



TODAYS News

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Commission replies to "Stop Vivisection" European Citizens' Initiative

The European Commission today set out the actions it intends to take in response to the ['Stop Vivisection' European Citizens' Initiative](#) (ECI). Whilst the Commission shares the conviction that animal testing should be phased out in Europe, its approach for achieving that objective differs from the one proposed in this Citizens' Initiative. It points out that this is the main aim of the EU's rules on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes ([Directive 2010/63/EU](#)), which the Initiative seeks to repeal. Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, said: "*The 'Stop Vivisection' Citizens' Initiative comes at a time of transition – thanks to major technological advances, Europe is reducing the use of animal testing. However, a complete ban on animal research in the EU would be premature and it would risk chasing out biomedical research from Europe.*" The Commission will organise a conference engaging the scientific community and relevant stakeholders in 2016 and on that occasion present a progress report on the actions taken. A press release is available [here](#)

Commission management report stresses accountability, best use of taxpayers' money

The European Commission today presents its 'Synthesis report' on the policy and financial management achievements of 2014. The report shows a greater emphasis on performance culture, via initiatives like an EU budget focused on results. The report finds improved reporting on the policy achievements of the Commission and on the impact of the EU budget, including examples of the added value of the EU funding and key performance indicators towards achieving policy targets. The report brings together annual reporting and declarations from the 49 services of the Commission, as well as the work done by the Internal Audit Service (IAS) for the past year. It allows the Commission to take the overall political responsibility for the management of the EU budget and is an important element of the accountability system. The report is available [here](#).

Brussels Green Week 2015: Tackling declining biodiversity as new data reveals birds and marine life threatened with extinction

Nearly 15% of birds in the EU are threatened with extinction, as well as 7.5% of all marine fish species in European waters, according to [new reports](#) published today by the European Commission. Opening today, [Green Week 2015](#), Europe's biggest conference dedicated to environment policy, will look at the reasons behind these trends and ways to tackle declining biodiversity. First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans**,

responsible for sustainable development, said: *“We need to maintain Europe's biodiversity – it underpins both our quality of life and our economy - 'our health and our wealth'. It is under threat and we need to make sure it's properly protected. Green Week will provide valuable input to our on-going [Fitness Check into the nature directives](#). That means looking for ways to improve the way they work and make them easier to enforce, without compromising the goals that are so important to our citizens.”* Commissioner Karmenu **Vella**, responsible for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, commented on the new data: *“These reports contain some worrying statistics – but they also show the value of well-targeted actions to protect the biodiversity we depend on.”* The three-day conference is open to all and sessions are [web-streamed](#). A press release is available [here](#).

EUROSTAT: Euro area unemployment rate at 11.1%

The euro area (EA19) seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate was 11.1% in April 2015, down from 11.2% in March 2015, and down from 11.7% in April 2014. The EU28 unemployment rate was 9.7% in April 2015, stable compared with March 2015 and down from 10.3% in April 2014. Eurostat estimates that 23.504 million men and women in the EU28, of whom 17.846 million in the euro area, were unemployed in April 2015. Compared with March 2015, the number of persons unemployed decreased by 126 000 in the EU28 and by 130 000 in the euro area. Compared with April 2014, unemployment fell by 1.545 million in the EU28 and by 849 000 in the euro area. Commenting on the Eurostat figures, Marianne **Thyssen**, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility said: *“Lasting economic growth and job creation must be built on structural reforms, investment and fiscal responsibility. There is no silver bullet for growth. It implies determined action at national and EU level. The launch of the Investment Plan for Europe and the new boost given to the Youth Employment Initiative by paying out 1 billion euro just a few days ago are exemplary of this new approach. Through our Youth Guarantee, Member States are engaging in bold structural reforms, reaching out to those furthest from the labour market. We need to maintain this momentum and maintain this encouraging decline in unemployment.”* The Eurostat press release can be found [here](#).

