



TODAYS  
News



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### EU Finance Ministers agree Regulation for Commission's Investment Plan fund

At today's ECOFIN Council, EU Finance Ministers agreed on the Regulation to set up the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), which will be at the heart of the Commission's €315 billion [Investment Plan for Europe](#). The decision clears a major hurdle on the path to matching ample liquidity reserves with potential investment projects. Also today Italy announced that it will contribute €8bn to the Investment Fund via its national promotional bank. European Commission Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, welcomed the news: *"I congratulate the Latvian Presidency for their speedy and skilful steering of negotiations in the Council. By reaching an agreement on the Regulation for a European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) in less than two months, Member States deliver on the commitment they have taken at the European Councils in October and December last year. This also shows that Member States are serious about getting citizens back to work and the European economy back on a sustainable growth path. With Italy announcing a contribution of €8bn to the Investment Plan today, four Member States have now put their money where their mouths are."* [Full statement](#).

### Investment Plan for Europe: Italy to contribute €8 billion

Today Italy announced that it would contribute €8 billion 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 [Cassa Depositi e Prestiti](#). That makes Italy the fourth country to contribute to the Plan even before the European Fund for Strategic Investments has been formally set up. Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, said: *"The ball is rolling! Italy is the fourth Member State to pledge a sizeable contribution to our Investment Plan for Europe. I am delighted that Member States are putting their money where their mouths are, helping us to make the most of the plan and to create jobs and lasting growth in Europe."* Read full [press release](#) .

### OTHER NEWS

**Commission welcomes European Parliament vote to cap interchange fees and improve competition for card-based payments**

The European Commission welcomes the adoption by the European Parliament of a Regulation capping interchange fees for payments using consumer debit and credit cards and improving competition for all card payments. The Commission estimates that the rules when implemented could lead to a reduction of about €6 billion annually in hidden fees for consumer cards. The "Regulation on Interchange Fees for Card-based Payment Transactions", which largely follows a [Commission proposal from July 2013](#), will also give more freedom of choice to retailers, enhance transparency for card transactions, and pave the way for innovative payment technologies to be rolled out. Full [press release](#) available online.

### **New EU rules for safer and more eco-friendly lorries**

Today the European Parliament will vote on the new EU rules for safer and more eco-friendly lorries ([Directive 2013/0195](#)), put forward by the Commission. These rules will allow manufacturers to develop more aerodynamic lorries which will reduce fuel consumption by 7-10%, cut emissions of greenhouse gases, and also enhance road safety. The rules currently setting the specifications for lorries date back to 1996 ([Directive 96/53/EC](#)). They now need to be updated to take account of technological developments. The old rules are the reason why today's lorries are brick shaped, which is the least aerodynamic shape and the main reason for many traffic related casualties.

### **EUROSTAT: Share of renewables in energy consumption up to 15% in the EU in 2013**

In 2013, the share of energy from renewable sources in gross final consumption of energy reached 15.0% in the European Union, compared with 8.3% in 2004, the first year for which the data is available. These figures come from a publication issued by Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. The target to be reached by 2020 for the EU is a share of 20% energy from renewable sources in gross final consumption of energy. Each EU Member State has its own Europe 2020 target. Three out of the 28 EU Member States have already reached the level required to meet their national 2020 targets: Bulgaria, Estonia and Sweden. Read the [EUROSTAT press release](#).

### **EU first donor in UN Iraq aid appeal**

Responding to the urgent humanitarian needs outlined in the United Nation's fast-track appeal for Iraq, the European Union is the first donor to contribute €5 million with more funding to follow. This will help respond to lifesaving operations for the next three months. *"I am deeply concerned by the intense fighting in Iraq, where the death toll and displacement are growing by the day. EU funding will focus on protection, health, water, sanitation and shelter,"* said Christos **Stylianides**, EU Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management. The Iraq crisis has left 5.2 million people in need of [humanitarian assistance](#). Iraq also hosts over 242,000 vulnerable refugees from the conflict in Syria.

