

**Opinion of the Committee on Foreign Affairs  
2016/17:UU4**

**2017 Commission Work Programme**

### ANNEX 3

#### Opinion of the Committee on the Constitution

#### 2017 Commission Work Programme

#### To the Committee on Foreign Affairs

The Committee on Foreign Affairs has given the Committee on the Constitution the opportunity to express an opinion on those parts of the 2017 Commission Work Programme (COM(2016) 710), including annexes, that come within the Committee's own remit.

The Committee on the Constitution welcomes the Commission's work to bring about better lawmaking and to focus more on implementing, applying and evaluating the legislation already in place. The Committee also welcomes the Commission's ambition to make the legislative process more transparent. The Committee appreciates the fact that the Commission intends to continue the work on promoting and championing the rule of law.

## The Committee's considerations

...

### The Committee's position

The Committee on the Constitution welcomes the Commission's work on better lawmaking. It appreciates the fact that the Commission continues to produce fewer new proposals than it did in previous years so as to focus more on implementing, applying and evaluating the legislation already in place.

The Committee also applauds the Commission's ambition to make the legislative process more transparent. As the Committee emphasised when it dealt with the Commission's 'Better regulation for better results' agenda in November 2015, transparent and effective decision-making promotes democratic legitimacy (opinion 2015/16:KU3). The Committee also emphasised the importance of greater openness and transparency in EU decision-making, especially with regard to the 'trilogues', i.e. the tripartite negotiations between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission. The Committee also welcomed the Commission's work on simplifying regulation.

The Committee also noted that, in the 'Better regulation' agenda, the Commission emphasised that every proposal was to be accompanied by a better explanatory memorandum, including in particular a more thorough explanation of how the initiative complied with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. As the Committee has pointed out on several previous occasions, absent or insufficient explanatory memoranda in relation to the principle of subsidiarity make it difficult for the Swedish Parliament and other national parliaments to fulfil their obligation under the Treaties to ensure that the principle of subsidiarity is applied in accordance with the Protocol on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.

Within the framework of the Committee on the Constitution's annual monitoring of the way in which the Swedish Parliament has applied the principle of subsidiarity, several committees have on various occasions pointed out that the Commission is more and more often producing draft Regulations instead of Directives. The Committee would emphasise that this reduces the Member States' room for manoeuvre in adjusting EU legislation to the changing constitutional conditions in each individual State.

As the Committee has on several previous occasions pointed out, political dialogue between the Commission and Sweden takes place through the Government, which is responsible to the Swedish Parliament. It is only through the subsidiarity control mechanism that the Swedish Parliament, on the basis of the Treaties, can communicate directly with the Commission. The Committee would emphasise how crucial it is that national parliaments that, for constitutional reasons, are unable to take part in the political dialogue, are not placed at a disadvantage.

Respect for human rights and the rule of law are fundamental in a democracy. Both the EU institutions and the Member States must take responsibility for ensuring that human rights and the rule of law are complied with. The Committee appreciates the fact that the Commission intends to continue with its work on promoting and championing the rule of law.

Stockholm, 17 January 2017

For the Committee on the Constitution

Andreas Norlén

## ANNEX 4

Opinion of the Committee on Finance

2017 Commission Work Programme

To the Committee on Foreign Affairs

The Chamber referred the 2017 Commission Work Programme, COM(2016) 710, to the Committee on Foreign Affairs. On 17 November 2016 the Committee on Foreign Affairs decided to give the Committee on Finance the opportunity to express its opinion on the matter.

The Committee on Finance decided to express its opinion on those issues in the Work Programme that come within its remit.

## **The Committee's considerations**

...

### The Committee's position

The Committee is able generally to concur with the Commission's picture of the major challenges to be dealt with by the EU and the Member States over the next few years. These include boosting the economy and employment, dealing with the situation regarding migration, strengthening internal security and helping bring stability to the surrounding world, especially in the immediate neighbourhood of the EU. The Committee wishes to point out that these challenges cannot be seen in isolation from each other but must be met with a coherent policy in which the Member States each accept their share of responsibility and in which commonly agreed rules are implemented effectively. In the light of this, there is reason to welcome the broad thrust of the Work Programme.

