

European Monitor

Issue X.

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I. ACCOUNTING

1. ACCA Report on effects of late payment

In 2014, ACCA conducted a review of the widespread problem of late payment, a life-threatening challenge for many businesses globally. This review brought together recent ACCA research with the experience of ACCA members and other finance professionals to examine potential solutions. The outcomes of this review have been presented in three reports. This current report that came to light in February, 2015, is the first of a trilogy to be published by ACCA on the issue of late payment. (Visit the link at the end to download.)

- *Ending Late Payment, Part 1: Taking Stock* combines an extensive literature review with quantitative data from ACCA's member surveys to correctly define late payment, trace its precise origins and document its impact on the global economy.
- *Ending Late Payment, Part 2: What Works?* brings together a wealth of ACCA-commissioned publications and other research as well as 36 case studies involving ACCA members around the world to help define good practice in business and policy.
- *Ending Late Payment, Part 3: Reflections on the Evidence* summarises ACCA's findings and issues a call to action for governments, financial services firms, large corporates and small businesses.

Late payment is a fact of life for the majority of the world's formal businesses. It helps some survive against the odds, but it also threatens others. It is at once a sign of distress from the weakest businesses and a privilege exercised by the most powerful. From a macroeconomic perspective, it is both inefficient and potentially destabilising.

Professional accountants around the world lead the fight for prompt payment, ensuring that businesses are protected from customer defaults and can cope with interrupted cash flows. Their first-hand accounts can offer both business and policy audiences valuable insights, from sectors and regions where late payment is endemic to the few places where businesses and governments have managed to turn the tide. This report reviews the evidence ACCA has collected over the years on the fight against late payment, from member surveys to policy publications and academic research. Its aim is to support a correct understanding of the nature and origins of late payment, and make realistic recommendations to businesses and governments. To achieve this, it incorporates a detailed discussion of that most under-reported financial market of all – the multi-trillion-dollar market for trade credit, on which so much of the world economy depends.

Links: <http://www.accaglobal.com/content/dam/acca/global/PDF-technical/small-business/pol-tp-elp-1stock.pdf>

http://pr.euractiv.com/node/124379?utm_source=EurActiv+Newsletter&utm_campaign=07dc960f6c-newsletter_science_policymaking&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_bab5f0ea4e-07dc960f6c-245619018

2. Implementing the EU New Accounting Directive

The European Commission reminds on its website that the **Member States have until 20 July 2015 to comply with the [new Accounting Directive 2013/34/EU](#)** which entered into force on 20 July 2013, replacing the so called Fourth and Seventh Directives.

II. BANKING

1. European Commission and European Investment Fund call on banks to sign up to a € 3bn loan scheme for Erasmus+ Master students

The European Commission and the European Investment Fund (EIF) have opened a call for banks to sign up to the new Erasmus+ Master Loans Guarantee Scheme. This scheme will see up to € 3 billion in loans provided for students completing a full Master's degree abroad. A call for expression of interest just launched invites eligible financial institutions such as banks and student loan companies to offer the guarantee scheme in Member States. Loans will become available later in 2015 and are estimated to benefit up to 200,000 students by 2020.

Links:

http://www.eif.org/what_we_do/guarantees/news/2015/erasmus+master-loan-guarantee-facility.htm

http://www.eif.org/what_we_do/guarantees/erasmus+master-loan-guarantee-facility/index.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/education/opportunities/higher-education/doc/master-loan_en.pdf

2. State aid: European Commission approves reintroduction of Danish bank support schemes

The European Commission authorised on 13 February, 2015, under EU state aid rules, the reintroduction until 30 June 2015 of a Danish scheme for the winding-up of banks, which includes a compensation scheme and two other mechanisms facilitating the sale of failing banks. The measures aim to enable market-based solutions for banks in difficulties, either via an orderly winding-down or by a sale through a competitive process. The Commission considered that the measures are limited in time and scope, ensure adequate burden-sharing and contain safeguards to avoid undue distortions of competition. The Commission therefore concluded that they were compatible with the [guidelines on state aid to banks during the crisis](#). The Commission initially approved the winding-up scheme [in September 2010](#). It was amended in [August 2011](#), introducing a compensation scheme, and in [December 2011](#), introducing two further mechanisms to support the sale of ailing banks. It was last prolonged in January 2014 until 30 June 2014. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the [public case register](#), under the case number SA.40029.

3. State aid: European Commission approves prolongation of Portuguese Guarantee Scheme on European Investment Bank lending

The European Commission approved, on 11 February 2015, under EU state aid rules, a prolongation of a Portuguese guarantee scheme on European Investment Bank (EIB) lending until 30 June 2015. The scheme covers State guarantees to banks that guarantee European Investment Bank (EIB) loans for companies in Portugal. It was initially [approved in 27 June 2013](#) and prolonged twice, last time [in July 2014](#). The Commission found the prolongation of the scheme to be in line with its [guidelines on state aid to banks during the crisis](#) because it is well targeted, proportionate and limited in time and scope. The prolonged scheme will allow the continuation of funding provided by the EIB to the real economy and prevent the disruption of the credit granted by the EIB through the banks participating in the scheme. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the [public case register](#), under the case number [SA.39958](#)

4. New prudential rules for banks and the insurance sector to become EU law

The European Parliament and the Council on 12 January 2015 gave their backing to three new rules designed to bolster the resilience of Europe's banking and insurance sector. These delegated acts will help promote high quality securitisation, ensure that banks have sufficient liquid assets in testing circumstances and introduce international comparability to leverage ratios. They will enable the financial sector to support the wider economy without jeopardising financial stability. These rules on high quality securitisation will also support other growth-friendly initiatives, including the EU's Investment Plan (see [IP/14/2128](#)) and the Capital Markets Union. The Solvency II rules will apply from 1 January 2016 and the detailed liquidity coverage requirement from 1 October 2015.

Links: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-14-1119_en.htm?locale=en

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-3120_en.htm

III. COMPETITION, MERGER AND ACQUISITION

1. Mergers: Commission opens in-depth investigation into General Electric's proposed acquisition of Alstom's energy businesses

The European Commission on 24 February, 2015, opened an in-depth investigation to assess whether General Electric's (GE) proposed acquisition of the Thermal Power, Renewable Power & Grid businesses of Alstom is in line with the EU Merger Regulation. The Commission's preliminary investigation indicates potential competition concerns in the market for heavy-duty gas turbines which are mainly used in gas-fired power plants. The transaction would bring together the activities of GE, the world's largest manufacturer of heavy-duty gas turbines, with those of Alstom, eliminating one of the three main global competitors to GE in this market. The opening of an in-depth inquiry does not prejudice the final result of the investigation. The Commission now has 90 working days, until 8 July 2015, to take a final decision.

Link: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4478_en.htm

2. Mergers: Commission clears Daimler and Kamaz joint venture in the Russian and Belarussian automotive sector

The European Commission on 24 February, 2015, approved under the EU Merger Regulation the creation of a joint venture by Daimler AG, of Germany, and Kamaz OJSC, of Russia. Daimler is active in the development, manufacture and distribution of automotive products (mainly passenger cars, trucks, vans and buses). Kamaz is active in the production of trucks, trailers, tractors, chassis, engines, power units, and multifunctional armoured vehicles. The joint venture will be active in the production of light-duty and heavy-duty trucks and in the welding and painting of truck cabins. The Commission's investigation found that the proposed acquisition will not raise any competition concerns, because the joint venture will only be active in Russia and Belarus. The Commission examined the operation under the simplified merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission's [competition](#) website in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.7497](#).

IV. DISPUTE SETTLEMENT

1. European Commission pushes for transparency for ISDS in current investment treaties

The European Commission proposed on 29 January, 2015 to allow United Nations rules on transparency for Investor-to-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) to apply also to existing investment treaties that the EU and Member States have in place. These rules represent an important change in giving the public access to documents submitted in ISDS cases, making hearings open to the public, and allowing interested parties to make submissions to the proceedings. *"The EU and Member States should sign up to this Convention without delay. These new rules are a welcome and necessary reform of the ISDS system worldwide, making old agreements more transparent,"* said EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia **Malmström**.

Link: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-3881_en.htm

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-3882_en.htm

2. Cutting red tape: Savings of up to €48 million thanks to new rules for cross-border judgments

New rules applying as of 10 January 2015 mean businesses and consumers will be able to resolve cross-border legal disputes more easily – bringing expected savings of up to €48 million each year in the EU. The rules abolish the costly and lengthy procedure, which is currently used 10,000 times per year to get judgments in civil and commercial matters recognised in other EU countries. *"This is very good news for Europe's citizens and SMEs",* Věra **Jourová**, the EU's Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality said. *"These new rules could bring savings of between €2,000 and €12,000 per individual case."*

Link: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-3080_en.htm.

V. ECONOMY, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

1. Europe 2020: Public consultation results and integrated guidelines on employment

The European Commission adopted on 3 March, 2015 a [Communication](#) on the results of the public consultation on the [Europe 2020 strategy](#) for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and integrated guidelines for economic and employment policies. According to the consultation results, Europe 2020 objectives and priorities remain meaningful in the light of current and future challenges and serve as a compass for policy action to promote jobs and growth at EU and national level. Better ownership and involvement on the ground would serve the strategy's delivery. The Broad Economic Policy Guidelines and Employment Guidelines were first adopted together in 2010, underpinning the Europe 2020 strategy. The set of [integrated guidelines](#) adopted yesterday reflects the new approach to economic policy making as set out in the [2015 Annual Growth Survey](#): a coordinated boost to investment, renewed commitment to structural reform in important areas such as product and labour markets and exercising fiscal responsibility. A [factsheet](#) is available online.

Links: http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/europe2020_consultation_results.pdf

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-4526_en.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/europe-2020-in-a-nutshell/index_en.htm

<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/6655013/KS-EZ-14-001-EN-N.pdf/a5452f6e-8190-4f30-8996-41b1306f7367>

2. Europe 2020 Strategy - How is the European Union progressing towards its Europe 2020 targets?

Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, on 2 March, 2015 published the 2015 edition of the publication "Smarter, greener, more inclusive?", which provides past trends and latest statistics useful to support the Europe 2020 strategy and to back up the monitoring towards its headline targets. The Europe 2020 strategy, adopted by the European Council in June 2010, aims at establishing a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy with high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion. The key objectives of the strategy are expressed in the form of five ambitious targets in the areas of employment, research & development (R&D), climate change & energy, education and poverty reduction, to be reached by 2020. These have been translated into national targets in order to reflect the situation and possibilities of each Member State to contribute to the common goal. A set of nine headline indicators and four sub-indicators, compiled by Eurostat, give an overview of how far or close the EU is from reaching its overall targets.