### **The Commission approves "Oli de l'Empordà"/"Aceite de L'Empordà" as a new Protected Designation of Origin (PDO)**

The Commission has approved the addition of a new Spanish product to the register of Protected Designation of Origin (PDOs). ["Oli de l'Empordà"/"Aceite de L'Empordà"](#) is an extra-virgin olive oil made with olives of the Argudell, Curivell, Llei de Cadaqués and Arbequina varieties which grow in the province of Girona located in the far north of the Autonomous Community of Catalonia. The newly PDO "Oli de l'Empordà"/"Aceite de L'Empordà" is a well-balanced, greenly fruity oil of medium intensity. The denomination will be added to the list of more than 1,200 products already protected. More information: webpages on [quality products](#) and [DOOR](#) database of protected products.

## **STATEMENTS**

### **European Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Terrorism on 11 March**

First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans**, High Representative/Vice-President Federica **Mogherini**, Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Commissioner Dimitris **Avramopoulos** and Justice, Consumers

and Gender Equality Commissioner Věra **Jourová** issued a [joint statement](#) ahead of the European Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Terrorism, saying "We express our heartfelt sympathy and support to those who still bear the physical and mental scars of such abominable acts." The 11 March marks the eleventh anniversary of the Madrid train bombings that killed 191 and injured at least 1800 people commuting to work. On 11 March 2015, Home Affairs, Migration and Citizenship Commissioner Dimitris **Avramopoulos** and Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality Commissioner Věra **Jourová** will participate in an event that will bring together victims from recent and past attacks, victim associations, and high-level European dignitaries. The event will take place from 14:00 – 18:30 in the Press Room of the European Commission. To register, please email: [Milica.petrovic@ec.europa.eu](mailto:Milica.petrovic@ec.europa.eu)

### **Joint statement by European Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris Avramopoulos and Kosovo Minister of Internal Affairs Skënder Hyseni and Minister of European Integration Bekim Çollaku, following their meeting in Priština on 10 March 2015**

*"In our fruitful meeting today, we took stock of Kosovo's steps to address the recent migration flows to the European Union as well as different aspects related to the implementation of the criteria of the Visa Liberalisation roadmap for Kosovo. Our discussions focused specifically on tightening the licenses of travel companies transporting travellers to the EU, informing the public of the rights and obligations stemming from entry to the Schengen area, enhancing border controls, and ensuring the return and successful reintegration into society of irregular migrants to the European Union. We also discussed ways to enhance operational cooperation and information exchange with Serbian, Hungarian, Austrian and German authorities as well as Frontex. We also discussed more generally the state of play on implementation of the requirements of the visa liberalisation roadmap for Kosovo. The European Commission is expecting a report by the Kosovo institutions on the implementation of the recommendations outlined in the Commission's second evaluation report on the visa liberalisation roadmap with Kosovo. Our meetings today are part of a larger, on-going dialogue at the technical and political levels to assess the work that has to be done in this area - and we look forward to continuing this constructive cooperation."*

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **Commissioners Crețu and Hogan in Romania to discuss financing opportunities for SMEs in the new programming period**

From 10 to 12 March, Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina **Crețu** is in Romania. On 12 March she will participate in a [conference on SMEs financing opportunities for 2014-2020](#). "I want the European Regional Development Fund to be a vital partner for our SMEs", she said, ahead of the conference. "Helping them getting better access to financing, giving shape to their new ideas or accompanying them in their international development are some examples of what Cohesion Policy can do, as we are well aware that SMEs are the main drivers for innovation and growth in Europe." Her trip also includes meetings with Romanian President Klaus Iohannis, Romanian Prime Minister Victor Ponta and the ministers in charge of EU funds, as well as visits of EU-funded projects with Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development Phil **Hogan**. For 2014-2020 Romania will receive 23 billion euro from Cohesion Policy funds. 800 million euro will be invested in SME support and nearly 1 billion euro will be allocated to research and innovation, in particular for technology transfer and cooperation between SMEs and researchers. More information on Cohesion Policy and Romania can be found [here](#).



See what will be discussed in the European Commission, European Council and the European Parliament [here](#)