As before, the Committee wishes to point out that the Commission Work Programme makes it easier to plan EU work and makes the EU's legislative process more transparent. The value of the Work Programme in these respects depends on the Commission's providing as many details as possible of future initiatives and on its keeping its eye on the ball when implementing the programme. Predictability is increased by the Commission's consistently sticking to the overall priorities for its term of office. The Committee also expects the new Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law-Making to help further improve the EU's multi-annual and annual programming through increased cooperation between the institutions on this subject.

With regard to the specific initiatives in the Work Programme, the Committee would first of all observe that a number of the approaches adopted in the public procurement rules are politically very important. The Committee sees no reason at this stage to comment on the two procurement issues in the Work Programme. However, the Committee has taken note of the report from the Commission on the implementation of the Directive on public procurement in the fields of defence and security (COM(2016) 762) and of the fact that the Commission does not think that this is the right time for tabling amendments.

#### *A New Boost for Jobs, Growth and Investments*

The Committee has devoted a lot of attention to the European Investment Plan ever since it was first launched in a Communication from the Commission. In its examination of the Communication (opinion 2014/15 :FiU16), the Committee welcomed the initiative and emphasised the special importance of that part of the plan which concerns structural reforms with a view to creating a better investment climate. That is still the Committee's perspective. The Committee also sought a proper evaluation of the mechanism for paying for the Plan: the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI). The Committee has studied the Commission's conclusions regarding the evaluations carried out by EFSI (COM(2016) 764) and agrees that EFSI appears to be operating as intended. The Committee also observes that there is still a need not to delay in evaluating EFSI's contribution to financing the wider economy.

As in the usual course of things, the Committee will follow the progress of the 2017 European Semester with great interest and takes note of the Commission's Annual Growth Survey, the Alert Mechanism Report on Macroeconomic Imbalances, and other introductory papers

for the Semester (COM(2016) 725-730). The Committee welcomes the Semester's continued overall focus on investments, structural reforms and sustainable public finances.

Strategic issues concerning the EU budget will have a prominent role in 2017. The mid-term review of the current multiannual financial framework will be decided on, and a draft multiannual financial framework for after 2020, including a system for budget income, is to be presented. Sweden's avowedly restrictive approach to EU budget policy is firmly rooted in the Swedish Parliament. The Committee considers that the mid-term review of the current financial framework ought to focus on how the budget is to be used for achieving the desired results and on simplified and more efficient implementation. The expenditure ceilings are to be complied with, and the total expenditure not allowed to exceed its limits. This means that any increased expenditure in one area is to be funded through reductions in another.

In the forthcoming negotiations concerning the next multiannual financial framework, the Committee sees an opportunity for further modernisation of the EU budget. The work should be focused on a change in priorities so that measures have clear European added value and promote economic renewal. The Committee fears that the UK's exit from the EU may have a significant effect on the negotiations. Basically, it thinks that a reduction in the number of Member States is likely to mean a reduction in the budget and that, in the future too, there will be a need to even out differences between the Member States' contributions to the budget in order to prevent disproportionately large net contributions.

#### *A deeper and fairer internal market with a strengthened industrial base*

The Committee thinks it very important for the capital and financial services markets to be integrated further. However, this must happen without financial stability's being undermined and with proper consumer and investment protection, as emphasised by the Committee in its examinations of the Commission's green papers on the Capital Markets Union (CMU) and on financial services to private individuals and small enterprises (opinions 2014/15:FiU29 and 2015/16:FiU19).

The Committee would point out that the Capital Markets Union is more than an important deepening of the internal market. Through creating a better investment climate, it is also central to the work on the Investment Plan for Europe. In this connection, the Committee notes the Commission's Communication on accelerating reform in the CMU Action Plan (COM(2016) 601). The Committee welcomes the progress made and the fact that the Commission is keeping up the momentum where this work is concerned.

The Committee has studied the Commission's report on the results and the follow-up of the consultation on overall financial markets regulation (COM(2016) 855). The legislative work done to restore stability in the financial system following the economic crisis was necessary, comprehensive, complex and prompt. The Committee takes the view that to consider making adjustments to reduce the burden of regulation where possible, without jeopardising financial stability, is a basically sound approach.

