

European Monitor

Issue XI.

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I. ACCOUNTING

1. *European Commission appoints Chair of European Financial Reporting Advisory Group*

The European Commission on 19 March, 2015, decided to appoint Mr Wolf Klinz as President of the Board of the European Financial Reporting Advisory Group ([EFRAG](http://www.efrag.org)). EFRAG was established in 2001 to provide technical expertise and advice to the European Commission on accounting matters. Mr Klinz, a former member of the European Parliament, is due to take office after his nomination is submitted to the European Parliament and Council and after appointment by the General Assembly of EFRAG.

Links: <http://www.efrag.org/Front/c1-262/EFRAG-Facts.aspx>

http://ec.europa.eu/finance/accounting/governance/committees/efrag/index_en.htm#150319

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.

Link: http://ec.europa.eu/finance/accounting/sme_accounting/review_directives/index_en.htm

II. BANKING

1. *Mergers: European Commission clears restructuring of Swisscard joint venture between American Express and Credit Suisse*

The European Commission on 30 March, 2015, approved under the EU Merger Regulation the reorganisation of Swisscard, a joint venture based in Switzerland which is jointly controlled by American Express of the US and Credit Suisse of Switzerland. The reorganisation will result in Swisscard becoming a full functioning joint venture and therefore needs prior Commission approval under the EU Merger Regulation. American Express provides financial services, issues payment cards and is active in merchant acquiring services worldwide. Credit Suisse provides financial services worldwide. Swisscard is active in card issuing and merchant acquiring activities in Switzerland and Lichtenstein. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because there are no appreciable overlaps between the activities of Swisscard and its parent companies and because of Swisscard's limited presence in the European Economic Area (EEA). The transaction was examined 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.7514](#).

Link: http://ec.europa.eu/competition/index_en.html

2. 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

3. 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. Competition: Results of first stakeholder survey published

The European Commission's competition directorate on 16 March, 2015, published the results of the first comprehensive survey of stakeholders and EU citizens on the competition portfolio and the Commission's work in this field. The two independent surveys overall provided very positive feedback: most professional stakeholders evaluate the work of DG Competition as effective in detecting infringements. 74% of EU citizens say that competition has a positive impact on them but they think that sectors most likely to raise issues relating to a lack of competition are energy, followed by transport, pharmaceuticals and telecoms. The survey also provided suggestions for improvement of the competition directorate's working practices, which the Commission will look into carefully and use in its interaction and communication with competition professionals and citizens.

Link: http://ec.europa.eu/competition/publications/reports/surveys_en.html

2. State aid: European Commission approves three aid schemes for the French aviation sector

On 7 April, 2015, the European Commission approved, for the first time, three state aid schemes for airports and airlines on the basis of the new [Guidelines on State aid to airports and airlines](#) adopted in February 2014. The Commission considers, in particular, that these schemes for the French aviation sector promote regional connectivity without causing undue distortion of competition in the Single Market. The schemes will enable France to grant individual aid that complies with the criteria laid down in the Guidelines without further intervention by the Commission.

Links: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4741_en.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/competition/publications/cpb/2014/002_en.pdf

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-14-172_en.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/competition/state_aid/modernisation/index_en.html

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-14-121_en.htm

3. Competition: Commissioner Vestager announces proposal for e-commerce sector inquiry

The European Commissioner in charge of competition policy Margrethe Vestager announced on 26 March, 2015 that the EC will at launch a competition inquiry in the e-commerce sector. The announcement was made one day after the College of EU Commissioners discussed the [Digital Single Market Strategy](#) to be unveiled in May 2015. European citizens are enthusiastic users of online services. In 2014, around half of all EU consumers shopped online. Yet, only around 15% of them bought online from a seller based in another EU Member State. This indicates that significant cross-border barriers to e-commerce still exist within the EU. Knowledge gained through the sector inquiry will not only contribute to enforcing competition law in the e-commerce sector but also to various legislative initiatives which the Commission plans to launch to boost the Digital Single Market

Links: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4701_en.htm

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4653_en.htm

4. Mergers: European Commission clears joint venture between Wärtsilä and China State Shipbuilding Corporation

The European Commission announced on 26 March, 2015 that it has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the creation of a joint venture between Wärtsilä Corporation of Finland and China Shipbuilding Power Engineering Institute (CSPI), a subsidiary of the China State Shipbuilding Corporation (CSSC) ultimately controlled by the Chinese State. The joint venture would be based in Shanghai and operate under the name CSSC Wärtsilä Engine. It will produce 4-stroke medium speed diesel engines based on Wärtsilä's technology in China. CSSC is the parent company of one of the largest shipbuilding conglomerates in China that, among other activities, manufactures marine-related equipment. Wärtsilä is a provider of power solutions for the marine and energy markets. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would not raise competition concerns, because the joint venture has no actual or foreseen activities within the European Economic area (EEA). The transaction was examined 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.7501](#).

Link: http://ec.europa.eu/competition/index_en.html

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.

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

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

V. ECONOMY, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

1. *Digital Single Market Strategy: European Commission agrees areas for action*

Digital technology is part of everyday life. From watching films, buying or selling online to connecting with friends – the internet is a goldmine of opportunities. But EU people and companies run into many barriers, such as geo-blocking or cross-border parcel delivery inefficiencies. This Commission has made it [a priority](#) to remove these obstacles and create a [Digital Single Market](#). The College of EU Commissioners on 25 March, 2015 had a first discussion on the Digital Single Market Strategy due in May. Based on the work of Vice-President **Ansip** and his team, the College set out three main areas on which Commission action will focus during this mandate:

1. Better access for consumers and businesses to digital goods and services;
2. Shaping the environment for digital networks and services to flourish;
3. Creating a European Digital Economy and Society with long-term growth potential.