EUROSTAT: Volume of retail trade up by 0.7% in euro area

In April 2015 compared with March 2015, the seasonally adjusted volume of retail trade rose by 0.7% in the euro area (EA19) and by 0.6% in the EU28, according to estimates from Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. In March retail trade fell by 0.6% and 0.4% respectively. In April 2015 compared with April 2014 the retail sales index increased by 2.2% in the euro area and by 2.6% in the EU28. The Eurostat press release can be found [here](#).

STATEMENTS

Statement following yesterday's mission of Commissioner Hahn to former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Commissioner for European Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes **Hahn**, met yesterday in Skopje with Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski and SDSM leader Zoran Zaev, DUI leader Ali Ahmeti and DPA leader Menduh Thaci to continue talks to find a solution to the ongoing political crisis. Discussions were constructive, building on the talks that were held in Strasbourg in the European Parliament (together with 3 MEPs) two weeks ago. All parties committed to putting the interests of the citizens and all communities of the country first. They confirmed their commitment to the Euro-Atlantic process and democratic principles, to strengthening inter-ethnic relations and improving good neighbourly relations. A number of concrete measures were discussed and agreed, to address the critical challenges facing the country. A number of points will need to be further elaborated and agreed over the coming days, and in this respect, the Commissioner has asked to finalise talks with the leaders shortly. It is essential that commitments made by the parties today and in the future are implemented in good faith. For more please see [remarks](#) by Commissioner Hahn following his meeting with political leaders in Skopje.

Statement of Commissioner Navracsics following the resignation of FIFA President Sepp Blatter

Commenting on the resignation of FIFA President Sepp Blatter yesterday evening, Tibor **Navracsics**, EU Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport said: *"I have taken note of the latest developments at FIFA. They represent one step in a long process that now has to follow to restore trust and establish a solid system of good governance at FIFA. We respect sports federations' right to run themselves, but after so many missed opportunities and the complete loss of trust in FIFA, I believe we should support fundamental change and ensure that solid solutions are put in place. I am now beginning to reflect on how the European Commission, and action at EU level more broadly, can play a role in this. We owe it to the millions of fans in Europe and beyond, who love sport – and who deserve so much better. We will develop the close cooperation we have built with a broad range of sport organisations and Member States to strengthen sport's place in society and fight the big threat to its integrity. We have built up sound expertise and created a number of tools which we can use to support those who will now push for change."*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

First Vice-President Timmermans in Bulgaria and Romania for Cross-Border Citizens' Dialogue

On 4-5 June 2015, the European Commission's First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** will visit Bulgaria and Romania. On 4 June 2015 he will exchange views with 750 Bulgarian and Romanian citizens in a [cross-border citizens' dialogue](#) in the Danube town of Ruse, Bulgaria. First Vice-President **Timmermans** said ahead of the Citizens' Dialogue: *"It is no secret that many people in our Member States don't understand what happens in Brussels and don't feel their views are heard. Dialogues like this provide a great opportunity for people to give their opinion for us to understand better what needs to be done to improve their daily lives. I am looking forward to hearing from the people of Bulgaria and Romania and discussing their ideas for making the Union work better together."* A press release is available [here](#).

EU launches new partnership to combat Undernutrition with Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

The European Commission today unveiled a major partnership with the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#) and also announced new funding to tackle the global challenge of undernutrition. Speaking at the [European Development Days \(EDDs\)](#) forum, which kicks off today in Brussels, EU Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven **Mimica**, confirmed the EU's commitment in supporting partner countries to reduce the number of children who are chronically undernourished by at least seven million by 2025. The EU is advancing towards delivering on this commitment by today announcing €23.5 million funding for an innovative new initiative: the National Information Platforms on Nutrition (NIPN). *"We have made huge progress towards meeting the [Millennium Development Goal](#) of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger by 2015,"* said Commissioner **Mimica**. *"But until every child is properly nourished we cannot reduce our efforts. That's why the EU has committed to provide €3.5 billion in actions towards improving nutrition by 2020."* A press release is available [online](#).

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Find out [here](#) what will be discussed next week in the European Commission, European Council and the European Parliament.