#### *A deeper and fairer Economic and Monetary Union*

In 2015, the Committee examined the Five Presidents' Report: Completing Europe's Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) (opinion 2015/16:FiU13), which forms the basis of the Commission's work in this area. The statements made at that time by the Committee are still valid. The Committee would note, however, that the United Kingdom's exit from the EU puts the issue of deepening economic

and monetary union in a partially new perspective. In the light of this, we welcome the fact that the Commission is to deal with this question in the context of the EU's future in a broader sense.

With regard to the specific issue of incorporating the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in Economic and Monetary Union (TSCG) into the EU legal framework, the Committee maintains its view that any such incorporation should be carried out by means of a change to the EU Treaties and that Sweden's possibly being made subject to the TSCG's provisions is a matter that should be submitted for examination by the Swedish Parliament, as stated by the Committee when the TSCG was approved (Government Bill 2012/13:39, report 2012/13:FiU 28, Swedish Parliament Communication 2012/13:167). That being said, the Committee is very doubtful about how appropriate it would be to initiate even a limited revision of the EU Treaties in the current situation. Such a process would be in danger of becoming unpredictable. Current challenges are better responded to by coming up with practical results on the basis of existing provisions.

The Committee would point out that Sweden does not participate in the Banking Union but that it nonetheless has cause to follow developments in the latter and, if need be, to try to influence further developments. With regard to the uniform EU rules governing the financial sector – rules that apply to all the Member States and that form the basis for further development of the Banking Union – the Committee notes the Commission's draft amendments to the capital adequacy and crisis management rules for banks (COM(2016) 850-854 and 856). These are central planks of the regulatory framework put in place following the economic crisis. In its subsidiarity checks on the current draft stipulations (opinions 2011/12:FiU12, 2011/12:FiU17 and 2011/12:FiU29), the Committee stated that EU rules in this area ought to provide the Member States with scope for taking account of country-specific risks and for taking supplementary measures to guarantee financial stability at national level. The Committee will bring this view to bear in the subsidiarity checks and in the other ways in which it deals with the proposals in question.

#### *A Union of democratic change*

This year too, the Committee wishes to emphasise that openness, transparency and accountability are fundamental to stable and effective management. These issues are of the greatest importance to EU cooperation, and the Committee therefore expects the Commission, in its forthcoming white paper on the future of the EU, to give prominence to the EU's democratic credentials.

The Committee considers it significant that the Commission does not go so far as to acquire a legislative role by being authorised to adopt delegated and implementing acts (opinion 2016/17:FiU18). In the light of this, the Committee welcomes the Commission's intention to evaluate the procedures for adopting such acts.

In connection with the deepening of economic and monetary union, the Committee maintains the view that clear national ownership of the policy conducted within the framework of the EU is crucial to that policy's democratic legitimacy. It is at national level and with effective participation and proper accountability on the part of national parliaments that economic policy choices must ultimately be made and implemented. This national process is enriched when it can be openly influenced and further analysed by partners both in the EU and elsewhere in the world.

Stockholm, 13 December 2016



For the Committee on Finance

Fredrik Olovsson

## ANNEX 5

### Opinion of the Committee on Taxation 2017 Commission Work Programme

#### To the Committee on Foreign Affairs

On 17 November 2016, the Committee on Foreign Affairs decided to give the Committee on Taxation the opportunity to express an opinion on those parts of the 2017 Commission Work Programme (COM(2016) 710), including five annexes, that come within the Committee's own remit. In the opinion, the Committee offers general remarks on the relevant parts of the Work Programme.

## **The Committee's considerations**

...

### The Committee's position

As in previous years, the Committee welcomes the work being done at EU level to bring about a VAT system that is more resistant to fraud. The Committee also welcomes initiatives on VAT rates and the simplification of cross-border e-commerce within the Digital Single Market because it is important for that market's potential to be exploited to the full. The Committee also welcomes more measures to simplify VAT, especially for small businesses, and to lay the foundations for a modern and more efficient VAT system.

With regard to the work being done in the corporate tax area, the Committee applauds a development that exploits the potential of the single market and makes it easier to combat tax fraud and tax evasion. However, the Committee remains sceptical about a taxation system built on a common consolidated corporate tax base.