Links: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4653_en.htm

[How digital is your country? New figures reveal progress needed towards a digital Europe](#)

[Website of the Digital Agenda for Europe](#)

[President Juncker's political guidelines](#)

[The Commission Work Programme 2015](#)

Attachments

 [Digital_Single_Market_Factsheet_20150325.pdf](#)

2. Agriculture: the European Commission publishes new scheme of authorisations for vine plantings

New EU rules for a [scheme of authorisations for vine plantings](#), allowing for a yearly limited expansion in the EU's wine area, were published by the European Commission on 9 April, 2015. As agreed in the [2013 Common Agricultural Policy reform](#), the new scheme will apply from 1 January 2016, replacing the transitional planting rights regime.

The rules also clarify the transition from the current system to the new scheme and how valid planting rights can be converted into authorisations.

Links: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4752_en.htm

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:L:2015:093:TOC>

3. New rules on labelling the origin of fresh meat apply

[New rules on the labelling of fresh, chilled or frozen meat](#) (from sheep, goats, pigs and poultry) will apply from 1 April 2015. The rules require the label to indicate the country which the animal was "reared in" and "slaughtered in". If animals were born, raised and slaughtered in the same country, then the label can simply state the "origin" country. Agreed by Member States in December 2013, the new rules were required under the [Food Information for Consumers Regulation](#) of 2011. They reflect the consumer interest above all in the place where animals are farmed while avoiding a major additional burden and costs for the supply chain.

Links: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32013R1337>

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32011R1169>

4. Milk quotas come to an end after 31 years in place

31 March 2015 was the last day of the milk quota regime, introduced in 1984 as a temporary measure to address the structural oversupply on the EU market that had led to the infamous "milk lakes" and "butter mountains". The EU Member States and the European Commission decided in 2003 that quotas would not be prolonged beyond 2015, and since then transitional steps to provide a "soft landing" were put in place, such as a gradual increase of national quotas. Now, with the global demand expected to increase by an average of 2,1% a year, the end of quotas means that EU farmers will be able to fully benefit from this growth, especially for added-value products like cheese.

Several support measures remain in place for milk producers: from direct payments and voluntary coupled support to investments through rural development programmes or even public intervention and private storage if need be. The Milk Package also reinforces the dairy farmers' position in the market chain.

Links: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4694_en.htm?locale=hu

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-4697_en.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/milk-quota-end/history/index_en.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/milk-quota-end/index_en.htm

For market trends, you can visit the [Milk Market Observatory](#).

5. *Agriculture: European Commission proposes to extend application deadline for direct payments*

The European Commission proposed on 19 March, 2015, the extension of the deadline of aid applications for Direct Payments to Monday June 15th. This represents an extension of one month on the original May 15th deadline. The extension would also apply to area-based payments in the Pillar II of the CAP.

Deadlines to submit aid applications are fixed by the Member States and, under current rules, shall not be later than 15 May. The extension would apply for 2015 only and will be voluntary.

6. *EU Commissioner Bulc and seven Transport Ministers from the Alpine states in Austria to promote sustainable transport*

On 19 and 20 March 2015, EU Commissioner **Bulc** attended a congress in Innsbruck (Austria) with seven Transport Ministers from the Alpine States (Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein, Slovenia and Switzerland) to discuss the development of transport solutions across the Alpine region. In the presence of some 500 participants, the Commissioner, Ministers and promoters of key Alpine crossing projects discussed the challenges of preparing, implementing and financing large-scale projects that cross borders of several Member States. Once completed, these projects will significantly change the flow of goods and passengers' mobility across the Alps, and improve economic relations. On 20 March the Commissioner and the Ministers signed a declaration renewing their commitment to further promote sustainable transport in the region.

Links:

http://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/infrastructure/ten-t-guidelines/corridors/rhine-alp_en.htm

<http://www.bbt-se.com/en/home/>

7. *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, 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.

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>

VI. ENERGY, RENEWABLE ENERGY, CLIMATE CHANGE, ENVIRONMENT

1. State aid: European Commission approves Dutch support for renewable energy

The European Commission announced on 10 April, 2015 that it has found modifications to an existing Dutch scheme for supporting the production of electricity, gas and heat from renewable sources to be in line with EU state aid rules. The scheme is expected to make an important contribution to the decarbonisation of the economy. The Dutch scheme, Stimulerend Duurzame Energieproductie (SDE+), is based on a competitive bidding process among all forms of renewable energy to determine the level of the premiums that will be paid to the beneficiaries. The scheme has been expanded to include support for the co-firing of biomass, and now includes a separate bidding process for electricity produced from offshore wind. Moreover, from 1 January 2016, no subsidies will be paid for periods in which the wholesale price is negative. The SDE+ will be financed through an increased energy tax paid by consumers. The Commission assessed the measure under its [Guidelines for Environmental and Energy aid](#) adopted in April 2014 and found that the measure supports renewable energy in a market based way, as required by the Guidelines. The Commission therefore concluded that the measure would further common energy and environmental objectives without unduly distorting competition in the Single Market. The non-confidential version of the decision will be made available under the case number [SA.39399](#) in the [State Aid Register](#) on the [DG Competition website](#) once any confidentiality issues have been resolved.

2. Mergers: European Commission clears joint venture between Global Infrastructure Management and ACS in renewable energy sector

As announced on 30 March, 2015, the European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the creation of a joint venture by Global Infrastructure Management of the US and ACS, Servicios, Comunicaciones y Energía of Spain. The joint venture will develop, build and operate renewable energy assets. Global Infrastructure Management manages equity funds that invest in infrastructure assets in the energy, transport and waste sectors. ACS provides engineering services in manifold sectors such as energy, mining, water treatment and other energy infrastructures. The assets of the joint venture were previously owned by ACS. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns, because it creates no new overlaps between the activities of the joint venture and its parent companies. The transaction was examined 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.7539](#).