Link: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/6664132/1-02032015-CP-EN.pdf/e339ff6c-ee5c-4385-9cbc-bce32fbd8d7>

3. 2015 Winter Economic forecast: outlook improved but risks remain

For the first time since 2007, the economies of all European Union Member States are expected to grow again this year, according to the European Commission's winter forecast, as presented by EU Commissioner **Moscovici** on 5 February 2015.

Over the course of this year, economic activity is expected to pick up moderately in the EU and in the euro area, before accelerating further in 2016. Growth this year is forecast to rise to 1.7% for the EU as a whole and to 1.3% for the euro area. In 2016, annual growth should reach 2.1% and 1.9%. These improved growth prospects across Europe are still limited by a weak investment environment and high unemployment. Further uncertainty surrounding these prospects has increased.

Commenting on the updated figures, Vice-President **Valdis Dombrovskis**, said: "Today, Europe stands at a critical juncture. The right economic conditions are in place for sustained growth and job creation. Following the difficult policy choices governments have made due to the crisis, the effects of reforms are emerging. We have to step up the reform momentum to strengthen the recovery and make sure it translates into money in people's pockets. The Commission is delivering on its commitments on three main fronts: investment, structural reforms and fiscal responsibility. Implementation now lies with the Member States. And that is where our results will be judged." Commissioner **Pierre Moscovici** said: "Europe's economic outlook is a little brighter today than when we presented our last forecasts. The fall in oil prices and the cheaper euro are providing a welcome shot in the arm for the EU economy. Meanwhile, the Investment Plan for Europe and the ECB's important recent decisions will help create a more supportive backdrop for reforms and smart fiscal policies. But there is still much hard work ahead to deliver the jobs that remain elusive for millions of Europeans."

Links: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4085_en.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/eu/forecasts/2015_winter_forecast_en.htm

4. Eurostat: Flash estimate for the fourth quarter of 2014; GDP up by 0.3% in the euro area and by 0.4% in the EU28

Seasonally adjusted GDP rose by 0.3% in the euro area (EA18) and by 0.4% in the EU28 during the fourth quarter of 2014, compared with the previous quarter, according to flash estimates published by Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union on 13 February, 2015. In the third quarter of 2014, GDP grew by 0.2% in the euro area and by 0.3% in the EU28. Compared with the same quarter of the previous year, seasonally adjusted GDP rose by 0.9% in the euro area and by 1.3% in the EU28 in the fourth quarter of 2014, after +0.8% and +1.3% respectively in the previous quarter. During the fourth quarter of 2014, GDP in the United States increased by 0.7% compared with the previous quarter (after +1.2% in the third quarter of 2014). Compared with the same quarter of the previous year, GDP grew by 2.5% (after +2.7% in the previous quarter). Over the whole year 2014, GDP rose by 0.9% in the euro area and by 1.4% in the EU28.

Link: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/6625198/2-13022015-AP-EN.pdf/6f7a18eb-0b2a-466b-b444-4d240889a723>

5. A vision for the post-2015 development agenda

2015 is a pivotal year for global sustainable development. On 5 February, 2015 the European Commission set out its views on the efforts needed to eradicate poverty and boost sustainable development across the world. It proposed how the international community should organise its action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals, and shows how the EU and its Member States could contribute. The Communication on a “Global Partnership for Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development after 2015” has been jointly prepared by the High Representative and Vice-President, **Federica Mogherini**, Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, **Neven Mimica**, and Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, **Karmenu Vella**. It has been agreed with First Vice-President **Frans Timmermans**, who holds horizontal responsibility for sustainable development.

Links: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4141_en.htm

[Communication: A Global Partnership for Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development after 2015](#)

[A Global Partnership for Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development after 2015 \(MEMO/15/4143\)](#)

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-4143_en.htm

VI. ENERGY, RENEWABLE ENERGY, CLIMATE CHANGE, ENVIRONMENT

1. *Energy Union: secure, sustainable, competitive, affordable energy for every European*

Delivering on this top priority set out in President Juncker's political guidelines, on 25 February, 2015 the European Commission set out its strategy to achieve a resilient Energy Union with a forward-looking climate change policy. Energy is used to heat and to cool buildings and homes, transport

goods, and power the economy. But with ageing infrastructure, poorly integrated markets, and uncoordinated policies, our consumers, households and businesses do not benefit from increased choice or from lower energy prices. It is time to complete the single energy market in Europe.

Jean-Claude **Juncker**, Commission President, said: *"For too long, energy has been exempt from the fundamental freedoms of our Union. Current events show the stakes – as many Europeans fear they may not have the energy needed to heat their homes. This is about Europe acting together, for the long term. I want the energy that underpins our economy to be resilient, reliable, secure and growingly renewable and sustainable."*

Links: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4497_en.htm

Fact sheets: [Energy Union](#);

[http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release MEMO-15-4485_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-4485_en.htm)

[Connecting power markets to deliver security of supply, market integration and the large-scale uptake of renewables](#);

[http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release MEMO-15-4486_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-4486_en.htm)

[Questions and Answers on the European Commission Communication: The Paris Protocol – A blueprint for tackling global climate change beyond 2020](#)

[http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release MEMO-15-4487_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-4487_en.htm)

2. Completing the Internal Energy Market: €100 million released to connect European energy networks

On 5 March, 2015 the European Commission is opening the annual call for proposals under the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) to help finance key trans-European energy infrastructure projects. €100 million will be made available for projects aimed at ending energy isolation, eliminating energy bottlenecks and to complete the European energy market. This European money will also act as a catalyst for securing additional financing by private and public investors. EU Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy Miguel Arias **Cañete** said: *"Reliable and well-connected energy networks are vital for achieving a resilient European Energy Union. We need major investments to make our energy grid fit for the future. This funding is an investment opportunity to build a competitive, sustainable and secure energy market, and ultimately bring the benefits into our homes and businesses."*

With a total of €650 million for grants foreseen in 2015, this is the first of two calls planned for 2015. The [Info Day](#) for the first Call will be held 16 March 2015.

The deadline for applications is 29 April 2015. A decision on the selection of proposals to be funded is expected for mid-July. A fully interconnected market is a top priority of the **Juncker** Commission. This call for proposals responds to this priority and follows up on the Energy Union strategy and the interconnections communication adopted on 25 February. For more information: [press release](#), [fact sheet](#) and the [website of DG Energy](#).

Links: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4560_en.htm

[http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release MEMO-15-4554_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-4554_en.htm)

<http://ec.europa.eu/energy/en/topics/infrastructure/projects-common-interest>

http://inea.ec.europa.eu/en/cef/cef_energy/apply_for_funding/cef-energy-calls-for-proposals-2015.htm

http://inea.ec.europa.eu/en/news_events/events/2015-cef-energy-info-day.htm

3. President Juncker and the leaders of France, Spain and Portugal agreed on the way forward to better connect the Iberian Peninsula with the rest of the EU energy market

On 4 March, 2015 in order to agree on ways to strengthen the connections of the Iberian Peninsula with the rest of the EU energy market, European Commission President Jean-Claude **Juncker** met in Madrid with the President of France François Hollande, the Prime Minister of Spain Mariano Rajoy and the Prime Minister of Portugal Pedro Passos Coelho. The Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy Miguel Arias **Cañete** and the President of the European Investment Bank Werner Hoyer also attended the meeting. A well-connected European energy market is crucial for creating an Energy Union and key driver to strengthen the security of energy supply across Europe. The leaders agreed to set up a High Level Group to step up the efforts to develop energy interconnections in South-West Europe and ensure that all the present and planned project are implemented in time. Building missing cross-border links is a priority for the **Juncker** Commission.

Links: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4551_en.htm

<https://ec.europa.eu/energy/en/news/new-high-level-group-will-drive-infrastructure-developments-south-west-europe>

<https://ec.europa.eu/energy/sites/ener/files/documents/Madrid%20Declaration%20FINAL.pdf>

<http://ec.europa.eu/energy/en/topics/infrastructure>

4. European Commission and European Investment Bank launch two financial tools for environment, energy efficiency, and climate action projects

The European Commission and the European Investment Bank (EIB) on 16 February 2015 launched two financial instruments to drive investment in energy efficiency, efforts to preserve natural capital, and adaptation to climate change. The objective is to unlock public and private investments by combining EIB loans with financing under the EU LIFE Programme for Environment and Climate Action.

The first instrument – the Natural Capital Financing Facility – foresees a total budget of €100–125 million for 2014-2017 and will support viable nature and climate adaptation projects.

The second instrument aims to increase private financing for energy efficiency projects. The European Commission has committed €80 million for 2014-2017, anticipating an 8-fold leverage effect. Both mechanisms complement the [Investment Plan for Europe](#), helping to remove market barriers by investing in projects with real added value for the European economy.

Link: <http://www.eib.org/infocentre/press/releases/all/2015/2015-031-new-european-support-to-address-climate-and-biodiversity-challenges.htm>

5. EC Vice-President for Energy Union Šefčovič gives his blessing to Southern Gas Corridor

Vice-President for Energy Union Maroš Šefčovič attended the first founding meeting of the Advisory Council on the Southern Gas Corridor in Baku on 11 February 2015, a project to bring gas from Azerbaijan to Europe by 2019-2020.

Ministers from transit countries, including Georgia, Turkey, Greece, Italy, Albania and Bulgaria also participated in the meeting hosted by the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliiev, as well as

representatives from the planned TANAP pipeline via Turkey, and the TAP (Trans-Adriatic) pipeline via Greece and Albania.

The participants adopted a joint declaration through which they established a format for working level consultations to address all outstanding matters as they may emerge during the implementation of the project “in the most practical and timely way”.

Link: <http://www.euractiv.com/sections/energy/sefcovic-gives-his-blessing-southern-gas-corridor-312105>

6. EC Vice President Šefčovič sees three sources of gas for Central Europe

Central and Southeastern European countries, largely dependent on Russian gas supplies, are starting work on a plan to build gas infrastructure, and should count on having at least three different sources of gas, the EU's energy chief said on 9 February 2015.

The European Commission is working on proposals for a more close-knit energy union, based on connections between EU nations to share available energy and reduce reliance on Russia, which supplies around a third of EU energy needs.

Commission Vice President Maroš Šefčovič said that a high-level working group for gas connectivity in Central and Eastern Europe, which had its first meeting in Sofia, should come up with an action plan on priority gas projects by June 2015.

Timeline:

- **25 Feb.:** Commission to table proposals for an Energy Union
- **By June:** High-level working group to table action plan for gas connectivity in central and eastern Europe

Link: <http://www.euractiv.com/sections/energy/sefcovic-sees-three-sources-gas-central-europe-311966>

7. European Environment Report: State and Outlook 2015

A [new report](#) published on 3 March, 2015 by the [European Environment Agency](#) shows that a coordinated EU environment policy has delivered substantial benefits for citizens over the past 5 years. Europeans enjoy cleaner air and water, send less waste to landfill and recycle more; while environmental policies drive jobs and growth. But the report warns that Europe still faces a range of persistent and growing environmental challenges. The Commission is responding with a series of initiatives for 2015, including a new, broader package on the Circular Economy, a review of the EU Biodiversity Strategy, an action plan on Ocean Governance and a modified Air Quality package.