Moreover, the Committee maintains the view that a system for taxing financial transactions must be designed in such a way as not to affect those countries that, like Sweden, choose not to take part in closer cooperation in this area.

As in previous years, the Committee seeks further initiatives to bring about a new Energy Tax Directive. A new and more up-to-date Energy Tax Directive would make it easier for Sweden to target its activities and to raise the level of its ambitions in the energy and climate field. The importance of having a modern system of economic instruments in this area cannot be emphasised enough.

Stockholm, 17 January 2017

For the Committee on Taxation

Per Åsling

## ANNEX 6

### Opinion of the Committee on Justice 2017 Commission Work Programme

#### To the Committee on Foreign Affairs

On 17 November 2016, the Committee on Foreign Affairs decided to give other committees the opportunity to express an opinion on those parts of the Commission Work Programme 2017 (COM(2016) 710), including annexes, that come within the respective committees' own remits. In the opinion, the Committee on Justice offers general remarks on the parts of the Work Programme that touch on its own remit. These parts fall mainly under the heading 'An Area of Justice and Fundamental Rights Based on Mutual Trust'.

The opinion contains a dissenting opinion (Sweden Democrats).

## The Committee's considerations

...

### The Committee's position

As it did in the opinion on the 2016 Work Programme (2015/16:JuU5y), the Committee welcomes the Commission's expressed ambition to prioritise efforts in relation to the big issues where effective EU measures can make an impact on the challenges faced by the EU. The same applies to the Commission's ambition to ensure that the existing legislation is applied and carried through and is suited to its purpose.

The Committee also maintains its previously expressed position (see 2015/16:JuU5y) that the Commission should attach greater importance to analysing existing legislation when new legislation is drawn up. In particular, new criminal legislation at EU level should be produced only if it will clearly contribute significant added value.

The Committee applauds the Commission's giving priority to those proposals that are in the process of being dealt with and that ought to be handled promptly by the Council and the European Parliament. Where the substance of the proposals is concerned, the Committee notes that the setting up of a European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) is one such prioritised proposal. The Committee remains critical of the proposal to set up such an office and considers that the proposal as a whole contravenes the principle of subsidiarity (see, for example, opinion 2013/14:JuU13). The Committee observes that the negotiations in the Council are approaching their conclusion and that, in the Swedish Government's view, Sweden ought, for the foreseeable future, to remain outside EPPO cooperation and so vote against the proposal. The Committee shares the Government's position (see minutes 2016/17:7 § 2).

With regard to the proposal for a revision of the EU Weapons Directive, the Committee still considers that a review is required. The proposal is aimed partly at preventing firearms from being used in terrorist and other serious crimes, and the Committee considers it important for Member States' control over dangerous types of weapon to be strengthened. However, the Committee abides by its previously expressed position that a number of elements in the Commission's original proposal contravene the principle of subsidiarity (opinion 2015/16:JuU26). Even if the objectives of the proposed Directive cannot adequately be achieved by the Member States acting alone, it is doubtful whether detailed rules need to be laid down in every part of the Directive and on all the issues raised by the Commission. As in previous years, the Committee considers that the controls should focus chiefly on those weapons shown by experience to be most likely to be used in terrorist or other serious crimes. At the same time, the regulations should not be unnecessarily burdensome or intrusive for individual licence holders or voluntary defence organisations, as possession of weapons by the latter rarely causes problems.

Where the proposal for a Directive on combating terrorism is concerned, the Committee has learned that an agreement has been reached between the European Parliament and the Council. The same applies to the proposal for the reinforcement of checks against relevant databases at external borders.

The proposal for a Directive on the exchange of criminal record information regarding third-country nationals is another proposal that the Commission wishes to prioritise. As the Committee pointed out previously when discussing the matter with the Swedish Government (minutes 2015/16:24 § 8 b), it is in essence a good proposal, aimed at making everyone equal before the law. It is also important that personal data be retained and exchanged with respect for individual privacy. The Committee questions the value of the proposal for retaining and exchanging data concerning the names of convicted third-country nationals' parents and questions whether it is compatible with general considerations of privacy.