Link: http://ec.europa.eu/competition/index_en.html

3. Maritime stakeholders confirm joint efforts for Blue Growth in Baltic Sea Region

A stakeholder-driven, cross-Baltic joined effort for Blue Growth that could bring more jobs and innovation in the region. This was the main goal of the [conference](#) of Maritime Stakeholders Platform in the Baltic Sea Region in Kiel on 26 March, 2015, which brought together all key maritime stakeholders from business, academia and the public sector across the Baltic Sea region to discuss smart specialisation, maritime technologies and skills and employment. The conference represented the first step of the European Commission's "[Sustainable Blue Growth Agenda for the Baltic Sea Region](#)" adopted in May 2014.

Link:

http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/newsroom/cf/mare/itemlongdetail.cfm?item_id=16493&subweb=342&lang=en

4. Energy Union: EU-Turkey High Level Energy Dialogue officially launched by EC Vice-President Maros Šefčovič

On 16 March 2015, EC Vice-President Šefčovič and Turkish Energy Minister Yildiz launched a new High Level Energy Dialogue between the EU and [Turkey](#). Both agreed to hold the High Level Energy Dialogue at ministerial level on a more regular basis, at least once a year. The next Dialogue will include all relevant energy sectors such as gas, electricity, nuclear, renewables, energy efficiency and climate action, in particular with a view to the preparation to [COP21](#) in Paris. It will take place still this year, with the participation of EC Climate Action and Energy Commissioner Arias Cañete and Turkish Energy Minister Yildiz. Both as a candidate country currently engaging in accession negotiations with the EU and a contributor to the EU's energy security, Turkey has made an important progress in aligning its legislation with the "acquis communautaire". The screening of Turkey's energy legislation against the "energy acquis" has been completed. In this regard, Parties have both agreed to improve cooperation and their policy dialogue in the energy sector, which plays a key role in their relations. The launching of the High Level Dialogue also clearly underlines the commitment of the European Commission, as reflected in its recently adopted Energy Union Framework Strategy of 25 February 2015, to establish strategic energy partnerships with increasingly important energy producing and transit countries.

Links: [Joint Statement on the EU-Turkey High Level Energy Dialogue](#).

<https://ec.europa.eu/energy/en/news/southern-gas-corridor-vice-president-%C5%A1ef%C4%8Dovi%C4%8D-turkey-%E2%80%93-read-joint-declaration>

http://ec.europa.eu/energy/sites/ener/files/documents/Joint%20statement%20high-level%20dialogueTurkey%20FINAL_0.pdf

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

5. 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.

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

[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

[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

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

The European Commission opened on 5 March, 2015 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. With a total of €650 million for grants foreseen in 2015, this is the first of two calls planned for 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://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

7. 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>

8. 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. Mergers: European Commission clears acquisition of Acenden and AMS by The Blackstone Group and TPG

The European Commission on 24 March, 2015, approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of Acenden Ltd. and AMS Decision Advisors LLP, both of the UK, by The Blackstone Group L.P. and Koala HoldCo, LLC, a portfolio company of TPG Global, LLC and TPG Special Situations Partners, LLC, all of the US. Ascenden and AMS Decision Advisors provide mortgage administration and management services for lenders in the UK and, for Acenden, also in Ireland. The Blackstone Group is a global alternative asset manager and provider of financial advisory services. TPG Global and its investment platform TPG Special Situations Partners are a global private investment firm, investing in a variety of companies through acquisitions and corporate restructuring. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would not raise competition concerns, because the companies' activities overlap only to a very limited extent. The transaction was examined 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.7545](#).

Link: http://ec.europa.eu/competition/index_en.html

2. *The European Commission and the European Investment Bank facilitate access to credit for farmers*

The European Commission and the European Investment Bank (EIB) on 23 March, 2015 presented a model financial instrument aimed at easing access to finance for agricultural producers, including young farmers. This is the first new product developed in the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding on co-operation in agriculture and rural development within the EU, signed in July 2014.

Link: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4647_en.htm

3. *Mergers: European Commission clears acquisition of Friends Life and Tenet by Aviva*

The European Commission approved on 16 March, 2015, under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of Friends Life Group Limited and Tenet Group Limited by Aviva Plc; all of the UK. Friends Life and Aviva both provide investment and insurance products. In addition, Friends Life also distributes insurance products from other suppliers. Tenet is an intermediary that distributes other suppliers' investment and insurance products as well as mortgages. The parties' activities overlap for the supply of insurance products in France, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Spain and the UK and for insurance distribution in the UK. The main impact of the transaction is in the area of life insurance in the UK. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because the combined market positions of the companies are moderate and a number of other strong players will continue to provide life insurance products and insurance distribution services in the UK and in all other countries where the companies' activities overlap. The transaction was examined under the normal merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.7478](#).

Link: http://ec.europa.eu/competition/index_en.html

4. *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

5. 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](#)

6. 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) 
- [Executive summary](#)  (684 KB) 
- [Full external study](#)  (5 MB) 

VIII. INNOVATION

1. Two Galileo satellites successfully launched

Galileo, the EU's satellite navigation programme, placed two more satellites into orbit in the night from Friday 27 to Saturday 28 March.

Galileo is the EU programme to develop a global satellite navigation system under European civilian control. The improved positioning and timing information supplied by Galileo will have positive implications for many services and users: in-car navigation devices, mobile phones, road and rail transport systems, and search and rescue functions. The next launch of Galileo satellites is scheduled for September 2015. The Commission aims to ensure the provision of initial Galileo services by 2016 and full services by 2020, by which time the Galileo network of 30 satellites and their supporting ground stations will be completed.

Links: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4717_en.htm

[MEMO/15/4711](#) - FAQ about Galileo, the EU's satellite navigation programme

[Galileo on Europa](#)

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-4711_en.htm

2. Ukraine joins the Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme

On 20 March, 2015, [Ukraine](#) signed an agreement to join [Horizon 2020](#), the European Union's €80 bn research funding programme, on equal terms with EU Member States and other [associated countries](#). This is the first EU programme in which Ukraine has chosen to participate following the beginning of the provisional application of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement. New funding for research and innovation will open up new opportunities for Ukrainian research institutions, universities and businesses to support the country's economic development.