Link: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4534_en.htm

<http://www.eea.europa.eu/soer>

<http://www.eea.europa.eu/>

VII. FINANCES

1. *Unlocking Funding for Europe's Growth - European Commission consults on Capital Markets Union*

The European Commission launched its landmark project on 18 February 2015, to unlock funding for Europe's businesses and to boost growth in the EU's 28 Member States with the creation of a true single market for capital. The Capital Markets Union aims to break down the barriers that are blocking cross-border investments in the EU and preventing businesses from getting access to finance. Following the public consultation, the European Commission will adopt an Action Plan this summer setting out its roadmap and timeline for putting in place the building blocks of a Capital Markets Union by 2019.

The current environment is tough for businesses that remain heavily reliant on banks and relatively less on capital markets. The opposite is true in other parts of the world. One example of the opportunities a fully functioning single market for capital could offer: if EU venture capital markets were as deep as the US, as much as 90 billion euro more in funds would have been available to companies between 2008 and 2013.

With the CMU, the Commission also wants to clear obstacles that are preventing those who need financing from reaching investors and make the system for channelling those funds – the investment chain – as efficient as possible.

On 18 February, the European Commission launched a three-month consultation round, known as a Green Paper, the outcome of which will shape an Action Plan to help unlock non-bank funding so that start-ups can thrive and larger companies can expand further. The CMU is a long-term project that will require sustained effort over many years although early progress can also be made in some areas in the coming months.

Links: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4433_en.htm

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-4434_en.htm

2. EU Council backs European Commission proposal to fight against the manipulation of financial benchmarks

The EU took a further step on 13 February, 2015, towards restoring public trust in financial benchmarks in the wake of recent scandals over the manipulation of the LIBOR (London interbank offered rate) and EURIBOR (Euro Interbank Offered Rate) benchmarks. In a move welcomed by the European Commission, the Council has given its backing to new proposed rules to enhance the robustness and reliability of benchmarks, which are used in financial instruments (e.g. bonds, shares, futures or swaps) and financial contracts (e.g. mortgages or consumer contracts) in the EU.

Link: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4422_en.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/finance/securities/benchmarks/index_en.htm

[MEMO/13/799](#)

3. EUROSTAT: First time release of data on contingent liabilities and non-performing loans in EU Member States







Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, published on 11 February, 2015, for the first time relevant information on contingent liabilities and non-performing government loans. These data have been provided by the EU Member States in the context of the Enhanced Economic Governance package (the “six pack”). This new data collection represents a step towards further transparency of public finances in the EU by giving a more comprehensive picture of EU Member States’ financial positions.

Link: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/6616449/2-10022015-AP-EN.pdf/d75df6fe-100b-4ae7-a09e-00400edb183a>

4. Pension funds to benefit from a further two year exemption from central clearing requirements

The European Commission on 3 February, 2015 published a [report](#) that recommends granting pension funds a two-year exemption from central clearing requirements for their over-the-counter (OTC) derivative transactions. The report, which is based on an extensive study requested by the European Commission, concludes that central counterparties (CCPs) need this time to find solutions for pension funds. At the same time, the report encourages CCPs to continue working on finding technical solutions in this important matter. Ultimately, the objective is that pension scheme arrangements (PSAs) should use central clearing for their derivatives transactions, as is the case for other financial institutions. This is also imperative for financial stability. Under current arrangements, PSAs – which encompass all categories of pension funds – would have to source cash for central clearing. Given that PSAs hold neither significant amounts of cash nor highly liquid assets, imposing such a requirement on them would require very far-reaching and costly changes to their business model which could ultimately affect pensioners’ income. Current EU law provides for a temporary exemption from the clearing obligation until August 2015.

Links: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-3643_en.htm

- [Text of the Report](#)  (97 KB)  (Provisional version. The final text will be available soon)
- [Executive summary](#)  (684 KB) 
- [Full external study](#)  (5 MB) 

VIII. INNOVATION

1. EU Commissioner Oettinger and communications industry present EU vision for 5G

By 2020 there will be more than 30 times as much mobile Internet traffic as there was in 2010. 5G technology is the solution to cope with this increased growth in the use of wireless Internet by humans, but also by machines and objects (from cars to fridges). 5G won't just be faster, it will bring new functionalities and applications with high social and economic value. Commissioner **Oettinger** and the [5G Public-Private Partnership](#) (including companies such as Alcatel-Lucent, Ericsson, Nokia and Orange) presented on 3 March, 2015 the EU vision for 5G, how it should be developed and the challenges ahead. This ambitious strategy will take 5G development into a new gear. It will give the EU a strong voice in 5G discussions at the global level that should lead to international agreements, including on standards. Digital technologies know no border and it makes no sense to have national silos in key areas such as the management of radio waves, the raw material of 5G. This is why it is essential to create a [Digital Single Market](#) in Europe

Links: <http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/towards-5g>

<https://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/news/5g-european-research-and-vision-showcased-blueprint-showcased-mobile-world-congress-2015>

http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/digital-single-market/index_en.htm

2. European Commission helps bring Europe's best innovations to the market

On 5 February, 2015, the European Research Council was awarding 59 grants to help some of the most outstanding researchers in Europe turn their inventions into viable products. The "Proof of Concept" grants will support the development of innovations such as a simple blood test to diagnose breast cancer, a timber wood tracking device to help prevent illegal deforestation, and artificial veins modeled on marine sponges. The grants, worth €150,000 each, will be awarded to researchers in 15 countries. The funding will allow grantees to build start-ups, establish intellectual property rights for their inventions and explore ways to test their ideas on the market.

Link: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4084_en.htm

[Examples of projects funded in this ERC Proof of Concept round](#)

[List \(second round\) of the 59 selected researchers by country of host institution](#)

[List \(entire call\) of all selected researchers by country of host institution](#)

[ERC website](#)

IX. INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

1. European Semester 2015: College decisions

On 25 February, 2015, the European Commission sent a strong signal to Member States to carry out structural reforms and to continue consolidating their public finances. This followed the approach that the new College of Commissioners outlined in November and is at the heart of the Annual Growth Survey 2015: a fresh focus on investment, structural reforms, and fiscal responsibility.

Links: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4504_en.htm

[Communication and country reports](#) :

http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/making-it-happen/country-specific-recommendations/index_en.htm

Memo : http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-4511_en.htm

2. Towards a new European Neighbourhood Policy: the EU launches a consultation on the future of its relations

High Representative/Vice-President Federica **Mogherini** and Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes **Hahn** on **3 March, 2015** launched a consultation on the future of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The ENP was last reviewed in 2011: Given the significant developments in the neighbourhood since then, it is now essential to undertake a fundamental review of the principles on which the policy is based as well as its scope and how instruments should be used. The aim is to consult as widely as possible both with partners in the

neighbouring countries and with stakeholders across the EU until the end of June. After this public consultation, a Communication setting out proposals for the future direction of the ENP will follow in the autumn.

3. EU Commissioner Mimica attends high-level event on women's empowerment and sustainable development

On 2 March, 2015 EU Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development Neven **Mimica** took part in a [high-level event in Riga](#) to debate possible solutions for ensuring women's equal rights and access to the market in partner countries, as well as the economic resources needed for unlocking women's potential (a [factsheet on the EU's work in gender equality worldwide](#) is available online). The event, which is one of the flagship events of the [European Year for Development \(EYD2015\)](#) and was jointly organised with the Latvian Presidency of the EU Council, took place in the thematic month dedicated to women and girls during the EYD2015, and a few days ahead of International Women's Day on March 8. Speaking ahead of the Conference, Commissioner **Mimica** said: *"Development simply cannot happen if half of the world's population is left behind. And the reality is that women and girls in developing countries continue to suffer severely from discrimination; lacking access to the most basic services like health, water and sanitation, or proper nutrition."*

Links: http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/web-release-gender-conference_en.pdf

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/factsheet-gender-equality-wordwide-2015_en.pdf

<https://europa.eu/eyd2015/>

4. EU Commissioner Věra Jourová presents the 2015 EU Justice Scoreboard

Commenting on 9 March, 2015, on the presentation of the main findings of this year's EU Justice Scoreboard, Commissioner **Jourová** said: *"An effective justice system is a fundamental pillar of every democracy. Justice reforms play a key role in strengthening the Union's common values and creating the investment friendly environment that we need for sustainable growth"*. The [EU Justice Scoreboard](#) focuses on three key areas: *efficiency, quality, and independence of EU Member States' justice systems*. The Scoreboard contributes to identifying good practices and trends on the functioning of the national justice systems over time. The Scoreboard is part of the [European Semester](#), the EU's annual economic policy coordination process that aims to boost Member States' economic performance and competitiveness. In its third edition, this year's Justice Scoreboard includes more data and new indicators including availability and use of ICT tools, alternative dispute resolution (ADR), and gender balance among judges.

Links: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4575_en.htm

Full document available: [2015 EU Justice Scoreboard](#)

Summary of the Justice scoreboard: [Factsheet](#)

[Annotated graphs](#) with the full figures

[Questions and answers](#) on the 2015 EU Justice Scoreboard

European Semester: http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/making-it-happen/index_en.htm

5. European Commission appoints top researchers to the European Research Council Scientific Council

Carlos **Moedas**, EU Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, welcomed on 17 February 2015, the appointment of three accomplished scientists to join the European Research Council's Scientific Council, an independent body that decides the strategy and distribution of ERC funding. The three new members, selected for a four-year term of office are Professors Tomas Jungwirth of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Dame Janet Thornton of the European Molecular Biology Laboratory, and Fabio Zwirner of the University of Padova. The Commission also renewed the term of office of three current members: Professors Nicholas Canny of the National University of Ireland, Galway, Timothy Hunt of Cancer Research UK, South Mimms, and Mart Saarma of the University of Helsinki. At the same time, the Scientific Council appointed Professor Saarma as well as Professor Sierd Cloetingh of the Utrecht University new Vice-Presidents of the ERC. All Members of the Scientific Council are selected by an [Identification Committee](#).

Link: http://erc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/press_release/files/erc_pr_2015_renewal_scc.pdf

6. Meeting the commitments of the new European Commission

Link:

<http://pr.euractiv.com/files/pr/Juncker%20Commission%E2%80%99s%20policy%20commitments.pdf>

7. The Latvian Presidency of the Council of the EU

The rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union is held by Latvia for the first time, from 1st January until 30th June 2015.

Link: <https://eu2015.lv/>

X. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

1. Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba is back in the news in February 2015

It has been criticised in a report published on 23 February, 2015, from the State Administration of Industry and Commerce (SAIC) over hosting the sale of counterfeits, among other illegal trading issues.

Data from the SAIC suggests that 63% of listed brand goods on the site are not genuine.

