

 TODAY'S  
News

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Click on [blue](#) link to view full Press[30 years after 'Val Duchesse': Commission gives a new impetus to the social dialogue](#)

Tomorrow marks the 30th anniversary of the launch of the cooperation with European Social partners at Val Duchesse in 1985. The launch of the social dialogue aimed to involve the European social partners in the internal market process. Three decades later, to give a new impetus to social dialogue at EU level and contribute to a competitive and fair economic recovery, the European Commission will hold a high level event on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March with leaders of European and national employers' and workers' organisations. Vice-President for the Euro and social dialogue, Valdis **Dombrovskis**, commented: *"To progress on the European social model, the **Juncker's** Commission is bridging economic and social policies. A well-functioning social dialogue is a key component for successful design and implementation of reforms that are needed for increasing the competitiveness of our economies as well as for creating more jobs. Building on the past achievements, we should now work on improving the quality of the social dialogue at the EU level."* Marianne **Thyssen**, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, skills and Labour Mobility commented: *"Social dialogue is a prerequisite to make our Social Market Economy work. Well-developed structures have been put in place at EU level, resulting in very concrete achievements. We want to build on what has been achieved over the past decades and give social dialogue a fresh impetus. We need a stronger involvement of social partners to develop adequate responses to the main challenges we are facing in Europe. I therefore look forward to the high level event on 5 March, which will bring together leading representatives from the Commission and social partners at European and national level."*

[Eighth round of TTIP negotiations to kick off](#)

From 2-6 February the eighth round of the [Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership \(TTIP\)](#) negotiations between the EU and the US kicks off in Brussels. The Directorate General for Trade of the European Commission will again organise a stakeholder event on Wednesday 4 February to ensure that a plurality of interests is taken into account during the negotiations. EU chief negotiator Ignacio Garcia Bercero and US chief negotiator Dan Mullaney will hold the closing press conference on Friday 6 February at 15.30. The press conference can be followed live via [EBS](#)

## **[EUROSTAT: Euro area unemployment rate at 11.4% - EU28 at 9.9%](#)**

The euro area (EA18) seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate was 11.4% in December 2014, down from 11.5% in November 2014, and from 11.8% in December 2013. This is the lowest rate recorded in the euro area since August 2012. The EU28 unemployment rate was 9.9% in December 2014, down from 10.0% in November 2014 and from 10.6% in December 2013. This is the first time the rate for the EU28 has fallen below 10.0% since October 2011. These figures are published by Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. Eurostat estimates that 24.056 million men and women in the EU28, of whom 18.129 million were in the euro area, were unemployed in December 2014. Compared with November 2014, the number of persons unemployed decreased by 228 000 in the EU28 and by 157 000 in the euro area. Compared with December 2013, unemployment fell by 1.710 million in the EU28 and by 693 000 in the euro area.

## **[EUROSTAT: Euro area annual inflation down to -0.6%](#)**

Euro area annual inflation is expected to be -0.6% in January 2015, down from -0.2% in December 2014, according to a flash estimate from Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. This negative rate for euro area annual inflation in January is driven by the fall in energy prices (-8.9%, compared with -6.3% in December). Prices are also expected to fall for food, alcohol & tobacco (-0.1%, compared with 0.0% in December) and non-energy industrial goods (-0.1%, compared with 0.0% in December). Only prices for services are expected to increase (1.0%, compared with 1.2% in December).

## **State aid: Commission approves prolongation of Irish credit union resolution scheme**

The European Commission has approved the prolongation of an Irish scheme for the orderly winding-up of credit unions until 30 June 2015. Credit unions are financial cooperatives that provide access to credit and savings facilities to their members. They are regulated by the central bank and required under Irish legislation to keep a minimum reserve as a buffer to absorb losses before they can have any impact on deposits and deposit guarantees. The Commission initially approved the scheme in [December 2011](#) and was prolonged several times, the last time [in July 2014](#). The objective of the scheme is to safeguard financial stability and protect the interests of depositors when a credit union is unable to meet regulatory requirements. The Commission concluded that the scheme was in line with EU state aid rules and in particular with its [guidelines on state aid to banks during the crisis](#). In particular, the prolonged measures are well targeted, proportionate and limited in time and scope. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the reference [SA.39837](#).

