcomed the Commission's European Energy Security Strategy (EESS) and held a first discussion on that basis. The EESS is closely linked to the 2030 policy framework on climate and energy. The European Council calls for increased efforts to reduce Europe's high energy dependency and supports the immediate implementation of a set of most urgent measures to strengthen Europe's resilience and increase its energy security in the short term, before the winter of 2014/2015. It agrees in particular that:
- in the light of assessments of the risk of short-term supply disruption, existing emergency and solidarity mechanisms, including gas storage, emergency infrastructure and reverse flows, will be reinforced in order to address this risk primarily in the most vulnerable Member States;
 - in view of enhancing the EU's energy security, relevant energy infrastructure investments, including those involving third countries, should be pursued in full respect of all the EU's internal market and competition rules, which must be consistently enforced;

- the EU will engage with its international partners to reduce the risk of disruption of energy supplies;
- the Energy Community, which aims to expand the EU's energy acquis to enlargement and neighbourhood countries, should be reinforced so as to ensure the application of the acquis in those countries.

In the run-up to the October European Council meeting, the European Council asked the Council to further analyse other medium to long-term measures to enhance the EU's energy security, based on the Commission's EESS. The European Council underlined the importance of energy efficiency, further development of domestic production, further implementing and integrating the European energy market based on a regional approach, increasing transparency on the gas market, and on fostering missing infrastructure, to put an end to any isolation of Member States from European gas and electricity networks by 2015. In line with the objective of completing the European energy market by the end of 2014, interconnectivity must be increased, including through further examination of the new interconnection target proposed by the Commission.

23. The European Council will take a final decision on the new climate and energy policy framework, including on further measures aimed at enhancing Europe's energy security and on specific 2030 interconnection objectives, no later than October 2014. All efforts will be mobilised in order to meet this agreed deadline.
24. The European Council also supports the Rome G7 energy initiative which serves to implement policies to build a more competitive, diversified and resilient energy system with reduced greenhouse gas emissions by promoting the use of safe and sustainable technologies.

III. THE NEXT INSTITUTIONAL CYCLE

25. The European Council adopted the Decision proposing Jean-Claude Juncker to the European Parliament as candidate for President of the European Commission. The President of the European Council will conduct consultations in view of other appointments to be made.
26. It agreed the attached strategic agenda. It invites the EU institutions and the Member States to fully implement these priorities in their work. The agenda will also guide the institutions in the annual and multiannual programming as well as in legislative planning; they should organize their work accordingly. The European Council will ensure the regular monitoring of the implementation of these strategic priorities.
27. The UK raised some concerns related to the future development of the EU. These concerns will need to be addressed.

In this context, the European Council noted that the concept of ever closer union allows for different paths of integration for different countries, allowing those that want to deepen integration to move ahead, while respecting the wish of those who do not want to deepen any further.

Once the new European Commission is effectively in place, the European Council will consider the process for the appointment of the President of the European Commission for the future, respecting the European Treaties.

IV. OTHER ITEMS

28. The European Council congratulated Lithuania on the convergence it has achieved, based on sound economic, fiscal and financial policies, and welcomed its fulfilment of all the convergence criteria as set out in the Treaty. It endorsed the Commission's proposal that Lithuania adopt the euro on 1 January 2015.

Ukraine

29. Recalling the Statements of the Heads of State and Government on Ukraine of 6 March and 27 May, the European Council conclusions of 21 March and the conclusions of the Foreign Affairs Council on Ukraine of 23 June, the European Council expresses its support to the peace plan announced last week by President Poroshenko. It takes note of the Russian President's declaration of support in principle of the peace plan and the Federation Council's decision to revoke the authorisation to use Russian forces to intervene militarily in Ukraine.
30. The European Council regrets that the cease-fire, while being respected by the Ukrainian authorities, has not led to the full cessation of military hostilities. Therefore, it calls upon all parties to genuinely commit to the implementation of the peace plan and to cement the cessation of the military activities. It urges the Russian Federation to actively use its influence over the illegally armed groups and to stop the flow of weapons and militants across the border, in order to achieve rapid and tangible results in de-escalation. The European Council supports the OSCE monitoring the implementation of the peace plan as well as its role in supporting the cease-fire and the establishment of effective border controls.
31. The European Council reconfirms its commitment to support the economic stabilisation process in Ukraine and welcomes the two recent significant Commission disbursements totalling 750 million EUR in the framework of the State Building Contract and the Macro Financial Assistance. In this context, the European Council looks forward to the high level donor coordination meeting on Ukraine to be held in Brussels on 8 July.

32. Following its March conclusions and the decision not to recognise the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol, the European Council welcomes the work undertaken by the Commission to give effect to this policy and the decision to prohibit the import of goods from Crimea and Sevastopol which do not have a Ukrainian certificate.
33. The European Council recalls that the European Commission, the EEAS and the Member States have been undertaking preparatory work on targeted measures, as it requested in March, so that further steps can be taken without delay. In that respect, the European Council expects that by Monday 30 June the following steps will have been taken :
- agreement on a verification mechanism, monitored by the OSCE, for the cease-fire and for the effective control of the border;
 - return to the Ukrainian authorities of the three border checkpoints (Izvarino, Dolzhanskiy, Krasnopartizansk);
 - release of hostages including all of the OSCE observers;
 - launch of substantial negotiations on the implementation of President Poroshenko's peace plan.

