



Brussels, 4 September 2025

Ms. Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission
European Commission
Rue de la Loi/Wetstraat 200
1049 Brussels

Dear President von der Leyen,

The shifting geopolitical landscape demands bold, visionary, and unprecedented action. Massive efforts are being made to speak with one voice on the global stage, but one must acknowledge that our institutional setup undermines this goal. The EU-US trade deal of this Summer, which is massively unbalanced, demonstrated how far we are from being a superpower. It is time to reform the EU.

We, therefore, share with you our **five top priorities** for the 2026 Commission Work Programme¹, which set out a practical roadmap to make the European Union a place of opportunities and protection. Those initiatives, largely shared by Mario Draghi in his landmark report on the future of European competitiveness released one year ago, must come at speed. Time is of the essence, and the EU has been dithering for too long. To be successful, those reforms will require courage to overcome opposition and move quickly.

1. Competitiveness

Europe must **unlock growth** boldly and urgently. The Clean Industrial Deal, accompanied by a credible Competitiveness Fund, is the kind of initiative our economy needs. But we need to see more. The IMF found that “the EU could raise its GDP by 7 percent if it reduced internal barriers for goods trade and multinational production by 10 percent”². Therefore, we must **eliminate the remaining internal barriers** to goods and services. We must adopt new forms of integration, such as the **28th regime**, operating above national constraints. We must reform our **public procurement rules**. Achieve the **Capital Markets Union**, which has been discussed for decades. Simplify EU rules and cut red tape. Access to capital and funding must become a top priority. Europe must unleash private investment to fuel innovation and critical technologies, secure **critical raw materials**, and reinforce its industrial backbone. This is what Draghi is recommending.

European investments and the cohesion policy must also contribute to reducing inequalities by fully involving local and regional authorities, and be allocated with a clear European added value, supporting cross-border projects, territorial integration, and equal opportunities for citizens across all Member States.

¹ See: ANNEX - Renew Europe input - 2026 Commission Work Programme

² <https://www.elibrary.imf.org/view/journals/022/0062/002/article-A008-en.xml>

We support creating new ways for the Union to raise money fairly and sustainably that ensure the EU's competitiveness and security. A stronger European Union also needs its own resources. The European Union needs to **finalise trade agreements** to secure better market access, investment and strong sustainability standards.

2. Democracy

We must stand firm on **civil liberties and the Rule of Law**. These are not negotiable; they are the foundation of our Union. The Rule of Law Conditionality Mechanism must apply to all EU funds, with **Smart Conditionality** - a key demand of our political family. We thank you in this regard for your proposal in July 2025, which will allow direct support to civil society, even in illiberal states. But we want to go even further, through the establishment of a **European Rule of Law Semester** to ensure institutional follow-up and enforcement of recommendations to EU countries on the matter³. We expect a lot from the future proposals composing the **European Democracy Shield**. The EU needs to be equipped with robust tools to effectively protect the integrity of our elections and fight disinformation and foreign interference. Misinformation and hate speech on social networks not only damage trust in truth, but also the minds of our young people. In this regard, we must take ambitious measures to **protect minors** with proportionate and gradual measures depending on the age. There is no time for empty promises.

3. Security and Defence

Europe must also be able to **defend itself**. To make our voice heard globally, we must invest in strategic sovereignty and build a **genuine EU Defence Union**. Ukraine's security is our security, and expedited **EU membership for Ukraine** must be a central pillar of any future security guarantees linked to a peace settlement. We must continue supporting Ukraine's self-defence and long-term reconstruction, while **expanding sanctions against Russia**. Our ultimate goal is lasting peace and security for all Europeans anchored in robust relations with like-minded democracies and a stable neighbourhood, including the Middle East. That is also why **the horror in Gaza must end**. In the absence of willingness from others, the EU and its Member States are the ones who have the duty to act decisively now to uphold international humanitarian law, to protect civilian lives, end the starvation and ensure the release of all hostages. The EU should also work relentlessly to help to **make the two-state solution a reality**.