Links: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4640_en.htm

[Horizon 2020](#)

[Associated countries](#) to Horizon 2020

EU-Ukraine [research and innovation cooperation](#)

IX. INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

1. Giving Citizens a Say: European Commission Report on European Citizens' Initiatives

In the past three years, an estimated six million Europeans have supported European Citizens' Initiatives (ECI) and used their voice to bring important causes directly to the attention of European policy makers. On 31 March, 2015 the European Commission published a Report looking at the application of this new tool since its entry into force on 1 April 2012. The fact that two Citizens' Initiatives have gone through the full process shows that the Regulation establishing the ECI has been fully implemented. However, the Report acknowledges that there is still room to improve the process and identifies a number of possible issues for further discussion with stakeholders and institutions.

Links: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4729_en.htm

[ECI Report](#)

[ECI Regulation – consolidated version](#)

[ECI website](#)

[Commission Communication on the Right2Water ECI](#)

[Commission Communication on the One of Us ECI](#)

2. Speech by President Juncker at the BusinessEurope Day event

Speaking at the BusinessEurope Day event on 26 March, 2015, President **Juncker** said: *"My true ambition is to create a Europe that is not distant and directive. Not a Europe that tells citizens how to be, or business how to operate. But a Europe engaged in dialogue and debate, working with and for Europeans for a better future."*

Link to the whole speech: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-15-4708_en.htm

3. Adoption of the 2014 European Neighbourhood Reports

In a set of annual reports adopted on 25 March, 2015, the European Commission and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy assessed the implementation of the [European Neighbourhood Policy](#) (ENP) with the 16 partner countries in the [East](#) and the [South](#) and made recommendations for the year ahead. 2014 saw the signing of association agreements with [Georgia](#), the [Republic of Moldova](#) and [Ukraine](#), democratic transition in [Tunisia](#) and strengthened relations with [Morocco](#). Nevertheless, conflicts and crises, involving security and humanitarian problems, persisted in both the East and South, especially in the form of terrorist threats and attacks. Significant support was mobilised by the EU to help [Lebanon](#) and [Jordan](#) cope with the increasing effects of the [Syria](#) crisis.

Links: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4677_en.htm

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4548_en.htm

ENP – country reports:

Armenia: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-4689_en.htm

Azerbaijan: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-4688_en.htm

Egypt: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-4687_en.htm

Georgia: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-4686_en.htm

Israel: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-4685_en.htm

Jordan: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-4684_en.htm

Lebanon: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-4683_en.htm

Moldova: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-4682_en.htm

Morocco: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-4678_fr.htm

Palestine: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-4681_en.htm

Tunisia: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-4680_fr.htm

Ukraine: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-4679_en.htm

In the absence of an Association Agenda or an ENP Action Plan, country reports have not been drafted on Algeria, Belarus, Libya and Syria.

4. New expertise exchange initiative to better manage Regional Policy investments

On 24 March, 2015 the European Commission launched a new platform for public service officials to exchange expertise and best practice around Europe to further improve how EU investments are spent and managed. By helping Member States strengthen administrative capacity, [TAIEX REGIO PEER 2 PEER](#), or PEER 2 PEER, is part of a broader initiative to fully use the potential of Regional Policy to create jobs and ensure sustainable growth, in line with the goals set by the [Europe 2020 Strategy](#) and the EU's new [315 billion euro Investment Plan](#). This is particularly relevant for countries with low absorption rates, such as Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

Links: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4655_en.htm

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-4654_en.htm

[European Commission and Transparency International join forces for better spending of EU investments](#)

InfoRegio website: [Improving how funds are invested and managed](#)

ESF website: [Better public services](#)

[PEER 2 PEER](#)

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/how/improving-investment/taix-regio-peer-2-peer/

5. Tripartite Social Summit: focus on jobs, growth and investment for Europe

At the Tripartite Social Summit on 19 March, 2015, EU leaders and social partners focused on jobs, growth and investment priorities for Europe. The participants in the Social Summit discussed the analysis of the Member States's economic situation contained in the [Country Reports](#) recently published by the European Commission, as well as the preparation of the further steps in the [European Semester](#) of economic policy coordination, including the preparation of national programmes expected in April. The Social Summit also discussed progress with the Investment Plan for Europe and the views of social partners on other major EU policy initiatives, such as the [Energy Union](#).

Link: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4633_en.htm

For more details about the High-Level Conference on Social Dialogue:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/socialdialogue2015>

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

For more information on Social Dialogue: <http://ec.europa.eu/socialdialogue>

6. Signature of EU-Greenland association agreement

President Juncker on 19 March, 2015, participated in a signing ceremony, alongside Greenlandic Premier Kim Kielsen and Danish Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt, of a "Joint Declaration" on the relationship between the EU and Greenland. The Joint Declaration signed on 27 June 2006 needed to be updated as it did not reflect the institutional changes that have taken place, in the meantime, within the Kingdom of Denmark. The Declaration confirms the long lasting links between the European Union and Greenland and reiterates the geostrategic importance of Greenland to the EU.

7. European Semester 2015: College decisions on the performance of the EU Member States

The European Commission sent a strong signal on 25 February, 2015, to the 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

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

EU Commissioner **Jourová** presented the main findings of this year's EU Justice Scoreboard, on 9 March, 2015. 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

9. Meeting the commitments of the new European Commission

Link:

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

10. 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. EU supports top science with €713 million in new research grants

On 12 March, 2015, the European Commission announced that 372 new research grants, worth up to €2.75 million each, will be awarded to excellent scientists in Europe. The grants are part of the [European Research Council's scheme](#) to enable researchers to consolidate their teams and push forward our understanding of issues such as the nature of autism or dyslexia and gravity's role in the universe. The funding comes from the EU's research and innovation programme Horizon 2020 and will be awarded to [researchers of 38 different nationalities](#).