This has kicked-off a battle between the SAIC and Alibaba, with counter-statements from the company and a number of accounts of alleged infringements emerging from both sides.

The blog post by the [China IPR SME Helpdesk](#) on [Your IP Insider](#) discusses the effectiveness of the mechanisms that Alibaba is taking to protect its customers from infringing products.

Links: <http://www.youripinsider.eu/>

<http://www.china-iprhelpdesk.eu/>

http://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/newsroom/cf/itemdetail.cfm?item_id=8118&lang=en&title=%27Alibaba%2D%E2%80%93

[2DWho%2Dis%2Dresponsible%2Dfor%2Dkeeping%2Dout%2Dthe%2Dcounterfeits%3F%27%2Dfrom%2Dthe%2DYour%2DIP%2DInsider%2Dblog](#)

2. New grants to help close the research excellence gap across Europe

New research grants announced on 30 January, 2015 will help the EU bridge the gap in how well Member States perform in research and innovation. The first 31 projects have been selected to unlock the potential in countries that rank lower on research performance indicators. The "Teaming" projects will team up local research institutions with top-tier research centres from across Europe to prepare plans for new Centres of Excellence in those countries. These first projects will benefit from €14.5 million under the Horizon 2020 budget.

Link: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-3885_en.htm

XI. INVESTMENT

1. Investment Plan for Europe: Spain will contribute €1.5 billion to Investment Fund projects

On 27 February, 2015 Spain [announced](#) that it will contribute €1.5 billion to projects benefiting from finance by the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) which is the core element of the Investment Plan for Europe. The contribution comes via Spain's National Promotional Bank, the [Instituto de Crédito Oficial](#) (ICO).

The announcement comes just days after the European Investment Bank (EIB) gave the [green light](#) for pre-financing for small- and medium- sized companies (SMEs), as well as some infrastructure projects, before the summer.

National Promotional Banks – such as ICO in Spain and KfW in Germany – have a crucial role to play in getting Europe investing again. They have the expertise to carry out the Investment Plan, and they ensure the most efficient use of public resources. Germany announced in February that it will contribute €8 billion to the Investment Plan through their National Promotional Bank, KfW.

Links: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4477_en.htm

<http://www.mineco.gob.es/portal/site/mineco/menuitem.ac30f9268750bd56a0b0240e026041a0/?vgnextoid=ec769ed87dacb410VgnVCM1000001d04140aRCRD&vgnextchannel=864e154527515310VgnVCM1000001d04140aRCRD>

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4441_en.htm

2. Investment Plan for Europe: France to contribute €8 billion

On 6 March, 2015, France announced that it would contribute €8 billion in the context of the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), which is the core element of the [Investment Plan for Europe](#). The contribution will come via France's National Promotional Banks [Caisse des Dépôts](#) (CDC) and [Bpifrance](#) (BPI). Commission Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, said: *"I welcome the excellent news from France. The contribution via the National Promotional Banks will ensure the Investment Plan for Europe is adequately implemented in France, benefitting from the expertise of CDC and BPI. The plan is progressing fast with the commitment of Member States, and we are confident that the results will start to be visible this summer."*

Link: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4577_en.htm

3. Investment Plan: Green light for SME financing before the summer

Small and medium sized businesses across Europe could benefit from the first funds from the new European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) before the summer, the EIB announced on 17 February 2015. Money can be made available to SMEs by the European Investment Fund (EIF), part of the EIB-Group, which will cover the risk of transactions with intermediaries providing additional finance to SMEs and small mid-caps until the main EFSI is in place, by September 2015, at the latest.

Link: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4441_en.htm

4. Investment Plan for Europe: new SME Initiative to unlock more than €3.2 billion of cheaper credit for Spanish companies

The European Commission welcomed on 26 January 2015, the signing of the SME Initiative with Spain, a ground-breaking agreement to unlock more than €3.2 billion of additional lending for companies with fewer than 250 employees (SMEs). In practice, under the new SME Initiative signed with Spain, regions in the country will reallocate part of their EU funding from European Structural and Investment Funds, i.e. €800 million. Rather than being given as a traditional grant, this pooled money will be channelled through the SME Initiative and used as a guarantee to take first risk in projects.

Links: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-3682_en.htm

European Investment Fund: <http://www.eif.org/>

European Fund for Strategic Investment:

http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/jobs-growth-investment/plan/financing/index_en.htm#efsi

5. European Commission takes major steps to implement Investment Plan for Europe, encourages structural reforms and investments

Just 50 days after announcing its ambitious [Investment Plan for Europe](#) to boost jobs and growth, the Juncker Commission, on 13 January 2015 took further important steps towards the implementation of the Investment Plan by presenting a legislative proposal for the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), which will be at the very heart of President Juncker's Investment Plan. The European Commission also presented a Communication providing guidance on how to encourage structural reforms and investment under the existing rules of the [Stability and Growth Pact](#) to ensure the common fiscal framework is supportive of the EU's jobs and growth agenda.

Links: http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/jobs-growth-investment/plan/financing/index_en.htm#efsi

http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/jobs-growth-investment/plan/docs/proposal_regulation_efsi_en.pdf

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-3222_en.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/jobs-growth-investment/plan/docs/20150113_efsi_qa_en.pdf

6. Juncker Investment Package

President **Juncker** presented his Investment Plan for Europe on 26 November, 2014, at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, announcing a € 315 billion Investment Plan to get Europe growing again and get more people back to work. The Plan is built on three main strands

- a **new European Fund for Strategic Investments**, guaranteed with public money, to mobilise at least € 315 billion of additional investment over the next three years (2015 - 2017);
- a **credible project pipeline** coupled with an assistance programme to channel investments where they are most needed;
- an **ambitious roadmap** to make Europe more attractive for investment and **remove regulatory bottlenecks**.

Links: http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/jobs-growth-investment/plan/index_en.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/jobs-growth-investment/plan/docs/20141126_invest_in_europe_presentation_final_en.pdf

http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/jobs-growth-investment/plan/docs/factsheet5-timeline_en.pdf

[Speech by President Jean-Claude Juncker](#)

Or Visit the [dedicated website on the Investment Plan for Europe](#)

XII. LABOUR

1. EUROSTAT: January 2015 - Euro area unemployment rate at 11.2%; EU28 at 9.8%

As published on 2 March 2015, the euro area (EA19) seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate was 11.2% in January 2015, down from 11.3% in December 2014, and from 11.8% in January 2014. This is the lowest rate recorded in the euro area since April 2012. The EU28 unemployment rate was 9.8% in January 2015, down from 9.9% in December 2014 and from 10.6% in January 2014. These figures are published by Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. Eurostat estimates that 23.815 million men and women in the EU28, of whom 18.059 million were in the euro area, were unemployed in January 2015. Compared with December 2014, the number of persons unemployed decreased by 156 000 in the EU28 and by 140 000 in the euro area. Compared with January 2014, unemployment fell by 1.820 million in the EU28 and by 896 000 in the euro area.

Link: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/6664116/3-02032015-AP-EN.pdf/28d48055-3894-492d-a952-005097600ee0>

2. Social dialogue in Europe: together for a new start

On 5 March, 2015 the European Commission organised, in Brussels, a High-Level Conference bringing together leaders of European and national employers' and workers' organisations, Members of the European Parliament and representatives from the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the EU. This Conference, called "[A new start for social dialogue](#)", has been an important step forward in strengthening and deepening dialogue with a broad cross-section of social partners in order to better address the economic and social challenges faced in Europe, as set out in the Political Guidelines and Work Programme of the European Commission. Vice-President for the Euro and Social

Dialogue, Valdis **Dombrovskis**, said: *"This High-Level Conference is the first of many steps where the Commission will reaffirm its commitment to engaging with employers and workers in shaping the European policies that affect us all. This is becoming increasingly important: not least considering the Commission's mandate in EU economic governance, and the challenge of helping cement the recovery of the European economy in a sustainable and fair way."* Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne **Thyssen**, commented: *"Today's economic and social challenges require a thriving social dialogue at both EU and national level. Where social dialogue is strong, economies are more competitive and socially resilient. The involvement of social partners in the design and implementation of policies is crucial to strengthen competitiveness and fairness, and is a prerequisite for the functioning of Europe's social market economy"*.

Links: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4542_en.htm

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-4540_en.htm

EU social dialogue: [Questions and Answers](#)

[Brochure](#) on a new start for social dialogue

Report on [Industrial Relations in Europe in 2014](#)

3. Eurostat: National minimum wages in the EU – Monthly minimum wages in euro varied by 1 to 10 across the EU in January 2015; Variation reduced to 1 to 4 when expressed in PPS

As of 1st January 2015, 22 out of the 28 Member States of the European Union (EU) had national minimum wages according to Eurostat analysis published on 26 February, 2015. They ranged from €184 per month in Bulgaria to €1,923 in Luxembourg. However, when adjusted for differences in purchasing power, the disparities between Member States are reduced from a ratio of 1 to 10 in euro to a ratio of 1 to 4 in purchasing power standards (PPS).

Link: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/6652357/3-26022015-AP-EN.pdf/42097ff5-231b-4116-b0cf-8a28ca316f84>

4. 8 March 2015: International Women's Day - Women earned on average 16% less than men in 2013 in the EU - 2 out of 3 managers are men, 2 out of 3 clerical workers are women

According to Eurostat data, published on 5 March, 2015, in 2013, the gender pay gap stood at 16.4% in the European Union (EU), ranging from less than 5% in Slovenia to more than 20% in Estonia, Austria, the Czech Republic and Germany. The gender pay gap represents the difference between average gross hourly earnings of male paid employees and of female paid employees as a percentage of average gross hourly earnings of male paid employees.

Link: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/6729998/3-05032015-AP-EN.pdf/f064bb11-e239-4a8c-a40b-72cf34f1ac6f>

5. Ahead of International Women's Day, EU Commission upholds commitment to gender equality

Ahead of International Women's Day on March 8, all male members of the European Commission have given their support to the UN campaign [#HeforShe](#) aiming to make gender equality an issue for both men and women. This reflects the European Commission's strong support for women's rights and women's empowerment. The [#HeforShe campaign by UN Women](#) calls for the more active

engagement of men in the fight against such discrimination, since they play a pivotal role in changing the social norms that affect women.

According to new [Eurobarometer statistics](#) published on 5 March 2015, a large majority of citizens (76%) believe that tackling inequality between women and men should be a priority for the EU. The European Commission's annual [Report on equality between women and men](#), also published on 5 March 2015, shows that despite some progress gender equality remains an unfinished business.

On the occasion of International Women's Day on 8 March 2015, Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, also publishes a selection of data on men and women with regard to their situation on the labour market. The press release is available [here](#).

On Monday 9 March, Carlos **Moedas**, Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, will launch the 3rd edition of the [EU Prize for Women Innovators](#).