4. Governance and reforming the EU institutions

We must **enlarge and reform our Union**. Candidate countries deserve a clear and fair path to membership. From Moldova to Albania, it is time to **speed up the enlargement process**. Otherwise, other powers will feed on and use the rising frustration of fellow Europeans.

However, our current decision-making processes are unfit for an agile Union - and this would be even more the case with more Member States. Therefore, enlargement or not, we must reshape the EU into a more powerful, efficient, competitive, and democratic force capable of acting swiftly and decisively, including by moving away from unanimity

³ <https://reneweuropegroup.box.com/s/kvdw4m5romhwa3e3ob110vane9gaqspu>

in foreign policy. The Parliament's existing proposal, triggering the **Article 48** process of amending the EU Treaties, must be pursued.

5. Climate and environment

And finally, we must lead the global **fight against climate change**. The EU used to be the world leader when it comes to protecting the planet. We perfectly know it is the right path, let's not lose that status. We call for bold action to meet the **2040 climate target**, modernise climate legislation, and help communities **adapt** to a changing world. Europe must protect its environment, economy and food sovereignty.

Dear President, time is of the essence. We consider that the EU is facing existential challenges that must be met with bold actions and speed. Therefore, we call for these five key priorities to be reflected in the Commission's Work Programme for 2026 and in your State of the Union address on Wednesday, 10th September. You will find in the following annex the detailed and expanded list of concrete actions we call for.

Needless to say, only a pro-European majority, in letter and in spirit, can achieve those goals. Any step toward the far-right and the far-left to destabilise the EU is a step in the wrong direction of history. We, therefore, call on you to stay true to our deep EU values to ensure that upcoming Commission proposals, together with your personal involvement, are framed in a way for pro-European groups to work together in trust and sincere cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Valérie Hayer, President of Renew Europe

Billy Kelleher, 1st Vice-President of Renew Europe

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ANNEX

Renew Europe input - 2026 Commission Work Programme

I. A competitive Europe with increased focus on strategic autonomy

- Follow up Omnibus with further simplification in single market sectors.
- Accelerate savings and investments union implementation to channel private savings into long-term investments; develop simple investment products; boost financial literacy; reduce fragmentation.
- Modernise and enforce competition rules, especially DMA, to protect SMEs and innovation.
- Advance simplification agenda without weakening EU standards; support SME relief and competitiveness checks; improve SME access to finance via InvestEU and venture tools; urges a revision of the state aid framework to allow Member States to create credit guarantee schemes that support SME housing developers.
- Streamline and digitalise compliance procedures by eliminating overlapping reporting obligations, modernising permitting and enforcement, especially for SMEs, e-commerce and cross-border services. Establish a one-stop shop for regulatory obligations. Ensure consistent implementation of EU law across Member States and act against gold-plating. Promote regulatory predictability through better impact assessments and coherence checks.
- Develop a European digital stack to boost innovation and strategic autonomy; propose Cloud & AI Development Act to support sovereign cloud alternatives and AI leadership; adopt a Quantum Act with clear funding and infrastructure plans.
- Propose a Chips Act 2.0 to strengthen Europe's capacity in advanced semiconductor manufacturing, support next-generation technologies and secure resilient supply chains.
- Establish European Research Area Act to unlock the fifth freedom and remove structural barriers to R&I; propose European Innovation Act to address commercialisation gap; support venture capital, sandboxes, public-private innovation.
- Revise energy security framework; ensure competitive, market-driven solutions post-2030; propose Grids Package to modernise outdated networks and enable decentralised generation and cross-border links; accelerate adoption of Circular Economy Act to boost strategic autonomy and recycled material use.
- Revise the public procurement rules to adapt them to sustainable and digital transition and use their leverage to strengthen Europe's strategic autonomy and added value.
- Make Europe the best place in the world to invest in, innovate, produce, and use biotechnology products. Based on the recognition of biotech as a strategic technology in the Competitiveness Compass and as a target of intense geopolitical

competition for talent and investment, develop the EU biotech sector as an enabler of its strategic autonomy and competitiveness.