Links: <http://erc.europa.eu/funding-and-grants/funding-schemes/consolidator-grants>

http://erc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/press_release/files/press_release_cog2014_results.pdf

XI. INVESTMENT

1. European Commission clears acquisition of Delta Lloyd by investment fund Apollo

The European Commission on 1 April, 2015, approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of Delta Lloyd of Germany by Apollo of the US. Apollo invests, through affiliated investment funds, in companies and corporate debt all over the world. Delta Lloyd, a subsidiary of Delta Lloyd

N.V., provides life insurance and leases commercial real estate. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would not raise competition concerns, because the companies' activities only overlap in a minimal manner in the real estate rental market in Germany. The transaction was examined 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.7546](#).

Link: http://ec.europa.eu/competition/index_en.html

2. State aid: European Commission orders Romania to recover incompatible state aid granted in compensation for abolished investment aid scheme

According to the announcement made on 30 March, 2015, following an in-depth investigation, the European Commission has concluded that compensation paid by Romania to two Swedish investors for an abolished investment aid scheme breaches EU state aid rules. The beneficiaries have to pay back all amounts already received, which are equivalent to those granted by the abolished aid scheme. The non-confidential version of the decision will be made available under the case number [SA.38517](#) in the State Aid Register on the competition website once any confidentiality issues have been resolved. New publications of state aid decisions on the internet and in the Official Journal are listed in the State Aid Weekly e-News.

Link: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4725_en.htm

3. Investment Plan for Europe: Luxembourg to contribute €80 million

Luxembourg announced on 7, April 2015, that it will contribute €80 million to projects benefiting from finance by the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), which is the core element of the €315 billion Investment Plan for Europe. The contribution will come via its National Promotional Bank [Société Nationale de Crédit et d'Investissement](#) (SNCI). Luxembourg is the fifth country to contribute to the Plan even before the European Fund for Strategic Investments has been formally set up, following the lead of Germany, Spain, France and Italy.

Germany announced in February that it would contribute **€8 billion to the Investment Plan** through [KfW](#). Also in February, **Spain** announced a **€1.5 billion** contribution through [Instituto de Crédito Oficial](#) (ICO). In March, **France** announced a **€8 billion** pledge through [Caisse des Dépôts](#) (CDC) and [Bpifrance](#) (BPI), and **Italy** announced it will contribute **€8 billion** via [Cassa Depositi e Prestiti](#) (CDP).

Link: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4745_en.htm

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

After announcing its ambitious [Investment Plan for Europe](#) to boost jobs and growth, the Juncker Commission 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. The legislative proposal is currently under discussion in the European Parliament with the aim to conclude the co-decision procedure with the EC, the EP and the European Council by June, thus ensuring the Investment Plan become operational by September

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

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. Juncker Investment Package

President **Juncker Investment Plan for Europe** announced 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: Euro area unemployment rate at 11.3% - EU28 at 9.8%

According to figures published by Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, on 31 March, 2015, the euro area (EA19) seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate was 11.3% in February 2015, down from 11.4% in January 2015, and from 11.8% in February 2014. This is the lowest rate recorded in the euro area since May 2012. The EU28 unemployment rate was 9.8% in February 2015, down from 9.9% in January 2015 and from 10.5% in February 2014. This is the lowest rate recorded in the EU28 since September 2011.

Link: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/6764147/3-31032015-AP-EN.pdf/6e77d229-9c87-4671-9a52-b6450099597a>

2. EUROSTAT: Labour costs in the EU - Hourly labour costs ranged from €3.8 to €40.3 across the EU Member States in 2014, lowest in Bulgaria, highest in Denmark

In 2014, average hourly labour costs in the whole economy (excluding agriculture and public administration) were estimated to be €24.6 in the European Union (EU) and €29.2 in the euro area (EA18).

However, this average masks significant gaps between EU Member States, with the lowest hourly labour costs recorded in Bulgaria (€3.8), Romania (€4.6), Lithuania (€6.5) and Latvia (€6.6) and the highest in Denmark (€40.3), Belgium (€39.1), Sweden (€37.4) and Luxembourg (€35.9). Within the business economy, labour costs per hour were highest in industry (€25.5 in the EU and €32.0 in the euro area), followed by services (€24.3 and €28.2 respectively) and construction (€22.0 and €25.8). In the mainly non-business economy (excluding public administration), labour costs per hour were €24.7 in the EU and €29.1 in the euro area in 2014.

Labour costs are made up of wages & salaries and non-wage costs such as employers' social contributions. The share of non-wage costs in the whole economy was 24.4% in the EU and 26.1% in the euro area, with the lowest in Malta (6.9%) and Denmark (13.1%) and the highest in Sweden (31.6%) and France (33.1%).

Link: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/6761066/3-30032015-AP-EN.pdf/7462a05e-7118-480e-a3f5-34e690c11545>

3. 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.

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](#)

4. Eurostat: National minimum wages in the EU – Monthly minimum wages in euro varied by 1 to 10 across the EU in January 2015

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>

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

The European Commission proposed on 4 February, 2015, 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](#)

XIII. MIGRATION

1. Investing in an open and secure Europe: €1.8 billion to fund Asylum, Migration, Integration and Security

On 25 March, 2015 the European Commission approved 22 new multiannual national programmes under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and the Internal Security Fund (ISF) for the period 2014-2020, worth together approximately €1.8 billion. An additional 36 national programmes will be approved later this year. These two strands of EU funding support Member States' efforts in the fields of asylum, migration and integration, and internal security.

Link: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4662_en.htm

[Directorate General for Migration and Home Affairs Website](#)

[Infographic - Home Affairs Funds](#)

2. EUROSTAT: The number of asylum applicants in the EU jumped to more than 625 000 in 2014

Over a year, the number of asylum applicants registered in the European Union (EU) has increased by 191 000 (+44%) to reach a peak of 626 000 in 2014. In particular, the number of Syrians rose by 72 000, from 50 000 in 2013 to almost 123 000 in 2014.

Link: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/6751779/3-20032015-BP-EN.pdf/35e04263-2db5-4e75-b3d3-6b086b23ef2b>

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 Commissioners 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.