## **Mergers: Commission clears creation of a joint venture by National Grid and Elia**

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the creation of a joint venture, Nemo of the UK, by the transmission system operators of the UK, National Grid, and of Belgium, Elia. Nemo will develop, construct and operate an electricity transmission interconnector between Great Britain and Belgium. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would not raise competition concerns, because there are no overlaps between the parties' activities and none of the parties are active in the wholesale or retail supply of electricity. 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.7493](#).

## **Eurobarometer: Support for euro on the rise in Lithuania**

Since Lithuania adopted the euro on 1 January this year, there has been a strong increase in the proportion of Lithuanians who think that their new currency will have positive consequences for their country. Now, 63 % think the consequences for Lithuania will be positive and 54% see positive consequences for

themselves personally. This is the result of the latest Eurobarometer (EB 412) survey, carried out in Lithuania between 16 and 19 January 2015 and published today. The increase in support by 19 and 17 percentage points respectively compares with an earlier survey, conducted in September 2014 (EB 402). Similarly, 60% of Lithuanians now think that the euro is good for their country and 79% think the euro is good for the EU. 92% felt informed about the euro, with 34% saying they felt very well informed. Read the full memo and [Eurobarometer opinion polls](#) online.

### [Commission asks the Council to publish the Trade in Services Agreement \(TiSA\) mandate](#)

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

### **Support for Ukraine**

High Representative/Vice-President **Mogherini** convened an extraordinary Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels on 29 January to discuss the latest escalation of violence in Ukraine. The EU condemned the indiscriminate shelling of residential areas and the escalation of fighting in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. The EU expects Russia to exert its influence and to induce separatists to live up to commitments under the Minsk agreements. A sustainable political solution to the conflict, respecting Ukraine's independence and territorial integrity, must remain the focus. In view of the worsening situation, the Council took decisions concerning restrictive measures. See [Conclusions](#). The European Commission is determined to make sure that Ukraine has all the support it needs to undertake the political and economic reforms necessary to consolidate a democratic, independent, united and prosperous Ukraine. An overview of the Commission's support for Ukraine since the beginning of the crisis is available [here](#).

### **New grants to help close the research excellence gap across Europe**

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

### **Commissioner Andriukaitis hails 50 years of European pharmaceutical legislation**

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the birth of pharmaceutical legislation in the EU. On 26 January 1965 the Council Directive 65/65 on the approximation of the law relating to medicinal products was adopted. That was the first piece of EU pharmaceutical legislation introducing some founding principles that are valid until today. Around those principles a large body of legislation has been developed over the last 50 years in order to guarantee high standards of quality, safety and efficacy for medicinal products. The [full statement](#) of the EU Health Commissioner, Vytenis **Andriukaitis** and a [factsheet](#) are available online

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **Climate Action and Energy Commissioner Miguel Arias Cañete in US for high-level talks on energy**

From 1-3 February 2015, Climate Action and Energy Commissioner Miguel Arias **Cañete** will be travelling to Washington DC for high level talks with US-administration counterparts. Bilateral meetings with US Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz, Special Envoy for Climate Change Todd

Stern, US Trade Representative Mike Froman and Caroline Atkinson, Deputy National Security Advisor for International Economic Affairs, are foreseen among others. The aim is to discuss energy security developments at large and within G7, EU-US energy cooperation, International energy trade and TTIP as well as International climate negotiations particularly ahead of the UN-Conference in Paris in December. Commissioner Arias **Cañete** will also deliver a key note on energy security and global energy prices to the Atlantic Council on 3 February.

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