In relation to the proposal to set up an entry/exit system for third-country nationals and with regard also to those amendments to the Community Borders Code that are linked with the proposal, the Committee is in favour of modernising the current stamping system in order to improve the quality of border control work. The Committee also sees advantages in the system's being able to help combat terrorism and other serious crime due to the fact that, under certain conditions, law enforcement authorities will have access to data in the system. In this context too, the Committee wishes, however, to echo the considerations referred to above and emphasise that such a system makes great demands on data protection and the protection of personal privacy.

With regard to the Commission's new initiatives on measures to combat the funding of terrorism, the Committee has not yet adopted a position on these. However, the Committee has previously expressed its opinion on the Commission's planned measures to strengthen the fight against the terrorist funding (opinion 2015/16:JuU32). The Committee stated, among other things, that terrorism is a national and global threat to everyone's security and to democratic society. The work on preventing and combating terrorism must therefore be done at all levels and have democratic and legally sound bases. While welcoming the Commission's planned measures, the Committee stressed the importance of striking a balance between efforts to combat terrorism and respect for fundamental freedoms and rights. The Committee maintains that view and will return later to discuss the initiatives concerned in detail. The same applies to the initiative for establishing a European Travel Information and Authorisation System and to the review of the Schengen Information System.

Finally, the Committee has no objections to those of the Commission's proposals that are to be withdrawn or that have already been withdrawn.

Stockholm, 19 January 2017

For the Committee on Justice

Beatrice Ask

## ANNEX 7

### Opinion of the Committee on Civil Affairs 2017 Commission Work Programme

#### To the Committee on Foreign Affairs

The Committee on Foreign Affairs has given the Committee on Civil Affairs the opportunity to express an opinion on those parts of the 2017 Commission Work Programme – (COM(2016) 710): Delivering a Europe that protects, empowers and defends – that come within the Committee on Civil Affairs' own remit.

In the opinion, the Committee offers a number of views on the relevant parts of the Work Programme.

The opinion contains a dissenting opinion.

## **The Committee's considerations**

...

### **The Committee's position**

The Committee on Civil Affairs wishes firstly to point out that it supports the focus adopted by the Commission in its Work Programme. It wishes also to state that, at this stage, it will be offering only general comments and that it will make an assessment of individual proposals as each one is presented.

The Committee welcomes the Commission's work on the Single Market Strategy and applauds proposals that make it easier for start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises to grow, as well as proposals in relation to business failure and insolvency. These are initiatives that should help make businesses more competitive and that will promote growth and employment. It is good, therefore, that the Commission intends to put forward a company-law initiative to make it easier for businesses to use digital technology throughout their whole life-cycles and in connection with cross-border mergers and divisions. The Committee thinks it very important to make use of the possibilities of digital technology in order to make things easier for businesses. The Committee also wishes to stress how important it is that the initiatives taken at EU level be designed primarily to make life easier for business that operate across borders. The solutions proposed should not lead to more administration or further costs for businesses. Likewise, they should not be in danger of impeding the development work that is going on in the Member States in this area. In this connection, it is very important that account be taken of cost-effectiveness, suitability, functionality and security.

With regard to existing proposals that the Commission thinks should be given priority in the legislative process, the Committee notes that the Commission no longer views the proposal for a Directive on improving the gender balance on company boards as one to which priority should be given.

In its Work Programme the Commission states that it will carry out a mid-term review of the way in which the strategy for the Digital Single Market is being implemented and that this will probably result in further initiatives. The Committee welcomes such a review and considers that the development of the Digital Single Market has a lot of potential for both businesses and consumers and that the work being done at EU level is important for creating better opportunities and a level playing field in the market. The Committee also wishes to emphasise how important it is that legislation be coherent and consistent and that a situation be avoided in which there are different rules for, on the one hand, online sales and, on the other, in-store sales.

With regard to the ongoing REFIT work involving legislation relating to consumers, the Committee wishes to emphasise the importance of the Commission's complying with the principles of proportionality and subsidiarity and not putting forward proposals that go beyond what is necessary in order to achieve the goals that have been set. See, in particular, the Committee's opinion on the subsidiarity check concerning the proposal for a new Regulation on consumer protection cooperation. Here, the Swedish Parliament considered that the Commission's proposal went too far (opinion 2015/16:26, Swedish Parliament Communication 2015/16:321). The Committee wishes also



to point out that it is very important for the initiatives taken in this area to guarantee consumer protection that is as good as, or better than, the consumer protection provided under Swedish law. It is also important for account to be taken of the interests of traders too so as to bring about a business-friendly climate. Where the reporting on the REFIT work in general is concerned, the Committee has no objections.