Links: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/document/index_en.htm#h2-2

http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/annual_reports/150304_annual_report_2014_web_en.pdf

6. Juncker Commission makes 1 billion euro available for the young unemployed

On 4 February, 2015, the European Commission proposed to make 1 billion euro from the Youth Employment Initiative available as early as this year. This change will increase by up to 30 times the pre-financing Member States receive to boost youth employment - reaching up to 650 000 young people and helping them get into work, faster.

Links: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4100_en.htm

[Legislative proposal on the Youth Employment Initiative](#)

[News item](#) on DG Employment website

[Memo: EU Youth Guarantee: Questions and Answers](#)

[Memo: Q&A: Accelerated pre-financing of the Youth Employment Initiative](#)

Youth Employment Initiative [funding map](#)

7. State aid: European Commission approves aid to alleviate social costs of closing uncompetitive coal mine in the Czech Republic

The European Commission approved, on 12 February, 2015, under EU state aid rules, public funding to facilitate the closure of an uncompetitive coal mine in the Czech Republic (the Paskov mine), operated by the Czech mining company OKD a.s. The aid aims to ease the closure process and provide financial support to those working in the Paskov mine. Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager** said: *"Uncompetitive coal mines cannot be kept in the market indefinitely on state support - but the Commission and Member States can find solutions to help coal miners through this difficult transition. I am glad that today's decision will allow the Czech authorities to support the workers that will lose their jobs due to the unavoidable closure of the Paskov coal mine."*

Link: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4401_en.htm

8. Employment: European Commission proposes €8.7 million from Globalisation Fund to help media workers in Greece

The European Commission on 3 February, 2015 proposed to mobilise the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) to help 1,633 workers made redundant in the media sectors (publishing, programming and broadcasting – names of companies to be added) in Attica (Greece). The funds requested by the Greek authorities, amounting to €8.7 million, will help the workers in their transition to new jobs. The proposals now go to the European Parliament and the EU's Council of Ministers for approval.

Link: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4082_en.htm

[EGF website](#)

XIII. MIGRATION

1. European Commission reports on visa-free travel from the Western Balkans

On 25 February, 2015 the European Commission published its fifth assessment of the functioning of the visa-free scheme with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. The fifth post visa liberalisation report on the Western Balkans shows that more measures are necessary to maintain the integrity of the visa-free scheme and to address potential abuses of the EU asylum system. In early March, Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Dimitris Avramopoulos, will be visiting Belgrade and Pristina. *"The European Commission remains committed to maintaining visa-free travel for citizens of the Western Balkans countries. The benefits of visa liberalisation have been very visible in terms of enhancing people-to-people contacts and business opportunities. However, the misuse of the visa-free travel scheme for seeking asylum in the EU must be addressed systematically and through proper allocation of resources. Our report formulates a set of recommendations to tackle the push and pull factors of irregular migration so I, therefore, strongly call for the full support and engagement of all participating countries"*, said Dimitris Avramopoulos, Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship.

Link: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4482_en.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-is-new/news/news/docs/20150225_5th_post-visa_liberalisation_report_with_western_balkan_countries_en.pdf

2. European Commission extends support to Italy on coping with migratory pressure on Lampedusa

On 19 February, 2015 the European Commission reinforced its assistance to Italy to deal with the current high migratory pressures in Lampedusa. In close cooperation between Vice-President **Timmermans**, High Representative/Vice-President **Mogherini**, and Commissioner **Avramopoulos**, a number of important measures were taken on 19 February.

Firstly, the Frontex Joint Operation Triton will be extended until at least the end of 2015. Secondly, the European Commission has awarded an amount of €13.7 million in emergency funding from the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) to Italy. The European Commission stands ready to react quickly to any Italian request to increase the resources of Joint Operation Triton. The Commission is also stepping up its surveillance of the implementation of the recommendations of the Mediterranean Task Force and will report back to the March Home Affairs Council on progress made.

Links: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4453_en.htm

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-14-609_en.htm

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-3261_en.htm

3. European Commission makes progress on a European Agenda on Migration

The European Commission on 4 March, 2015 launched its work on an ambitious European Agenda on Migration. The College of Commissioner held a first orientation debate on possible key actions to ensure a comprehensive approach to coping with migration into the EU. For the first time in the history of the European Union, managing migration better is an explicit priority of the European Commission, as presented in the political guidelines of President **Juncker**, [A new start for Europe](#). Migration is a cross-cutting issue, involving different policy areas different actors, both inside and outside the EU. The new structure and working methods of the European Commission are a first step at addressing the challenges and opportunities of migration in a truly holistic way.

Links: [STATEMENT/15/4406](#), the Statement by First Vice-President of the European Commission, Frans Timmermans.

Questions and Answers: Smuggling of Migrants in Europe and the EU response: [MEMO/15/3261](#)

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STATEMENT-15-4406_en.htm

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-3261_en.htm

XIV. REAL ESTATE

1. EUROSTAT: House prices up by 0.5% in the euro area

House prices, as measured by the House Price Index (HPI), rose by 0.5% in the euro area and by 2.3% in the EU in the third quarter of 2014 compared with the same quarter of the previous year. These figures come from Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. Compared with the second quarter of 2014, house prices rose by 0.6% in the euro area and by 1.1% in the EU in the third quarter of 2014.

Links: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STAT-15-3540_en.htm

<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/6483048/2-21012015-AP-EN.pdf/6bbab49f-02eb-4c9f-ba22-b58be750747e>

XV. TAX

1. European Commission lays the foundation for a fairer and more transparent approach to taxation in EU

The European Commission on 18 February, 2015 launched its work on its ambitious agenda to combat tax avoidance and aggressive tax planning. A first orientation debate on possible key actions to ensure a fairer and more transparent approach to taxation in the EU ranked high on the College

agenda on 18th February. President Jean-Claude **Juncker** has made the fight against tax evasion and avoidance a top political priority of this Commission. The Commission is rapidly making good on the pledges it made in its Work Programme last December: it will propose legislation next month to extend the automatic exchange of information on tax rulings. This March proposal will be accompanied by a wider set of measures to increase tax transparency. But next month's Tax Transparency package is just the beginning, with more work to come in this area during 2015.

Link: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4436_en.htm

2. State aid: European Commission opens in-depth investigation into the Belgian excess profit ruling system

As announced on 3 February, 2015 the European Commission has opened an in-depth investigation into a Belgian tax provision, which allows group companies to substantially reduce their corporation tax liability in Belgium on the basis of so-called "excess profit" tax rulings. In essence, the rulings allow multinational entities in Belgium to reduce their corporate tax liability by "excess profits" that allegedly result from the advantage of being part of a multinational group. At this stage, the Commission has doubts if the tax provision complies with EU state aid rules, which prohibit the granting to certain companies of selective advantages that distort competition in the Single Market. Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager** in charge of competition policy said: "*The Belgian "excess profit" tax system appears to grant substantial tax reductions only to certain multinational companies that would not be available to stand-alone companies. If our concerns are confirmed, this generalised scheme would be a serious distortion of competition unduly benefitting a selected number of multinationals. As part of our efforts to ensure that all companies pay their fair share of tax, we have to investigate this further.*"

Link: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4080_en.htm

3. State aid: Commission extends information enquiry on tax rulings practice to all Member States

The European Commission has enlarged the enquiry into the tax ruling practice under EU state aid rules to cover all Member States. The Commission will ask Member States to provide information about their tax ruling practice, in particular to confirm whether they provide tax rulings, and, if they do, to request a list of all companies that have received a tax ruling from 2010 to 2013. The Commission already requested similar information on tax rulings from several Member States in June 2013. Commissioner in charge of competition policy, Margrethe **Vestager** said, "We need a full picture of the tax rulings practices in the EU to identify if and where competition in the Single Market is being distorted through selective tax advantages."

Link: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-14-2742_en.htm

XVI. TRADE, FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS

1. EUROSTAT: First estimate for the fourth quarter of 2014; EU28 current account surplus €33.4 bn; €40.7 bn surplus for trade in services

The EU28 seasonally adjusted external current account recorded a surplus of €33.4 billion in the fourth quarter of 2014, compared with surpluses of €15.1 bn in the third quarter of 2014 and of €29.9 bn in the fourth quarter of 2013, according to first estimates from Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. In the fourth quarter of 2014, compared with the third quarter of 2014, based on seasonally adjusted data, the balance of the goods account moved into surplus (from -€6.5 bn to +€12.4 bn) and the surplus of the services account increased (from +€37.9 bn to +€40.7 bn). The

deficit of the secondary income account improved (from -€18.8 bn to -€17.4 bn). The surplus of the primary income account turned into a deficit (from +€2.5 bn to -€2.3 bn).

Link: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/6643067/2-20022015-AP-EN.pdf/25f0eb29-3bd2-4926-8ba5-ba8e05cbead5>

2. EU offers Least Developed Countries preferential market access for services

As part of its ongoing efforts to help least developed countries (LDCs) better integrate into the global economy, the EU on 5 February, 2015 offered them preferential access to the EU market in a wide range of services.

The EU used a high-level WTO meeting in Geneva on 5 February to signal its willingness to allow professionals from such countries to provide short-term services in the EU. The move responds to a commitment made at the 2013 WTO Ministerial Conference in Bali and to a list of needs identified by LDCs last summer. Some 15 other WTO members present also indicated their willingness to offer preferential access to the least developed countries.

The EU's offer covers services broadly. In some 30 important sectors or subsectors LDC services companies will, for example, be able to transfer management trainees to their affiliated companies in the EU and allow them to get up to one year of experience there. LDC companies with a contract to provide services will be able to send skilled professionals to the EU to provide these services for up to six months. Likewise, independent professionals from LDC countries will be able to provide services in the EU for up to six months at a time in a wide range of services sectors, including architecture, engineering, research and development and management consulting, and computer services.

Link: <http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/press/index.cfm?id=1256>

XVII. TRANSATLANTIC TRADE & INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIP (TTIP)

1. 10th Round of negotiations held in Brussels (2-6 February 2015)

On 10 February 2015, the European Commission published negotiating documents following the close of the eighth round of TTIP negotiations, held in Brussels the week before.

The round, which focused on regulatory aspects, included [detailed provisions](#) for stepping up cooperation within the TTIP by setting up a transatlantic regulatory cooperation body (RCB).

The proposed RCB will aim to discuss regulatory proposals relevant to the agreement, covering issues such as textiles, automobile standards and professional qualifications, at an early stage, in order to ensure a coherent approach to rule-making in the US and EU.

It will have no power to issue policy, and will only feed into the existing rule-making processes, but is likely to be influential within the relevant regulatory processes.