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

Q and A: 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. Mergers: European Commission clears acquisition of office real estate properties by Eurazeo and Groupe Crédit Agricole

The European Commission, as announced on 8 April, 2015, has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of joint control over office real estate properties located in Villeurbanne, France, by Eurazeo and Groupe Crédit Agricole, of France. Eurazeo is an investment company active in various sectors, including real estate. Groupe Crédit Agricole is a provider of banking and insurance services, which invests in real estate properties. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would not raise competition concerns, given the Parties' moderate combined market position in the real estate sector in France and, in particular, in the area of Lyon where the acquired assets are located. The transaction was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information on the EC's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number M. 7556.

XV. TAX

1. Fighting tax evasion: European Commission concludes negotiations with Switzerland on landmark tax transparency agreement

The European Commission on 19 March, 2015 concluded negotiations on an ambitious new tax transparency agreement with Switzerland, marking a major step forward in the fight against tax evasion. Under this new agreement, Member States and Switzerland will automatically exchange information on the full range of financial account information from 2018. This means that EU residents will no longer be able to hide undeclared income in Swiss accounts to evade paying tax.

Member States will receive, on an annual basis, the names, addresses, tax identification numbers and dates of birth of their residents with accounts in Switzerland, as well as a broad set of other financial and account balance information. This is fully in line with the new [OECD/G20 global standard for the automatic exchange of information](#). The new EU-Swiss agreement was initialled by Commission and Swiss negotiators on 19 March, 2015. It will be signed following authorisation by the Council on one side and the Swiss Government on the other, both of which are expected to be before the summer.

Link: http://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/taxation/tax_fraud_evasion/acting_globally/index_en.htm

2. Combatting corporate tax avoidance: European Commission presents a first Tax Transparency Package

The European Commission on 18 March, 2015, presented a package of tax transparency measures as part of its ambitious agenda to tackle corporate tax avoidance and harmful tax competition in the EU. This marks the start of a new era of transparency. This package includes a [legislative proposal](#) introducing the automatic exchange of information between Member States on their tax rulings and a [communication](#) outlining a number of other initiatives to advance the tax transparency agenda in the EU.

Corporate tax avoidance is thought to deprive EU Member States' public budgets of billions of euros a year. It also undermines fair burden-sharing among tax-payers and fair competition between businesses. Companies rely on the complexity of tax rules and the lack of cooperation between Member States to shift profits and minimise their taxes. Therefore, boosting transparency and cooperation is vital in the battle against aggressive tax planning and abusive tax practices. This current Tax Transparency Package aims to ensure that Member States are equipped with the information they need to protect their tax bases and effectively target companies that try to escape paying their fair share of taxes.

Links: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4610_en.htm

More information: [The Communication](#)

[The Proposal on automatic exchange of information](#)

[Memo/15/4609](#) - http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-4609_en.htm

[Website](#)

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.

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

XVI. TRADE, FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS

1. European Commission reports: Trade is a powerful engine for growth and jobs in Europe – the case of South Korea

EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia **Malmström** presented on 27 March, 2015, two reports highlighting the importance of trade agreements for the European economy: a [discussion paper](#) public, which was presented earlier to Member States at the Informal Meeting of Trade Ministers in Riga, as well as the Annual Report on the implementation of the [EU-South Korea Free Trade Agreement](#). “*The EU-South Korea FTA is a great example of why we need free trade: it's given a boost to EU exports and created new business opportunities in the fast-growing East Asian market. This confirms that European companies and consumers are very well placed to benefit from increased international trade, since the EU is the world's largest exporter and importer*”, said Commissioner **Malmström**. In the European Union 31 million jobs – over 14% of total employment – depend on exports to third countries and each additional €1bn of exports supports 14,000 additional jobs across the EU.

Link: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4695_en.htm

http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2015/march/tradoc_153270.pdf

http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2015/march/tradoc_153271.pdf

2. EUROSTAT: International trade in goods in 2014: EU's top trading partners in 2014: the United States for exports, China for imports, Trade between Member States largely prevails though

According to EUROSTAT publication released on 27 March, 2015, in the year 2014, the United States (€515.6 bn, or 15% of total EU trade in goods) and China (€467.3 bn, or 14%) continued to be the two main goods trading partners of the European Union (EU), well ahead of Russia (€285.1 bn, or 8%) and Switzerland (€236.9 bn, or 7%).

Trends observed over recent years are however very different for these top trading partners of the EU. The share of the United States in EU total trade in goods recorded a significant and almost continuous fall, from 24% in 2002 to 15% in 2014. In contrast, the share of China has doubled, rising from 7% in 2002 to 14% in 2014. In particular, the shares of the United States and China in EU trade almost converged in 2010, before stabilising since then. The increase in the share of Russia in total EU trade in goods was less significant (from 5% in 2002 to 8% in 2014), while the share of Switzerland remained almost unchanged at 7% over the same time period. In 2014, machinery and transport

equipment, other manufactured goods and mineral fuels represented the main categories of product in EU international trade with the rest of the world.

Link: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/6760204/6-27032015-AP-EN.pdf/15911e52-a591-400d-af4c-d3ac72affa8c>

3. European Commission presents EU Trade and Investment Barriers Report

On 19 March, 2015, the European Commission presented to the European Council the fifth edition of the [Trade and Investment Barriers Report](#). Identifying concrete obstacles to trade, it concludes that the EU's strategic economic partners – Argentina, Brazil, China, India, Japan, Russia, and the United States – maintain a variety of barriers that significantly hinder international trade and investment opportunities of EU companies.

The Trade and Investment Barriers Report is part of a broader EU trade enforcement strategy set out in the Commission Communication "[Trade, Growth and World Affairs](#)" published in 2010. A new report has been presented to the European Council every spring since 2011.