Stockholm, 17 January 2017

For the Committee on Civil Affairs

Tuve Skånberg

## ANNEX 8

### Opinion of the Committee on Defence

#### Commission Work Programme 2017

#### To the Committee on Foreign Affairs

The Committee on Foreign Affairs has given the Committee on Defence the opportunity to express an opinion on those parts of the 2017 Commission Work Programme (COM(2016) 710), including five annexes, that come within the Committee's own remit.

The Committee on Defence is confining its opinion mainly to activities within the framework of one of the Commission's ten priorities, i.e. The EU as a Stronger Global Actor. The crucial parts of the Work Programme, seen from the perspective of the Committee on Defence, are consequently the European Defence Action Plan (including in relation to space), the proposals for a European Defence Fund and measures concerning public defence procurement.

The representative of the Left Party (*Vänsterpartiet*) did not take part in preparing the position. The grounds for this are stated in a separate opinion.

## **The Committee's considerations**

...

### **The Committee's position**

Given the security-policy situation in the world outside Sweden and, in particular, in Sweden's immediate neighbourhood, the Committee welcomes the European Defence Action Plan and the Commission's initiatives and work to ensure that the European defence market and the industrial and skills base will be able to deliver the military capability needed in the longer term. Given the particular nature of the defence equipment market, the Committee wishes, however, to emphasise that cooperation in the defence area should predominantly be between nation states. In other words, there is no need for further legislation or regulations in this area. The continued work ought also to take account of the Member States' security interests within the context of the common market. In accordance with the Committee's observations in report 2014/15:FöU11 on the direction to be taken by defence policy in the period 2016-2020, the Committee shares the Government's assessment of what should be the principles governing the supply of equipment. In short, these principles require equipment always to be supplied following an assessment of how best to increase military units' operational capabilities in the period concerned. By way of clear examples, capabilities in terms of war planes and submarines are referred to as being essential to Sweden's security interests. The Committee continues to agree with this assessment. Measures to be proposed in the area of EU public defence procurement will be assessed in that light.

The Committee basically welcomes the Commission's proposal to set up a European Defence Fund to boost research and innovation, help strengthen the technological and industrial base of European defence and stimulate the development of crucial defence capability, but considers that, in the case of the EU, the measures ought to be funded from the existing financial framework.

The Committee agrees with the Swedish Government's preliminary position – set out in the Government Offices of Sweden's explanatory memorandum ((2016/17:FPM30) – that each individual initiative presented by the Commission has to be assessed and dealt with on its own merits, even if the Work Programme is welcomed in general terms. The memorandum also states that the Commission intends to submit the notified individual initiatives for consideration by the Council and the European Parliament. The Committee looks forward to the Government's returning to the Swedish Parliament as the proposals are presented in greater detail.

Given the new threats that are now emerging in the space sector – from space debris via IT threats to space weather – the Committee wishes to highlight the Commission's statement about the importance of creating synergies between civil and defence-related applications and making the most of its assets by using its space capabilities to meet the Member States' and the EU's security needs. The Committee agrees with the view expressed in the Government Offices of Sweden's explanatory memorandum 'Communication on a Space Strategy for Europe' (2016/17:FPM31), namely that the proposed strategy and the specific details and priorities this contains regarding strategic objectives for the EU's space policy are generally to be welcomed but that the overarching objective should be budget restrictiveness, with efforts being made to achieve budgetary oversight. Priorities should successively be set through cooperation between the Member States and the

Commission once the programmes and the package of measures referred to in the strategy are to be implemented.

Another of the Commission's priorities is 'A Resilient Energy Union with a Forward-Looking Climate Change Policy'. In this connection, the Committee wishes to point out that, in the continued work on the Energy Union Strategy, the EU should deepen its analysis of aspects of security policy, for example in the matter of diversifying and securing the EU's gas supplies.