- Enforce Digital Services Act (DSA) to protect minors from algorithmic harm; publish compliance deadlines and scoreboards.
- Support national Digital Services Coordinators the national authorities designated by each EU Member State to supervise and enforce the DSA, with funding, training, and Commission coordination.
- Simplify and increase the effectiveness of the existing digital rulebook on EU level. Follow up Omnibus with further simplification in single market sectors.
- Propose directive on AI and algorithmic management in the workplace.
- Propose directive on just transition at work to boost jobs and support local economies.
- Propose EU legislative framework for Vocational Education and Training (VET) to enable mutual qualification recognition and mobility for VET professionals and apprentices.
- Deliver on trade agreements: advance and finalise ongoing negotiations, sign and ratify the existing agreements, namely with good outcomes on market access, investment, protection of geographical indications and trade and sustainable development provisions.
- Fully operationalise the Economic Security Strategy to decrease risky international dependencies and reduce the EU's vulnerability: Promote, Protect and Partner.
- Develop a new instrument to protect the EU industry from foreign overcapacities.
- Explore the feasibility of reinforcing the EU Trade Defence Instruments (TDI) investigations and limiting their timelines.
- Engage multilaterally in support of rules-based international trade.
- Implement the principle of a horizontal "Smart Conditionality" clause in the context of the new MFF: Allow EU funds to bypass national governments undermining the rule of law, directing support directly to municipalities, NGOs and other actors upholding European values.
- Deliver a path to new Own Resources that strengthens the EU's financial autonomy by establishing sustainable and independent revenue streams for the European budget, ensuring the responsible repayment of the NextGenerationEU debt and supporting the long-term financing of future EU priorities without putting new burdens on taxpayers.
- Mobilise public-private funding towards the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) to support electrification infrastructure including electricity grids, interconnectors and hydrogen pipelines, which is essential to enabling the renewables expansion, achieving EU climate targets, and advancing the clean industrial transition.
- Ensure strict and swift enforcement of the Rule of Law Conditionality Mechanism where breaches impact the EU's financial interests, while applying a "smart conditionality" approach to protect final beneficiaries without weakening the regulation's effectiveness.
- Develop dedicated EU-wide AI-driven mechanisms within OLAF, the EPPO and Europol, to detect fraud supported by a joint task force including national anti-fraud units, to enhance the prevention and investigation of financial crimes against the EU budget.

- Reinforce the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) through regulatory revisions to improve its capacity to investigate cross-border organised crime effectively.
- Introduce a forward-looking, results-oriented EU performance audit framework that evaluates outcomes, impact and financial compliance to ensure EU spending delivers tangible benefits and contributes to strategic objectives such as green and digital transitions, economic resilience, and democratic governance.
- Propose a genuine European Video games Strategy that meets the needs of this major cultural and creative industry particularly in terms of access to finance and skills.
- Establish a legal status and investment pathway for European Universities Alliances.

II. Strengthened fight for Democracy, for the Rule of Law, for our values and for the protection of EU borders

- Timely and effective implementation of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum, and report on such implementation.
- Reach an agreement on a common system on Returns that finally works.
- Counter the criminal business model of migrant smuggling and trafficking of human beings via a Common Search and Rescue Strategy.
- Counter irregular migration through a Safe Mobility Initiative by streamlining access to legal pathways.
- Further harmonise the recognition of qualifications of third country nationals.
- Establish a Rule of Law Cycle ensuring a unified monitoring across all Member States and establish clear links between serious deficiencies and concrete Union measures.
- Strengthen the Commission's Rule of Law Report through a broader scope, clearer timelines and closer links between the findings and recommendations of the report, the degree of implementation of reforms and the allocation of financial support under the EU budget.
- Expand and systematise the Rule of Law Conditionality Mechanism to cover all EU funding programmes and instruments and introduce "smart conditionality" in the next MFF.
- An ambitious Post 2025 Gender Equality Strategy including EU legislation on consent-based definition of rape and commitment on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights.
- Include the right to safe and legal abortion into the EU Charter for fundamental Rights.
- Review current and adopt a new Gender Action Plan in External Action IV with at least 85% of new actions implemented with a gender equality as principal or significant objective.
- Deliver on the proposed Civil Society Platform and pursue work on an ambitious toolbox for citizens' direct participation to EU policymaking.
- Adopt a feminist foreign policy promoting gender equality and women's rights as well as defending and funding women-led CSOs and human right defenders.