Timeline:

- **Before April 2015:** Commission to table proposal on regulatory convergence between member states and Regulatory Cooperation Body within TTIP
- **April 2015:** Ninth TTIP round of negotiations expected to take place in Washington DC

Links: http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2015/february/tradoc_153110.pdf

http://www.euractiv.com/sections/trade-society/ttip-dummies-311161?utm_source=EurActiv+Newsletter&utm_campaign=9202438b57-newsletter_trade_society&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_bab5f0ea4e-9202438b57-245619018

TTIP documents

- [Introduction on textual proposal on regulatory cooperation with TTIP](#)  10 February 2015
- [Factsheet on regulatory cooperation in TTIP](#)  10 February 2015
- [Textual proposal on regulatory cooperation in TTIP](#)  10 February 2015

2. European Commission asks the Council to publish the Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA) mandate

Trade Commissioner Cecilia **Malmström** sent a [letter](#) to the Latvian Presidency asking for the publication of the Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA). This step reflects the ongoing effort by the European Commission to increase transparency in the way trade negotiations are conducted.

Link: http://ec.europa.eu/carol/index-iframe.cfm?fuseaction=download&documentId=090166e59c73127c&title=CM_signed.pdf

3. European Commission publishes TTIP legal texts as part of transparency initiative

The European Commission published on 7 January 2015, a raft of texts setting out EU proposals for legal text in the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) it is negotiating with the US. This is the first time the Commission has made public such proposals in bilateral trade talks and reflects its commitment to greater transparency in the negotiations. The so-called 'textual proposals' published today set out the actual language and binding commitments which the EU would like to see in the parts of the agreement covering regulatory and rules issues. The eight EU textual proposals cover competition, food safety and animal and plant health, customs issues, technical barriers to trade, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and government-to-government dispute settlement (GGDS, not to be confused with ISDS). Besides these, the Commission has also published TTIP position papers explaining the EU's approach on engineering, vehicles, and sustainable development, bringing the total number of position papers it has made public up to 15. To make the online documents more accessible to the non-expert, the Commission is also publishing a 'Reader's Guide', a glossary of terms and acronyms, and a series of factsheets setting out in plain language what is at stake in each chapter of TTIP and what the EU's aims are in each area. [All texts \(textual proposals, position papers, Reader's Guide and factsheets\) are available online](#)

Links: <http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/press/index.cfm?id=1230>

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-2980_en.htm

Link to the texts published: <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/ttip-texts/>

4. Report on the consultation on investment protection in EU-US trade talks

On 13 January the European Commission published its report on the public online consultation on investment protection envisaged in the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership agreement

(TTIP). Almost 150,000 replies were submitted by individuals and organisations. The report analyses the results. A key question in the consultation was whether the EU's proposed approach for TTIP would achieve the right balance between protecting investors and safeguarding the EU's right and ability to regulate in the public interest.

Links: [The report](#)

<http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/press/index.cfm?id=1234>

http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2015/january/tradoc_153045.pdf

5. TTIP 8th Report published on 24 February 2015

Link: http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2015/february/tradoc_153175.pdf

6. List of Lead Negotiators for TTIP

Link to the refreshed list: http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2013/july/tradoc_151668.pdf

XVIII. SPECIFIC FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

1. Fighting poverty: European Commission commits €3.8 billion to help the most vulnerable in Europe

The European Commission adopted on 26 February, 2015, the last remaining national Operational Programmes for the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived for 2014-2020. In total this is worth €3.8 billion in assistance to 4 million of the people most in need in the EU. The Fund supports Member States in their efforts to help Europe's most vulnerable people: those who have been worst affected by the on-going economic and social crisis. The Fund focuses on material assistance to those suffering the worst forms of poverty - including food deprivation, homelessness, and material deprivation of children. Commenting on the adoption of the final programmes, Marianne **Thyssen**, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, said: *"The Fund supports people in taking their first steps out of poverty and social exclusion. Around 4 million of the most materially deprived people in Europe will benefit from the immediate assistance of the Fund. This is a strong symbol of EU solidarity."*

Links: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4513_en.htm

[Information on the National Operational Programmes](#)

Frequently asked questions on FEAD: [MEMO/14/170](#)

[FEAD Regulation \(EU 223/2014\)](#)

2. Employment: European Commission proposes €6 million from the Globalisation Fund to help over 2,500 road haulage and delivery workers in France

The European Commission proposed on 23 February, 2015, to mobilise €6 million from the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund to help 2,513 former workers of Mory-Ducros, second biggest operator in France at the time of the redundancies for services such as freight transport and delivery, to find

new jobs. "The economic crisis has badly affected the road transport sector", said EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility Marianne Thyssen. She stressed the importance of supporting the redundant lorry drivers and their colleagues in their efforts to find new jobs as swiftly as possible: "The European Globalisation Fund will make the workers' transition to new jobs easier and faster by helping them adapt their skills to the requirements of future employment." These job losses were the result of the global financial and economic crisis which has deeply affected the road haulage sector, leading to its decline in line with the general weakening of physical output in Europe.

Links: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4472_en.htm

[EGF website](#)

3. Agriculture: European Commission opens Private Storage Aid for pigmeat

The European Commission on 6 March, 2015 formally adopted measures providing Aid for Private Storage measures for the EU pigmeat sector. Under this standard market support measure, the Commission pays for part of the costs of storing pigmeat for 3-5 months. Past experience has shown that this move to temporarily reduce supply on the EU market eases market pressure and thus tends to help prices pick up. The sector has been under pressure since the Russian ban on pigmeat imports from the whole EU in February 2014 linked to an outbreak of African swine fever in East Poland and the Baltic Republics. Although traders have managed to find alternative markets for most products and animal feed costs have been lower than usual, the lengthy squeeze on margins is being felt, with many producers having previously made substantial investments in order to meet new EU animal welfare rules. Having been discussed and voted on by Member State experts in the [Common Market Organisations \(CMO\) Committee on 24 February](#), the measure is published in the [Official Journal](#) on 6 March and enters into force on 9 March, 2015.

Link: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/newsroom/192_en.htm

4. Cohesion Policy: European Commission commits more than 66 billion euro to promote economic development across Europe

The European Commission adopted on 13 February 2015, 40 new programmes under the European Cohesion Policy to support economic development and social cohesion across the European Union. An additional 10 programmes will be adopted before the end of February 2015. Together, these 50 programmes will be worth more than 66 billion euro. With these decisions, 266 Cohesion Policy programmes, worth more than 256 billion euro, have now been approved for the 2014-2020 budgetary period. These programmes are vital, performance-guided investments that have an important impact on people's everyday life. They help boost economic competitiveness, enhance research and innovation, promote entrepreneurship, tackle unemployment, fight social exclusion and support the shift towards a low-carbon economy in Europe. The Commission will adopt the remaining programmes as soon as possible. With a budget of 351,8 billion euro for a total of 387 programmes for the period 2014-2020, the European Structural Funds are the EU's main investment policy.

Link: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4425_en.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/index.cfm/en/atlas/programmes?search=1&keywords=&periodId=3&countryCode=ALL®ionId=ALL

5. Further 18 Rural Development Programmes get green light

The European Commission approved on 13 February 2015, a further 18 Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) aimed at improving the competitiveness of the EU farming sector, caring for the countryside and climate, and strengthening the economic and social fabric of rural communities in the period until 2020. Taken together, the RDPs for [Belgium](#) (Flanders), [Estonia](#), [Finland](#) (Åland), [France](#) (National Rural Network Programme, Mayotte), [Germany](#) (Bavaria, Hesse, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Nordrhein-Westfalen), [Latvia](#), [Lithuania](#), [the Netherlands](#), [Portugal](#) (Azores, Madeira), [Slovakia](#), [Slovenia](#), [Spain](#) (National Framework) and [United Kingdom](#) (England) offer funding worth 14,3 billion EUR from the EU budget, which will be co-financed by further public funding at national/regional level and/or private funds.

Links: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4424_en.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rural-development-2014-2020/country-files/index_en.htm

XIX. COUNTRY SPECIFIC SUPPORT

1. €30.5 billion worth of EU development cooperation to come on stream following entry into force of 11th European Development Fund

The 11th [European Development Fund \(EDF\)](#) came into force on 2 March 2015. In a [joint statement](#) issued by High Representative / Vice-President Federica **Mogherini** and Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development Neven **Mimica**, this event was highlighted as a cornerstone of the EU's international cooperation and development policy that concretely implements the EU's partnership and dialogue with African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries under the [ACP-EU Cotonou Agreement](#). The EDF also covers cooperation with the Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) as laid down in the Overseas Association Decision.

Link: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STATEMENT-15-4518_en.htm

2. Commissioner Mimica signs €279 million development programme for Liberia and €103 million for Congo

On 4 March 2015, EU Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven **Mimica** signed the [National Indicative Programme \(NIP\) for EU development cooperation with Liberia for the period 2014-2020](#), which amounts to €279 million. The signing ceremony took place at the high-level international conference "Ebola: From Emergency to Recovery", in Brussels, with the President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and the Minister of Finance and Development Planning, Amara Konneh.

EU Commissioner **Mimica** also signed [the new National Indicative Programme \(NIP\) for Congo for the period 2014-2010](#) with a total amount to €103M of development support. This was done in the presence of the President of Congo, Denis Sassou N'Guesso and the Minister of Economy, Finance and Public Management Portfolio Gilbert Odongo, also within the margins of the high-level international conference on Ebola.

Link:

Liberia: http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/nip-liberia_en.pdf

Congo: https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/countries/congo-republic_en

3. Albania joins COSME, the EU's financing programme for small and medium-sized enterprises

On 3 March, 2015 Elżbieta **Bieńkowska**, European Commissioner for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, and Arben Ahmetaj, Albanian Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Entrepreneurship, signed an Agreement formalising the entry of Albania in the Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Programme (COSME). Commissioner **Bieńkowska** said: *"I welcome Albania to the group of countries that can benefit from the COSME funds"*. More broadly on COSME and SME policy, the Commissioner added: *"Access to finance remains an important hurdle for SMEs. I want to use the financing possibilities of our COSME programme efficiently, and in parallel hear ideas on how to further reduce red tape and promote entrepreneurship for SMEs."* **COSME is the EU programme aimed at strengthening the competitiveness and sustainability of SMEs running from 2014 to 2020 with a budget of €2.3bn.**

Albania is the fifth country outside of the EU to join and contribute to the programme, after Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova and Turkey.

4. From emergency to recovery: EU mobilises efforts to end Ebola and alleviate its impact

The "Ebola: from emergency to recovery" a high level conference took place in Brussels on 3 March, 2015 under the organisation and patronage of the European Union. While international efforts have reduced the number of Ebola infections in recent months, it is critical to maintain the momentum to prevent a sharp increase in new cases. The conference aimed to sustain the international mobilisation and to plan the next steps in the fight both against the current outbreak and the Ebola virus in general. Jean-Claude **Juncker**, President of the European Commission, said: *"To end Ebola and ensure sustainable development in the affected region is the best way to honour the memory of the victims. I would also like to pay tribute to all those who have been involved in the outbreak response with expertise, dedication and courage. **Together with our Member States, we have mobilised more than €1.2 billion for the fight against this disease. And we will continue to help until we win the battle against Ebola**"*.