Otherwise, the Committee has nothing to say with regard to the 2017 Commission Work Programme.

Stockholm, 15 December 2016

For the Committee on Defence

Allan Widman

## ANNEX 9

### Opinion of the Committee on Education 2017 Commission Work Programme

#### To the Committee on Foreign Affairs

On 17 November 2016, the Committee on Foreign Affairs decided to give the Committee on Education the opportunity to express an opinion on those parts of the 2017 Commission Work Programme (COM(2016) 710) that come within the Committee's own remit.

The Work Programme describes 21 new initiatives that the Commission intends to present during 2017. In the opinion, the Committee offers mainly general remarks on two new initiatives that come within the Committee's remit. These initiatives concern the Commission's 'Youth Initiative' and initiatives in relation to, for example, the recently presented Space Strategy for Europe.

The opinion contains a dissenting opinion (Swedish Social Democratic Party, Green Party).

## **The Committee's considerations**

...

### **The Committee's position**

The Committee wishes firstly to point out that it is very important for cooperation at EU level to provide added value to the EU's Member States. On that basis, the Committee welcomes the Commission's continued ambition to focus on the major issues. The Committee also observes that the Work Programme as it relates to the Committee on Education's remit contains initiatives also of relevance to other committees. The Committee wishes therefore to point out that this opinion relates only to those parts of the initiatives that are deemed to come within the remit of the Committee on Education.

Where the Youth Initiative is concerned, the Committee on Education can begin by observing that the Commission presented this initiative on 7 December 2016. The Committee has not yet had time to deal with those parts of the initiative that more closely relate to its own remit. However, the Committee broadly welcomes the fact that, under the aegis of the Youth Initiative, the Commission has chosen to highlight education as a priority issue. The Committee observes that there are established instances of EU cooperation on quite a number of the issues mentioned by the Commission in the Work Programme's description of the Youth Initiative. One example of such cooperation is the 2013 European Alliance for Apprenticeships, which makes efforts to increase access to, the quality of and movement within the apprenticeships system. Other examples are the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training, Education and Training 2020 and the modernisation agenda for higher education in Europe. The Committee considers that cooperation and the exchange of experiences in the matter of education are valuable for improving education and promoting development in each Member State and within the EU as a whole. At the same time, the Committee would emphasise that many of the issues that the Commission intends to broach through its Youth Initiative fall mainly under the responsibility of the Member States. It is therefore important for national competences to be respected in the continued work on the Youth Initiative.

The Committee also observes that the Youth Initiative is closely bound up with the Commission Communication on a New Skills Agenda for Europe (COM(2016) 381), examined by the Committee during the autumn of 2016 (opinion 2016/17:UbU7). In the opinion it issued following its examination, the Committee stated that it was well disposed towards strengthening the skills base in Europe through cooperation. At the same time, the Committee emphasised that education and training are national competences and that the Commission's role in this field is to promote cooperation between the Member States and, where necessary, support and supplement their work.

With regard to the initiative announced by the Commission on implementing the Space Strategy for Europe, the Committee would state the following. On 30 November 2016 the President referred the Commission Communication on a Space Strategy for Europe (COM(2016) 705) to the Committee for examination. The Committee will deal with this matter during the spring of 2017 and does not wish, therefore, to anticipate this process. However, the Committee is able, in general terms, to observe that the 2009 Treaty of Lisbon introduced a special legal basis for space policy at EU level (Article 189

of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union) and that the EU in that way acquired a larger role in European space activities. The EU's role in this area is constantly developing, and the Committee considers that a European space strategy fulfils an important long-term role in this development. The Committee wishes, also in general terms, to point out how much it is to be welcomed that, with the Space Strategy and the initiatives planned for 2017, the Commission intends to focus on issues surrounding the use of those services that can be provided by existing European space programmes such as the Galileo Satellite Navigation System and the Copernicus Earth Observation Programme. In the Committee's view, it is also very important to consider cooperation, coordination and areas of overlap between the European Space Agency (ESA) and the EU, particularly in view of the fact that the two organisations have, in large measure, the same countries as members. The Committee looks forward to discussing and following up these issues in the future.

Stockholm, 19 January 2017

For the Committee on Education

Lena Hallengren