

Briefing Note:

October 2015

The European Commission's Work Programme for 2016

The Work Programme is the European Commission's annual "to do list", presented each October in consultation with the European Parliament. President Juncker's second work programme continues his theme of doing fewer, bigger things at EU level. Yet it presents a packed legislative agenda for 2016.

The programme contains no surprises, as the virtually empty European Parliament plenary session on Tuesday 27th October illustrated. Each of the mainstream, non-Eurosceptic, political groups responded broadly supportively to the statement by First Vice President Frans Timmermans to the parliament.

The 2016 Work Programme is structured around 10 priorities, with 23 initiatives – each requiring legislative action. But the Commission has emphasised five priorities, on which it hopes to make the fastest progress next year. These are:

1. An effective response to the **migrant crisis** through "better migration management" and "proposals on border enforcement"
2. Implementation of the **Digital Single Market** and incorporation in the Single Market Strategy
3. A comprehensive **Circular Economy Package** (billed as a jobs and growth package) and legislation to implement the **Energy Union**
4. A New **Skills Agenda** for Europe and a pillar of social rights – (Timmermans explicitly stated to the parliament that the Commission is keen to ensure that freedom of movement does not threaten job security)
5. A **Corporate Tax** package and **Action Plan on VAT** – the ambitious steps the Commission is planning here have already begun with recent announcements on tax recouping from the Competition Commissioner

The Commission has also identified 17 [currently pending proposals](#) which it wants the Parliament and Council to get on and pass – and this will have a bearing on the parliamentary timetable. Three significant inclusions are *Women on Boards*, *Financial Transactions Tax* and tightened regulations on national atmospheric pollutants.

The Commission also envisages repealing 28 former initiatives, regulations or directives – most of which are relatively minor or have been superseded by more recent agreements. The list is [here](#).

Along with the 5 top priorities, the Commission will bring forward details on the legislative programme for **Capital Markets Union** by the end of 2015 and proposals for deepening EMU. The broad outlines of which have already been set out by UK Commissioner Jonathan Hill.

There will also be further detail on the **new trade strategy**, progress on TTIP, a review of the **EU Budget** (the Multi-annual Financial Framework 2014-20), A **Defence Action Plan**, a **Space Strategy** and – important for followers of international trade and development – the first detailed communication on an update to the **Cotonou Agreement** which has governed the EU's relationship with African, Caribbean and Pacific countries since 2002.

This will all be set in the context of the EU's response to the UN Sustainable Development Goals and an expected, updated framework for global emissions reductions coming out of the COP21 summit in December.

The final – 23rd – initiative is of interest to lobbyists: bringing forward a long-discussed inter-institutional, **mandatory transparency register** of interests, which may include lawyers and other professionals working in or with Brussels.

The full communication on the Work Programme from the Commission can be found [here](#).