Links: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4521_en.htm

The EU's contribution to the fight against Ebola:

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-4507_en.htm

The EU's support for sustainable development in the Ebola-affected countries:

https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/ebola-memo-20150227_en.pdf

EU contribution to urgent Ebola research:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/health/infectious-diseases/emerging-epidemics/ebola_en.html

DG Health and Food Safety – latest developments:

http://ec.europa.eu/health/ebola/index_en.htm

5. EU announces support to secure Kariba dam and electricity generation in Zambia and Zimbabwe

A signing ceremony took place on 20 February, 2015, in Zambia to announce €64 million in EU funding for the rehabilitation of the Kariba dam, which is central to energy security and economic development in both Zambia and Zimbabwe. After 50 years in operation, the dam on the Zambezi River requires rehabilitation work for its safe operation, which is essential for hundreds of thousands of Zambians and Zimbabweans. The project will be co-financed with the African Development Bank, Sweden and the World Bank. Ahead of the signing, Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development Neven **Mimica** said: *"The Kariba dam is a vital source of energy in the region, which in turn improves living conditions and boosts growth. Our new support will help to preserve this dam and make it safe for future generations."*

6. EU gives humanitarian aid to victims of food insecurity in Central America

As announced on 19 February, 2015, the European Commission is providing €4 million in humanitarian aid to assist the people affected by food insecurity in Central America. More than 2.5 million people in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua are lacking reliable access to enough affordable and nutritious food due to erratic rain, drought and floods. EU aid will provide the affected populations with appropriate food assistance: cash, vouchers, material aid. In case of significant increase in severe acute malnutrition among children under five years of age, nutrition assistance will also be provided, including therapeutic supplementary feeding.

7. EU steps up humanitarian assistance to Syria crisis

As announced on 29 January, 2015 the European Union is increasing its assistance to the Syria crisis by €136 million in humanitarian funding, half of which will go to needs inside Syria, and the other half to Syrian refugees and host communities in neighbouring Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. The funding was announced as Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides**, and Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes **Hahn**, are in Lebanon and Jordan to discuss how EU aid can help meet the growing needs of Syrian refugees and relieve the growing burden on neighbouring countries.

Links: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-3883_en.htm

Syria factsheet: http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/syria_en.pdf#view=fit

EU development cooperation – Syrian crisis:

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/neighbourhood/countries/syria/index_en.htm

EU development cooperation with Jordan:

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/neighbourhood/countries/jordan/index_en.htm

EU development cooperation with Lebanon:

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/neighbourhood/countries/lebanon/index_en.htm

8. EU releases €212 million to support the Palestinian people

The European Union on 17 February, 2015 released the first tranche of its 2015 financial support to the Palestinian Authority and to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), totaling €212 million. This new funding will help provide vital basic services such as education, healthcare and social services to the Palestinian people. The new financial support

is financed through the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy. The ENI is the main EU financial instrument for support to Palestine for the period 2014-2020.

9. EU announced €156 million in humanitarian aid for the people of the Sahel region

The European Union is giving €156 million in assistance to the victims of the complex crises in the Sahel. The new aid was announced by EU Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides** who visited Senegal, and Mali between 16 and 18 February 2015. In addition to alleviating malnutrition and food insecurity, these funds will also help meet the needs of people affected by conflict and epidemics. *"Sahel is the poorest region in the world and must continue to be our high priority. We need to prevent acute malnutrition and food insecurity from becoming a norm in West Africa"*, said Commissioner Stylianides.

Link: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4430_en.htm

10. EU provides €32 million in humanitarian aid to Mali

The European Union is increasing its humanitarian assistance in Mali with €32 million for this year, as announced on 17 February 2015. This new aid will help meet the increasing needs in view of renewed violence, increased displacement and malnutrition. The crisis is compounded by difficult access to the affected populations due to the worsening security situation in northern Mali. *"Humanitarian aid is neutral and aid workers should be allowed safe and unhindered access to those who need help. Our first priority is to provide life-saving aid to the malnourished and the displaced, and to protect people who are caught up in conflict"*, said Christos **Stylianides**, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management during his visit to Mali.

11. Additional EU aid for flood victims in Albania

The European Commission on 17 February 2015, announced over € 118 000 in EU support for the most vulnerable people affected by the recent floods in Albania. The funding comes from the Commission's humanitarian aid budget. This EU assistance will provide around 8 000 people with food, hygiene kits and blankets as well as information on health and hygiene during floods. The funding will be channeled through the Albanian Red Cross. It comes on top of aid provided by European countries via the [EU Civil Protection Mechanism](#). In a coordinated response facilitated by the European Commission's [Emergency Response Coordination Centre \(ERCC\)](#), Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Hungary, Slovakia and Montenegro have sent beds, tents, kitchen sets, generators, and other material support to the affected region.

12. EU disburses 100 million euros in Macro-Financial Assistance to Jordan

The European Commission, on behalf of the European Union (EU), on 10 February, 2015, disbursed 100 million euros in the form of loans to **Jordan**. This is the first tranche of the Macro-financial assistance (MFA) programme to Jordan, which amounts to 180 million euros in total. Commissioner **Moscovici**, said: *"This disbursement is a concrete sign of Europe's solidarity with the Jordanian people, who are exposed to severe tensions and the knock-on effects of regional crises. We are living up to our promise to help the country, an important partner for the EU, to support its economic reforms and create the conditions for sustainable growth and employment."* The Commission continues to assist the government of Jordan in its on-going reform efforts in key sectors, ranging from renewable energy and energy efficiency to employment and private sector development.

Link: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4321_en.htm

More information on EU – Jordan cooperation: http://eeas.europa.eu/jordan/index_en.htm

13. New strategy mobilises all EU tools and €1 billion for Syria and Iraq

The European Commission and the High Representative presented on 6 February, 2015 the first EU comprehensive [strategy](#) on tackling the crises in Syria and Iraq and the threat posed by Da'esh. It brings together ongoing and planned initiatives of the EU and its Member States and boosts their efficiency, with an additional € 1 billion in funding for the next two years.

With this substantial package, the EU will ensure steady and predictable funding for essential priorities: relief, stabilisation and development in the region, as well as countering the threat posed by terrorist groups like Da'esh. These political, social, and humanitarian measures target Syria and Iraq, but also Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey.

Links: http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/news/20150206_JOIN_en.pdf

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4222_en.htm

14. EU allocates €3 million to help flood victims in Southern Africa

The European Commission gave on 6 February, 2015, €3 million in humanitarian aid for the people affected by severe flooding in Malawi, Mozambique and Madagascar. This will bring immediate assistance to the affected populations, such as shelter, food, clean water and health care, as well as blankets, hygiene material and mosquito nets. A crucial component of EU aid will be to help those affected recover their livelihoods and sources of income. European Commission's funding will also contribute to preventing outbreaks of diseases in affected areas due to water stagnation. More than 1 million people have been affected, about 300 000 displaced and around 300 people killed by heavy rains and flooding throughout the region.

XX. EU CALL FOR TENDERS, APPLICATIONS

1. EU Prize for Women Innovator

Get ready for the new edition of the contest!

The EU Prize for Women Innovators was launched in 2011 to give public recognition to outstanding women entrepreneurs who brought their innovative ideas to the market. The aim is to inspire other women to follow in their footsteps. After two successful editions in **2011 and 2014**, the **European Commission will launch the third edition of the prize on 9 March 2015**.

Three prizes will be awarded at the end of the competition:

- 1st prize: €100 000
- 2nd prize: €50 000
- 3rd prize: €30 000

Contestants will be able to submit their entries from 10 March 2015 **until 20 October**

2015 (12:00 – Brussels time).

An independent panel of judges from business and academia will select the three winners who will be announced in 2016.

Who can participate in the contest?

The contest is open to all women who have founded or co-founded their company and who have at some point of their careers benefitted from the EU's research framework programmes, the EURATOM Framework Programme, the Competitiveness and Innovation framework programme (CIP) or actions relating to research and innovation under the European Structural and Investment Funds (known as the Structural Funds prior to 2014). The contestant must reside in an EU Member State or a country associated to Horizon 2020, the EU's research and innovation programme. The company must have been registered before 1 January 2013 and have had an annual turnover of at least EUR 100 000 in 2013 or 2014.

2. Business Avenues in South East Asia European Union and South East Asia

Reference	EuropeAid/136576/DH/SER/Multi		
Published	31/12/2014	Updated	19/02/2015
Status	Open » 27/03/2015	Type	Services
Programme		Geog. Zone	All Countries
Budget	21,000,000 (EUR)		

English: [Prior Information Notice](#) 31/12/2014

[Contract Notice](#) 19/02/2015

To view the information in any of the 23 EU languages, click [here](#).

Link: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/europeaid/online-services/index.cfm?ADSSChck=1424351904405&do=publi.detPUB&searchtype=QS&orderby=upd&orderbyad=Desc&nbPubliList=15&page=1&aoref=136576>

[For more information on the tender, please access the eTendering platform](#)

XXI. UPCOMING EVENTS:

1. 11th Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Forum and Exhibition for South-East Europe

Date: 11-13 March 2015,

Venue: Sofia, Bulgaria

The 2015 edition will promote the latest energy developments and encourage their large-scale implementation in South-East Europe as well as speed up foreign investment in the regional economy. It is a great networking place for the international and local industry players.

Scope: energy efficient solutions for heating, cooling, ventilation, lighting and other manufacturing sectors; bio-, hydro, solar, geothermal and wind energy, waste-to-energy, electric vehicles, etc.

Link: [Conference website](#)

2. 2015 CEF Energy Info Day

The **Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) Energy Info Day** for the [first of the 2015 Calls for Proposals](#) is scheduled for

Date: Monday, 16 March 2015 - 10.00-16.00

Venue: Charlemagne building - room Gasperi
170 rue de la Loi, Brussels, Belgium

The event, organised by DG Energy and INEA, will present the priorities of the Call that was launched on 4 March.

The Connecting Europe Facility was set up for the period 2014-2020 to provide the EU financial assistance to projects of common interest in transport, energy and telecommunications infrastructure sectors, in order to accelerate investment in the trans-European networks and to exploit potential synergies between these sectors.

In the energy sector, CEF will, in particular, support projects in electricity and gas in order to achieve the following objectives:

- increasing competitiveness by promoting the further integration of the internal energy market and the interoperability of electricity and gas networks across borders
- enhancing Union security of energy supply
- contributing to sustainable development and protection of the environment - through the integration of energy from renewable sources and the development of smart energy networks

The Info Day will provide:

- info on the priorities of the 2015 Call for proposals
- policy context
- practical details about how to prepare a successful proposal
- other background information relevant to the application and evaluation process

Registration & Logistics



[Registrations](#)

The event will be in English only. If you are unable to attend the event in person, you will be able to follow it via webstreaming. The link will be posted here 24 hours prior to the event.