The Council will assess the situation and, should it be required, adopt necessary decisions. The European Council underlines its commitment to reconvene at any time for further significant restrictive measures.

34. The European Council endorsed the Council conclusions of 24 June 2014 on Albania.
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STRATEGIC AGENDA FOR THE UNION IN TIMES OF CHANGE

The May 2014 European elections open a new legislative cycle. This moment of political renewal comes precisely as our countries emerge from years of economic crisis and as public disenchantment with politics has grown. It is the right time to set out what we want the Union to focus on and how we want it to function.

The European Council agreed today on five overarching priorities which will guide the work of the European Union over the next five years: stronger economies with more jobs; societies enabled to empower and protect; a secure energy and climate future; a trusted area of fundamental freedoms; effective joint action in the world.

Action in these fields is vital, given the important challenges awaiting our societies. Though the recovery in Europe is gaining pace, unemployment is still our highest concern – especially for young people – and inequalities are on the rise. Meanwhile the global economy is changing fast. In the digital age, the race for innovation, skills and markets forces all our countries to anticipate and adapt in order to thrive. Scarce natural resources, the cost of energy and impact of climate change are major challenges; Europe's current energy dependency is a vulnerability. Across the world, radicalisation and extremism are reasons for concern. Geopolitical stability at our very borders cannot be taken for granted. Demographic trends are challenging, with ageing populations putting additional pressure on our welfare systems and irregular migration flows requiring common answers and concerted action.

Against this backdrop, the first purpose of the Union's work over the coming years must be to equip our societies for the future and to foster confidence.

The countries of Europe are uniquely placed to shape change – both individually and collectively as a Union. Our diversity is an asset, our unity brings strength. In our Union, different degrees of cooperation and integration exist. Our enlargement policy continues to foster democracy and prosperity.

In line with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, the Union must concentrate its action on areas where it makes a real difference. It should refrain from taking action when member states can better achieve the same objectives. The credibility of the Union depends on its ability to ensure adequate follow-up on decisions and commitments. This requires strong and credible institutions, but will also benefit from closer involvement of national parliaments. Above all, the emphasis should be on concrete results – in the five following fields.

1. A Union of jobs, growth and competitiveness

Our countries are emerging from the deepest economic crisis in a generation. We see efforts and reforms producing results. Yet it is not going to be a return to the promises of yesteryear. Important challenges remain: slow growth, high unemployment, insufficient public and private investment, macroeconomic imbalances, public debt, and a lack of competitiveness. We respect the Stability and Growth Pact. All our economies need to continue to pursue structural reforms. Very clearly, our common strength hinges upon each and every country's success. That is why the Union needs bold steps to foster growth, increase investments, create more and better jobs and encourage reforms for competitiveness. This also requires making best use of the flexibility that is built into the existing Stability and Growth Pact rules.

The upcoming review of the EU2020 strategy will be a good occasion to bring it fully in line with this strategic agenda.

Therefore the priorities we set for the Union for the next five years are to:

- **fully exploit the potential of the single market in all its dimensions:** by completing the internal market in products and services; by completing the digital single market by 2015;
- **promote a climate of entrepreneurship and job creation,** not least for SMEs: by facilitating access to finance and investment; by ensuring more resilient financial regulation; by improving the functioning of labour markets and by shifting taxes away from labour; by reducing unnecessary administrative burdens and compliance costs in a targeted manner, respecting consumer and employees protection as well as health and environment concerns;

- **invest and prepare our economies for the future:** by addressing overdue investment needs in transport, energy and telecom infrastructure as well as in energy efficiency, innovation and research, skills, education and innovation; by making full use of EU structural funds; by mobilising the right mix of private and public funding and facilitating long-term investments; by using and developing financial instruments, such as those of the European Investment Bank, in particular for long-term projects; by providing the right regulatory framework for long-term investments;
- **reinforce the global attractiveness of the Union** as a place of production and investment with a strong and competitive industrial base and a thriving agriculture, and complete negotiations on international trade agreements, in a spirit of mutual and reciprocal benefit and transparency, including TTIP, by 2015;
- **make the Economic and Monetary Union a more solid and resilient factor of stability and growth:** with stronger euro area governance and stronger economic policy coordination, convergence and solidarity, while respecting the integrity of the internal market and preserving transparency and openness towards non-euro EU countries.

2. A Union that empowers and protects all citizens

Europeans have benefitted from the opportunities offered by integrated economies with open borders, but the advantages are not always immediately tangible to all. Many experience or fear poverty and social exclusion. The Union must keep doing what it is good at and continue to unlock opportunities, but it must also be perceived and experienced as a source of protection. People expect Europe to defend their interests and keep threats at bay, but also to respect their identities and sense of belonging. The Union must be stronger outside, more caring inside.