- Prepare an Action Plan against cyber violence including on gender disinformation and cyber violence targeted towards women politicians, journalists and human rights defenders.
- Develop a comprehensive Strategy for Citizenship Education to improve the quality of citizenship education in the EU.
- Present a legislative proposal on corruption to be included in the EU Human Rights Sanctions Regime.
- Present a roadmap of steps and measures for substantial EU support to strengthen international justice mechanisms.
- Propose tools to address and fight back the reawakening of ideologies that reject democracy.
- Adopt a Humanitarian Strategy, which includes a “Commission-wide integrated approach to fragility” following the mission letters of Commissioners Lahbib and Síkela.
- Put in place a clear mechanism for systematic assessment of the impact of the Global Gateway strategy, particularly in fragile contexts where this strategy may not apply.
- Implement the regulations adopted: Digital Services Act, European Media Freedom Act, Artificial Intelligence Act, Transparency Directive.
- Launch a dedicated initiative on AI, media pluralism and democratic resilience, addressing the systemic risks posed by generative AI tools (such as AI-powered search and summarisation features) to editorial diversity, independent journalism and public access to verified information.
- Establish a European fund for information integrity.
- Establish common rules across the EU to prohibit foreign funding of political parties and campaigns and ban the use of cryptocurrencies in political or activist activities.

III. A secure and protective Europe

- Increase EU’s assistance necessary to uphold Ukraine’s right to self-defence and step in, as far as possible, while ensuring long-term support for reconstruction and recovery.
- Substantially increase pressure on Russia to definitively undermine its ability to wage war against Ukraine by:
 - proposing further restrictive measures on key sectors—banking, metallurgy, chemical, nuclear and agriculture - alongside robust monitoring of sanctions and anti-circumvention measures.
 - proposing bans or targeted tariffs on Russian imports to the EU, including on fertilisers, grain, all fossil fuels, steel products, titanium, nickel, wood, uranium, and other raw materials.
- Deliver the Readiness 2030 plan by:
 - Significantly improving and continuing the streamlining and harmonization of EU regulations with defence dimensions
 - Urgently publishing guidance on taxonomy and defence
 - Publishing guidance on working time for armed forces and governmental security forces.

- Propose targeted investments in defence-related research, disruptive technologies and joint industrial projects to strengthen Europe's strategic sovereignty.
- Increase EU defence financing, including military support to Ukraine, by utilizing existing unspent allocations in preparation for the next MFF.
- Swiftly implement the preparedness strategy with progress on civil protection, military mobility, critical infrastructure protection, hybrid threat response, and defence-related exemptions to speed up permitting and boost industry capacity.
- Present detailed proposals for a strengthened enlargement policy that includes an incremental pathway towards EU membership and outlines the necessary financial resources for the accession process and needed internal reforms.
- Continue efforts to move to qualified majority decision-making in matters related to foreign affairs, including in the accession process.
- Include a long-term strategy for peace and stability in the Middle East, focused on preventing regional escalation by:
 - supporting concrete steps towards a viable two-state solution between Israel and Palestine and
 - introducing initiatives supporting a stable and democratic development in Syria.
- Step up support for multilateral organisations and a rules-based international order, founded on the rule of law.
- Continue EU efforts to overcome the tensions in the EU-US relationship, while adopting a firm stance to ensure the defence of European interests and values, by activating, if necessary, the anti-coercion instrument.
- Strengthen the EU's engagement with countries in Africa and Latin America, based on true partnership and efforts to fill the gap left by suspended USAID funding.
- Review thoroughly the Eastern Partnership Strategy which aims at stepping up the EU's role in regional peace and security.
- Develop a coherent China strategy focused on de-risking, economic and technology security, countering geopolitical influence and upholding human rights.
- Adjust the Global Gateway initiative to:
 - meet challenges created by the retreat of the US in the context of global infrastructure and connectivity efforts,
 - improve speed of implementation of projects in close coordination with local stakeholders and
 - improve strategic communication efforts by forging a convincing global narrative of EU's connectivity drive
 - ensure that it has clear links to human development indicators.
- Implementation of a new EU humanitarian strategy with fragility as a focus
- Swift action on the new European Internal Security Strategy (ProtectEU) by speeding up the relevant legislative proposals, including:
 - Update the Justice and Home affairs agencies' mandates; especially of EPPO, Europol, Eurojust and Frontex;
 - Propose new rules and action on tackling organised crime to step up the fight against organised drug crime.
- New Counter-Terrorism Agenda to address new and emerging threats, such as the online dimension or the evolving global security landscape, and to take a stronger approach to terrorist financing and anti-radicalisation.