Links: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4618_en.htm

Trade and Investment Barriers Report 2015:

http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2015/march/tradoc_153259.pdf

The Market Access Strategy:

http://ec.europa.eu/trade/creating-opportunities/trade-topics/market-access/index_en.htm

4. Council of the EU decides to publish mandate for Trade in Services Agreement

On 11 March, 2015, the European Commission welcomed the decision by the Council of the EU to make public the directives for the negotiations for a plurilateral [Trade in Services Agreement](#) or TiSA. This decision follows a [letter](#) sent by Trade Commissioner Cecilia **Malmström** on 29 January 2015, asking the Latvian Presidency for its publication. Commenting on today's decision Commissioner **Malmström** said: *"I am glad that EU governments have agreed my proposal to make the TiSA negotiating mandate public. This is yet another step in our commitment to improve transparency in EU trade negotiations. Citizens will be able to see for themselves that in the TiSA negotiations the EU protects public services, preserves the right to regulate at all levels of government and ensures that we can maintain the highest standard"*.

The Trade in Services Agreement is a trade agreement currently being negotiated by 24 members of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), including the EU. Together, these countries account for 70% of world trade in services.

Links: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4590_en.htm

Read the text of the negotiating mandate: <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-6891-2013-ADD-1-DCL-1/en/pdf>

Commissioner Malmström's letter requesting the publication of the mandate: http://ec.europa.eu/carol/?fuseaction=download&documentId=090166e59c73127c&title=CM_signed.pdf

More information at the European Commission website dedicated to TiSA:
<http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/in-focus/tisa/questions-and-answers/>

XVII. TRANSATLANTIC TRADE & INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIP (TTIP)

1. Latest EC publication on TTIP: *The Top 10 Myths about TTIP, Separating fact from fiction*

Link: http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2015/march/tradoc_153266.pdf

2. The 8th Round of negotiations held in Brussels

The European Commission published on 10 February, 2015 negotiating documents following the close of the eighth round of TTIP negotiations, held in Brussels on 2-6 February, 2015.

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:

- **20-24 April, 2015:** Ninth TTIP round of negotiations to take place in New York

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
- http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2014/may/tradoc_152462.pdf
- http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2015/march/tradoc_153263.pdf 20 March 2015

- **TTIP 8th Report** published on 24 February 2015:

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

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

The European Commission published 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 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.

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

[All texts \(textual proposals, position papers, Reader's Guide and factsheets\) are available online](#)

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

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

4. List of Lead Negotiators for TTIP

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

5. TTIP Advisory Group

Link to the refreshed Member information:

http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2014/january/tradoc_152102.pdf

XVIII. SPECIFIC FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

1. EU Solidarity Fund: €66.5 million for Bulgaria, Italy and Romania after severe flooding

On 9 April, 2015, the European Commission granted aid worth €66.5 million from the European Union Solidarity Fund to Bulgaria, Italy and Romania following three natural disasters in 2014. The aid — €1.98 million to Bulgaria, €56 million to Italy and nearly €8.5 million to Romania — aims to partially cover the emergency costs of recovery operations following floods. It will particularly help restore vital infrastructure and services, reimburse the cost of emergency and rescue operations, and cover some of the clean-up costs in the disaster-stricken regions.

Links: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4746_en.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/index.cfm/en/funding/solidarity-fund/

2. Italy: European Commission restarts payments under the Operational Programme for the region of Calabria

The European Commission on 1 April, 2015, notified [Italy](#) that EU payments under the [Operational Programme for the region of Calabria](#) for the programming period 2007-2013 can now restart. The Commission will proceed with a payment of 796 million euro from the [European Regional Development Fund \(ERDF\)](#) till the end of April.

Links: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/index.cfm/en/funding/erdf/

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/information/cohesion-policy-achievement-and-future-investment/factsheet/italy_en.pdf

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/index.cfm/en/atlas/programmes/2007-2013/italy/operational-programme-calabria

3. Agriculture: 150 million euro approved for the School Fruit Scheme

The national allocation of the 150 million euro of EU funds for the [School Fruit and Vegetables Scheme](#) in 2015-16, proposed by the European Commission, was accepted by Member States on 17 March, 2015. This scheme aims at distributing portions of fruit and vegetables in schools, potentially reaching 12 million children aged 6 to 10 years old across the 25 participating Member States. It was established in 2009 to reverse the trend of declining fruit and vegetables consumption by specifically addressing children. In turn, higher fruit and vegetables consumption is also supporting efforts to establish healthier eating habits amongst school children. Nutrition plays an important role in combating health problems related to poor nutrition, such as child obesity. Since 2014, the scheme also co-funds accompanying educational measures to explain the potential benefits.

Link: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/sfs/index_en.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/newsroom/196_en.htm

4. 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.

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 \(EU 223/2014\)](#)

XIX. COUNTRY SPECIFIC SUPPORT

1. The EU remains the world's largest aid donor in 2014

The European Union and its Member States have kept their place as the world's largest aid donor in 2014. They provided more than half of the Official Development Assistance (ODA) reported last year to the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD/DAC). This is shown by data published on 8 April, 2015, by the [Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development \(OECD\)](#). The new figures show that EU collective ODA (i.e. ODA from both EU institutions and Member States) reached 0.42% of EU Gross National Income (GNI) in 2014, increasing to EUR 58.2 billion. This means an increase of 2.4% from 2013.

Links: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4747_en.htm

MEMO/15/4748: Publication of preliminary data on Official Development Assistance :

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-4748_en.htm

DG International Cooperation and Development: http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/index_en.htm

2. EU-Ukraine: European Commission welcomes Council's approval of additional €1.8bn assistance

The Council of the European Union on 1 April, 2015 approved the European Commission's [proposal](#) for new [macro-financial assistance \(MFA\)](#) to Ukraine. Only a few days after the [European Parliament's approval](#) the week before, this paved the way for swift disbursement of up to €1.8bn in medium-term loans in 2015 (€1.2bn) and 2016 (€600m). The European Commission on 31 March, 2015, also decided to disburse a final tranche of €250m under MFA 1, which is expected to take place still in April 2015.

The new MFA comes on top of [what the EU is already contributing](#) via the State Building contract in terms of humanitarian and technical assistance and in terms of project assistance. In the course of 2014, the Commission disbursed €1.36bn in support of Ukraine under [existing MFA programmes](#).