3. Launching Workshop: a European Roadmap for Climate Services

Date: 17 March 2015

Venue: Management Centre Europe (MCE), Rue de l'Aqueduc 118, 1050 Brussels

The event is organised by the DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR RESEARCH & INNOVATION, designed to initiate a visionary and forward looking discussion on the development of a European market for climate services. One of its outcomes was the proposal to design a research and innovation Roadmap for climate services to be implemented through Horizon 2020 and beyond. This workshop is the first public occasion to present the Roadmap to the stakeholders and key players in the field, share views, discuss the challenges and opportunities, and move towards its implementation.

The Roadmap will be published by the end of February 2015. It is not a European Commission document, but it is the result of the work of an ad hoc expert group, established by the European Commission, and relied on the involvement of a larger supporting group – including the EC services, Copernicus and the EIT Climate KIC - and on a focused stakeholders' consultation. The Roadmap is expected to offer a coherent and focused framework for action, able to leverage on existing initiatives at EU and national level, as well as to provide a support framework to local initiatives.

The event is a one-day workshop for about 180 participants, mostly leaders of organisations which either produce or supply climate information and intelligence, or are interested as actual or potential users of climate services. Some of them have been involved in different ways in the development of the Roadmap. The Workshop programme is designed to introduce the Roadmap, share views and experiences on the key issues identified in the document, and initiate a discussion among scientists, policy makers, practitioners, climate services suppliers/purveyors and end-users, with the goal to facilitate a trans disciplinary dialogue, inspire innovative approaches and new forms of collaboration, upon which will ultimately depend the successful implementation of the Roadmap. To this aim, we propose to address the key issues identified in the Roadmap through the contribution of guest speakers who will either present a case study (see 'case study' in the agenda), or their experience and perspective (see 'ambassador' in the agenda), based on direct practice and/or representing a sector/type of organisation/specific challenge.

Links

- [Registration](#)
- [Draft agenda](#)  302 KB
- [Practical information](#)  233 KB
- [Roadmap for climate services](#)  859 KB

4. The Role of Patents – Innovation in a European Digital Single Market

Date: 17 March 2015,

Venue: Brussels

This conference, organised by the Institute for Prospective Technological Studies of the Joint Research Centre, aims to provide reliable evidence based on patent data analysis to support European innovation policies for a Digital Single Market.

Link: [Conference website](#)

5. European Association Summit

Date: 5 and 6 May 2015

Venue: Brussels

The European Association Summit (EAS) is a unique peer-to-peer learning platform for international association executives: sharing ideas, exchanging best practice, gaining insights and networking. The 2nd edition of the EAS (Brussels 14/15 May 2014) will be remembered for the rich quality of its content, its speakers and its exchanges. ...An event that shines a bright light on the future of association management.

Background

Brussels hosts more international associations than any other city in the world, whether we're talking about intergovernmental or non-governmental bodies. It is number one in Europe and number two in the world when it comes to hosting the meetings of international associations. And it is the unrivalled top host city for the offices of international associations (more than 2000). So says the Union of International Associations (UIA), an independent research institute that has been observing and documenting international civil society for over one hundred years.

The European Association Summit 2015 is the third summit organised by VISITBRUSSELS (Brussels' official Convention Bureau) in Europe's capital city. It's being organised in collaboration with the European Business Summit (EBS) and the leading partners in the sector: ESAE (European Society of Association Executives), FAIB (Federation of European & International Associations Based in Belgium), UIA (Union of International Associations).

Link: <http://visitbrussels.be/bitc/minisite/home/display/name/eas.do>

XXII. Pan-European Dialogue between cruise operators, ports and coastal tourism stakeholders

Date: 5 and 6 March 2015

Venue: Square Conference Centre, rue Mont des Arts, B-1000 Brussels

As announced in action 3 of the Communication "A European Strategy for more Growth and Jobs in Coastal and Maritime Tourism", the European Commission promotes a structured dialogue on cruise tourism to enhance synergies in the sector, targeting best practice sharing in innovation, competitiveness and sustainability strategies.

You are kindly invited to register via the following website, which will be regularly updated:

Link: <https://scic.ec.europa.eu/fmi/ezreg/CRUISE2015/start>

XXIII. European Business Summit

Date: 6-7 May 2015

Venue: Palais d'Egmont- Egmont Palace, 1000 Brussels

European Business Summit, Europe's key meeting place for business leaders and decision makers, where Business and Politics Shape the Future. Every year, the EBS attracts more than 2 000 participants from over 60 countries, including: the President of the European Commission, the President of the European Parliament, the President of the European Council, European Commissioners, members of the European Parliament, Prime Ministers, CEOs, high-ranking individuals and about 200 journalists and broadcasters.

Link: <http://www.ebsummit.eu/>

XXIV. European Development Days

[European Development Days](#) (EDD15) returns to Brussels this year with the motto 'Our world, our dignity, our future', in the spirit of creating a more inclusive and united approach to development policy:

Date: 3-4 June 2015

Venue: Tour & Taxis

Avenue du Port - Haveniaan 86c
B-1000 Brussels

Organised by the European Commission, European Development Days is Europe's leading forum on development and international cooperation. Leaders and stakeholders from across government, civil society and business and from around the world will come together in Brussels to develop solutions to shared challenges.

The forum serves as the [European Year for Development's](#) (EYD2015) flagship event, showing how Member States and citizens are contributing to the eradication of poverty and the promotion of human rights worldwide.

With universality as the underlying theme to this year's forum, EDD15 will explore issues surrounding sustainability and climate change as well as human rights and securing a decent life for all. It will involve rigorous debate on how to make development policy more coherent and illustrate how individual actors can contribute to a more just, equal world.

Follow #EDD15 for the latest news and updates. Contact community@eudevdays.eu with any questions.

Links: www.eudevdays.eu

http://www.eudevdays.eu/doc/EDD15_Agenda_Overview.pdf

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/european-year-development-2015_en

XXV. Latvian Presidency Conference: First Innovative Enterprise Week, Riga, Latvia

Date: 15-17 June 2015

Venue: Riga, Latvia

First Innovative Enterprise week “Access to Finance for Research, Innovation and SMEs 2015” is a 3-day international conference on:

- the political answer to the macroeconomic situation
- ways to boost growth, jobs and competitiveness through innovation, including the investment Plan for the EU
- how the financial instruments, facilities and accompanying measures launched under Horizon 2020 can enhance access to finance for research, innovation and SMEs
- interactions between these financial instruments, COSME's and European Structural & Investment Funds (ESIF), as well as with instruments at national and local levels.

The conference will bring together high-level policy-makers, financial intermediaries and representatives of the research, innovation and business communities.

Link: [Conference web site](#)

XXVI. EC Your Voice in Europe: GGI has a say in the decision-making processes of the European Parliament!

Last year, the European Commission has approved GGI's application for admittance which will allow us to participate in the public consultations that are going to shape the future of Europe, and will also prove important to us.

These collations serve the purpose of allowing the participants to recount or describe their opinions regarding those policy issues that the European Parliament will pass a decision on.

For us, the members and clients of GGI, this provides an opportunity of advocacy, an occasion that only a limited number of alliances or institutions are awarded.

We may state our opinions about the following topics:

1. Development
2. Employment and Social Affairs
3. Enterprise
4. Trans-European Networks
5. Economic and Financial Affairs
6. Energy
7. Environment
8. Internal Market
9. Regional Policy
10. Taxation
11. Budget
12. Competition
13. Customs
14. Enlargement

- 15. External Relations
- 16. Humanitarian Aid
- 17. Justice and Fundamental Rights
- 18. Research and Technology
- 19. Trade

We would like to request the comments in writing, keeping in mind the deadline, to either or both of the following addresses: tunyogi@ggi.com and/or csusz@ggi.com.

We will summarize these opinions, and the GGI head office will then further them to the European Commission, and to the appropriate persons of the European Parliament.

In the case of high profile issues, we are also going to have the opportunity to express our views at the European Parliament in person!

Further information regarding open topics may be found here:

http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/index_en.htm

1. Consultations

Below are the consultation topics that are open for discussion. Only those topics are included that have at least an end of September deadline in order to provide a longer period for expressing opinions. (Here is a link that shows all the consultation topics that are still open: http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/consultations/index_en.htm) The ideas and views should be submitted at least one week prior to the deadlines. In case we receive several (possibly divergent) opinions pertaining to a topic, we set up a date for a discussion either on Skype, WebEx, or by e-mail. Once again, this opportunity to participate is very unique and also a privilege that has been awarded to GGI. The importance of this issue will be discussed during the EasyMeet in Budapest in November so members may learn more about it there. Also, this list is constantly updated; therefore we will inform you of them continuously.

Policy field	Description	Deadline
Competition	Public consultation on proposed modifications to Regulation 773/2004 and the Notices on Access to the File, Leniency, Settlements and Cooperation with national courts http://ec.europa.eu/competition/consultations/2014_regulation_773_2004/index_en.html	March 25, 2015.
Energy	Consultation on the list of proposed Projects of Common Interest in the field of Smart Grids https://ec.europa.eu/energy/en/consultations/consultation-list-proposed-projects-common-interest-field-smart-grids	April 15, 2015.

Research and Technology	<p>A public consultation on possible EU actions in relation to global coordination of Earth observations via the Group on Earth Observations (GEO)</p> <p>http://ec.europa.eu/research/consultations/geo/consultation_en.htm</p>	April 20, 2015.
Enterprise	<p>REACH authorisation: Public consultation on streamlining and simplification of the REACH authorisation application procedure for applications concerning uses of substances in low volumes and on a one-time extension of transitional arrangements for uses of substances in legacy spare parts</p> <p>http://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/newsroom/cf/itemdetail.cfm?item_id=8081&lang=en&title=REACH-Authorisation---Consultation-on-applications-for-low-volumes-and-on-extension-of-transitional-arrangements-for-uses-in-legacy-spare-parts-</p>	April 30, 2015.
Competition	<p>Guidelines on the application of the specific rules set out in Articles 169, 170 and 171 of the CMO Regulation for the olive oil, beef and veal and arable crops sectors</p> <p>http://ec.europa.eu/competition/consultations/2015_cmo_regulation/index_en.html</p>	May 05, 2015.
Employment and Social Affairs	<p>Public consultation on service provision to long-term unemployed</p> <p>http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=333&langId=en&consultId=15&isib=0&furtherConsult=yes</p>	May 15, 2015.
Research and Technology	<p>Consultation on the ex-post evaluation of the 7th Framework Programme</p> <p>http://ec.europa.eu/research/consultations/fp7-ex-post-evaluation-2015/consultation_en.htm</p>	May 22, 2015.
Taxation	<p>Public consultation on a review of Regulation (EC) N° 1889/2005 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 October 2005 “on controls of cash entering or leaving the Community”</p> <p>http://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/common/consultations/customs/cash_2015_02_en.htm</p>	June 01, 2015.