IV. Sustainable Europe

- Present a comprehensive and ambitious Chemicals Package, including the REACH revision due in 2025, to ensure the modernisation of the regulatory framework, in line with the EU's Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability.
- Implement the EU 2040 climate target through updating the EU's climate policy framework, fully aligned with the long-term climate neutrality objective laid down in the European Climate Law, accompanied by further measures to support and incentivise the climate transition in all sectors.
- Propose a comprehensive Climate Adaptation plan, including concrete legislative proposals and actions.
- Propose an ambitious Circular Economy Act aimed at reducing the EU's material footprint and import dependence, while boosting European productivity.
- Present a European Action Plan on Rare Diseases that complements existing legislation, promotes investment in research and development, and enhances cooperation.
- Revise the Cross-Border Healthcare Directive to ease patient access to treatment in other Member States.
- Revise the Tobacco Products Directive, the Tobacco Taxation Directive and the legal framework on cross-border purchases of tobacco to achieve the goal of a "tobacco free generation".
- Deliver a targeted revision of the Medical Devices- and In Vitro Medical Devices regulations to overcome the issue of shortages to benefit patients and improve the functioning of the single market.
- Implement Principle 2 of the European Pillar of Social Rights to ensure the right to the highest attainable standard of health by addressing gender disparities in medical research, clinical trials and diagnostics, and improve access to sexual and reproductive healthcare.
- Follow up on the 2025 Roadmap for Women's Rights with targeted measures that embed gender sensitivity across health systems in the EU.
- Conduct a targeted policy review to protect the EU agri-food sector from unfair competition in trade agreements.
- Adopt a strategic approach to EU food production, one that reduces dependence on raw material imports, fosters innovation within EU agriculture, and ensures the delivery of safe, healthy, and sustainable food for all EU consumers.
- Prepare an impact assessment on the integration of Ukraine's agricultural sector into the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).
- Strengthen the Union's veterinary vaccination strategy through a coordinated EU-level preparedness mechanism to enable the purchase and distribution of vaccines.
- Present an EU Strategy for Fertilisers in the form of a multi-layered action plan to secure affordable, sustainable supply for EU farmers.
- Present a concrete Action Plan, backed by a timeline and adequate funding, for the implementation of the Ocean Pact.

- Present a comprehensive evaluation of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and, based on the findings, work on a revision to adapt to the challenges European fishers are facing.
- Propose a strategy for a new generation of Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements in order to contribute to a coherent EU approach for sustainable fisheries and ocean governance and to avoid complications with third countries.
- Launch a comprehensive Rural Revitalisation and Demographic Resilience Strategy that includes dedicated funding mechanisms, simplified administrative procedures for community-led projects and targeted support for areas experiencing severe population decline.
- Propose a European Strategy for Eastern border regions to help strengthen their resilience and security, which could include new mechanisms to support these areas.
- Propose a legislative initiative or delegated act ensuring that environmental and decarbonisation transport measures include flexibility for geographically constrained regions.
- Propose a targeted funding programme and update technical specifications under the EU Accessibility Act to promote inclusive design in all transport modes.
- Deliver an ambitious update of the European Disability Strategy 2021-2030 with new flagship initiatives and concrete actions in consultation with representative organisations of people with disabilities.