Links: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-3020_en.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/international/neighbourhood_policy/ukraine_en.htm

For more information on MFA operations, including this given proposed Decision:

http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/eu_borrower/macro-financial_assistance/index_en.htm

3. EU continues its strong support for the victims of Syria's crisis

The EU significantly increased its funding in response to the [Syria](#) crisis on 31 March, 2015, at the [Third International Pledging Conference for Syria](#) in Kuwait. Together, the European Commission and Member States pledged close to €1.1 billion, double the overall EU pledge at the 2014 Conference.

EU increases its emergency aid in Yarmouk, Syria: The European Union is providing emergency funding of €2.5 million for life-saving assistance to Palestinian refugees in Syria, as announced on 7 April, 2015. With intense fighting in the Yarmouk refugee camp near Damascus, the humanitarian situation is dramatically deteriorating for 18 000 Palestinian refugees and Syrians in the camp. The EU's aid (cash and emergency relief items) will be channeled through UNRWA, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees.

Links: http://eeas.europa.eu/syria/index_en.htm

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4732_en.htm

[Third International Humanitarian Pledging Conference for Syria](#)

<http://www.unocha.org/syria/third-pledging-conference>

[Syria factsheet](#)

[The EU's relations with Syria](#)

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

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4743_en.htm

4. More than € 1 billion pledged in support of Guinea-Bissau

Pledges amounting to over €1 billion were announced on 25 March, 2015, at the International Conference in support of [Guinea-Bissau](#) organized in Brussels, which the European Union hosted together with the Government of Guinea-Bissau and the UN Development Programme (UNDP). The pledges came from more than 70 delegations from all over the world. They include €160 million that will be provided by the EU.

Links: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4703_en.htm

[IP/15/4663: A fresh start for Guinea-Bissau: EU to resume cooperation and provide new support](#)

[Guinea-Bissau: EU lifts restrictions on cooperation](#)

[The EU's relations with Guinea-Bissau](#)

https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/countries/guinea-bissau_en

5. EU development cooperation of €30.5 billion worth of 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

6. 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

7. 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). **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.

8. 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.

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

9. EU steps up humanitarian assistance to Syria crisis

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**, were 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

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

The European Union 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.

11. 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

12. 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

XX. EU CALL FOR TENDERS, APPLICATIONS

1. Pre-information notices (2015) in the field of TRADE

["Unified MADB tender related to the purchase of data on 'Tariffs', 'Procedures and formalities' and 'Rules of origin' for the market access database \(MADB\) for years 2016 through 2018 for a minimum of 108 customs areas" 2015/S 058-101075 TRADE2015/G3/G05](#)

- Published: 24 Mar 2015
- Format: 
- **Link:** http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2015/march/tradoc_153325.pdf

[Supply and update of data for the requirements and taxes sections of the European Commission's Export Helpdesk website](#)

- Published: 20 Mar 2015
- Format: 
- **Link:** http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2015/march/tradoc_153269.pdf

2. EU Prize for Women Innovator

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 launched 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.

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

XXI. UPCOMING EVENTS:

1. 27th meeting of the Madrid Forum, 20-21 April 2015

Date: 20 April 2015 to 21 April 2015

Venue: Madrid

The Madrid Forum was set up to discuss issues regarding the creation of the internal gas market. Currently it is addressing the cross-border trade of gas, in particular the tariffication of cross-border gas exchanges, the allocation and management of scarce interconnection capacity and other technical and commercial barriers to the creation of a fully operational internal gas market.

The participants include national regulatory authorities, EU national governments, the European Commission, transmission system operators, gas suppliers and traders, consumers, network users, and gas exchanges. The Forum meets once or twice a year in Madrid and is co-hosted by the Fundación de Estudios de Regulación.

[Agenda](#)

[Hotels](#)

[Presentations](#) 

[overview](#)



28th meeting of the Madrid Forum, 14-15 October 2015

2. 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>

3. 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/>

4. 2015 European Nuclear Energy Forum (ENEF) Plenary Meeting

Date: 26 May 2015 to 27 May 2015

Venue: Prague, Czech Republic

Debates will be held on the following strategic topics:

The role of nuclear in the Energy Union as security of supply

The EU as a world leader on nuclear safety

Creating a market for decommissioning in Europe

Link: <http://ec.europa.eu/energy/en/events/2015-european-nuclear-energy-forum-enef-plenary-meeting>

5. 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

6. 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](#)

7. EU Sustainable Energy Week

Date: 15 June 2015 to 19 June 2015

Venue: Brussels, Belgium

Take part in shaping Europe's sustainable energy future! EU Sustainable Energy Week will bring together public authorities, energy agencies, research organisations, NGOs, businesses, and private consumers to share best practices and inspire ideas on secure, clean and efficient energy. There are plenty of opportunities to get involved, for example, by:

- Competing for the Sustainable Energy Europe Awards.
- Organising an event as part of the Sustainable Energy Days throughout the month of June.
- Participating in the Conference in Brussels.

The Sustainable Energy Europe Awards are officially open. In its 10th edition, the competition is looking for outstanding and innovative projects in three categories: Renewable energy; Energy efficiency; and Cities, communities and regions.

Link: [More information](#)

XXII. 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
Enterprise	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 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-	April 30, 2015.

Competition	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 http://ec.europa.eu/competition/consultations/2015_cmo_regulation/index_en.html	May 05, 2015.
Employment and Social Affairs	Public consultation on service provision to long-term unemployed http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=333&langId=en&consultId=15&isib=0&furtherConsult=yes	May 15, 2015.
Research and Technology	Consultation on the ex-post evaluation of the 7th Framework Programme http://ec.europa.eu/research/consultations/fp7-ex-post-evaluation-2015/consultation_en.htm	May 22, 2015.
Taxation	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” http://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/common/consultations/customs/cash_2015_02_en.htm	June 01, 2015.