Therefore, while respecting the competences of member states, who are responsible for their welfare systems, the priorities we set for the Union in this field for the next five years are to:

- **help develop skills and unlock talents and life chances for all:** by stepping up the fight against youth unemployment, in particular for young people who have dropped out from education, employment or training; by promoting the right skills for the modern economy and life-long learning; by facilitating mobility of workers, especially in fields with persistent vacancies or skills mismatches; by protecting one of the Union's four fundamental freedoms, the right of all EU citizens to move freely and reside and work in other member states, including from possible misuse or fraudulent claims;
- **guarantee fairness:** by combatting tax evasion and tax fraud so that all contribute their fair share;
- **help ensure all our societies have their safety nets in place to accompany change and reverse inequalities,** with social protection systems that are efficient, fair and fit for the future; indeed, investing into human capital and the social fabric is also key to the long-term prosperity prospects for the European economy.

3. Towards an Energy Union with a forward-looking climate policy

Geopolitical events, the worldwide energy competition and the impact of climate change are triggering a rethink of our energy and climate strategy. We must avoid Europe relying to such a high extent on fuel and gas imports. To ensure our energy future is under full control, we want to build an Energy Union aiming at affordable, secure and sustainable energy. Energy efficiency is essential, since the cheapest and cleanest energy is that which is not consumed.

In light of this challenge, our energy and climate policies for the upcoming five years must focus on:

- **affordable energy** for companies and citizens: by moderating energy demand thanks to enhanced energy efficiency; by completing our integrated energy market; by finding ways to increase the Union's bargaining power; by increasing transparency on the gas market; by stimulating research, development and the industrial European base in the energy field;
- **secure energy** for all our countries: by speeding up the diversification of energy supply and routes, including through renewable, safe and sustainable and other indigenous energy sources, as a means to reduce energy dependency, notably on a single source or supplier; by developing the necessary infrastructure such as interconnections; by providing private and public actors with the right planning framework so they can take mid- to long-term investment decisions;
- **green energy**: by continuing to lead the fight against global warming ahead of the United Nations COP 2015 meeting in Paris and beyond, including by setting ambitious 2030 targets that are fully in line with the agreed EU objective for 2050.

4. A Union of freedom, security and justice

Citizens expect their governments to provide justice, protection and fairness with full respect for fundamental rights and the rule of law. This also requires joint European action, based on our fundamental values. Given their cross border dimensions, phenomena like terrorism and organised crime call for stronger EU cooperation. The same is true for justice matters, since citizens increasingly study, work, do business, get married and have children across the Union. Another challenge in the years ahead will be managing migration flows, which are on the rise due to instability and poverty in large parts of the world and demographic trends – a matter which requires solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility.

Therefore the priorities we set for the Union for the next five years are to:

- **better manage migration in all its aspects:** by addressing shortages of specific skills and attracting talent; by dealing more robustly with irregular migration, also through better cooperation with third countries, including on readmission; by protecting those in need through a strong asylum policy; with a strengthened, modern management of the Union's external borders;
- **prevent and combat crime and terrorism:** by cracking down on organised crime, such as human trafficking, smuggling and cybercrime; by tackling corruption; by fighting terrorism and countering radicalisation – while guaranteeing fundamental rights and values, including the protection of personal data;
- **improve judicial cooperation among our countries:** by building bridges between the different justice systems and traditions; by strengthening common tools, including Eurojust; by mutual recognition of judgments, so that citizens and companies can more easily exercise their rights across the Union.

5. The Union as a strong global actor

Recent events show how fast-shifting the strategic and geopolitical environment has become, not least at the Union's eastern and southern borders. Instability in our wider neighbourhood is at an all-time high. At the same time it has never been as important to engage our partners on issues of mutual or global interest. To defend our interests and values and to protect citizens, a stronger engagement of the European Union in world affairs is crucial.

The following foreign policy priorities will therefore be key in the years ahead:

- **maximise our clout:** by ensuring consistency between member states' and EU foreign policy goals and by improving coordination and coherence between the main fields of EU external action, such as trade, energy, justice and home affairs, development and economic policies;
- **be a strong partner in our neighbourhood:** by promoting stability, prosperity and democracy in the countries closest to our Union, on the European continent, in the Mediterranean, Africa and in the Middle East;
- **engage our global strategic partners,** in particular our transatlantic partners, on a wide range of issues – from trade and cyber security to human rights and conflict prevention, to non-proliferation and crisis management – bilaterally and in multilateral fora;
- **develop security and defence cooperation** so we can live up to our commitments and responsibilities across the world: by strengthening the Common Security and Defence Policy, in full complementarity with NATO; by ensuring that member states maintain and develop the necessary civilian and military capabilities, including through pooling and sharing; with a stronger European defence industry.

DOCUMENTS ENDORSED BY THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL

- *Council report of 24 June 2014 on the 2014 Country Specific Recommendations*
- *Council conclusions of 24 June 2014 on Albania*
- *European Union Maritime Security Strategy*
- *Council conclusions of 19 May 2014 on the annual report on EU Official Development Assistance*