

 TODAY'S
News

Monday, 15 June, 2015

Click on [blue](#) link to view full Press**Commission brings together religious leaders to discuss “Living together and disagreeing well”**

Today, the European Commission hosted the Annual High-Level Meeting with religious leaders. First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** hosted European Parliament Vice-President Antonio **Tajani** and fifteen religious leaders from Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and Mormon communities. This year's meeting discussed the topic “*Living together and disagreeing well*”. On the occasion, First Vice-President **Timmermans** said: “*This dialogue has never been more important. Our societies face fundamental challenges, and churches and religions are among the actors that can play an important role in promoting social cohesion and bridging divides. The leaders here today are partners for the European Commission as they can share their experience in fighting against fundamentalism, discrimination and in building mutual trust and understanding.*” A press release is available [here](#).

Commissioner Moedas and European Research Council celebrate 5000th EU-funded grantee

Today the 5000th prestigious grant of the [European Research Council \(ERC\)](#) will be awarded at a symbolic signing ceremony at the Solvay library with the participation of Carlos **Moedas**, Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation. The recognition goes to Dr Iva Tolić from the Ruđer Bošković Institute in Croatia, whose research is contributing to the development of new therapies against cancer. This is an important milestone in the 8 year lifespan of the ERC, which was set up by the Commission to strengthen excellent science in Europe. With a budget of €13 billion between 2014-2020 from the EU's Horizon 2020 programme, the ERC rewards top scientists to carry out their most daring research ideas that promise to push the boundaries of knowledge. Commissioner **Moedas** said: “*I am honoured and proud to take part in the celebration of this milestone with the ERC, an organisation open to top talent from around the world, regardless of nationality, gender and age. The ERC is the best example that investing in excellent scientists pays off, as their research is crucial for boosting innovation, stimulating the economy and improving our daily lives. Congratulations to the grantee Iva Tolić; a shining example of a bright researcher whose project holds promises in the field of cancer research.*” The ceremony starts at 18:30 and will be broadcast live by [EBS](#). More information is available [here](#).

European Sustainable Energy Week: Commission presents Renewables Energy Progress Report 2015

The [European Sustainable Energy Week](#) (EUSEW) will take place from 15 to 19 June. The centrepiece of this week long series of sustainable energy events everywhere in Europe will be the Policy Conference taking place in the Commission's Charlemagne building from 16 to 18 June. Maroš Šefčovič, Vice-President of the European Commission in charge of Energy Union, and Miguel Arias Cañete, EU Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy, the Members of European Parliament Jerzy Buzek and Claude Turmes will join experts from energy industry, government, civil society, as well as stakeholders and the media. Now in its tenth year, the EUSEW highlights the central role of consumers in the energy system, as stressed by the newly-launched Energy Union Strategy: the European Commission's top priority aiming at ensuring secure, sustainable, competitive and affordable energy. In Europe household energy consumption has increased by 13% in the 20 years to 2010, and households generate some 25% of greenhouse gas emissions: consumers therefore become crucial to improve the environment and encourage energy efficiency. Actions in this area will also have the effects of reducing energy costs for consumers themselves. See [press release](#) and [fact sheet](#). Hashtag: #EUSEW15. An overview of all press events can be found [here](#). More information on the [Commission's website](#).

Mergers: Commission approves acquisition of Sigma-Aldrich by Merck, subject to conditions

The European Commission has approved the proposed acquisition of Sigma-Aldrich by Merck under the EU Merger Regulation. Both companies are active world-wide in the life science sector. The decision is conditional on the divestment of certain Sigma-Aldrich assets, including manufacturing assets in Germany, the rights to certain brands and a sales force. The Commission had concerns that the merged entity would have faced insufficient competitive pressure from the remaining players in the markets for certain laboratory chemicals, with a risk of price rises. The commitments offered by the companies address these concerns. A full press release is available in [EN](#), [FR](#) and [DE](#). More information will be available on the [competition website](#), in the Commission's [public case register](#) under the case number [M.7435](#).

EUROSTAT: Employment up by 0.1% in euro area and by 0.3% in the EU28

The number of persons employed increased by 0.1% in the euro area (EA19) and by 0.3% in the EU28 in the first quarter of 2015 compared with the previous quarter, according to national accounts estimates published by Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. In the fourth quarter of 2014, employment increased by 0.1% in the euro area and 0.2% in the EU28. These figures are seasonally adjusted. Compared with the same quarter of the previous year, employment increased by 0.8% in the euro area and by 1.1% in the EU28 in the first quarter of 2015 (after +0.9% and +1.1% respectively in the fourth quarter of 2014). Eurostat estimates that, in the first quarter of 2015, 228.1 million men and women were employed in the EU28, of which 150.3 million were in the euro area. These figures are seasonally adjusted. This quarterly data on employment provide a picture of labour input consistent with the output and income measure of national accounts. A press release is available [here](#).

EUROSTAT: Consumption per capita varied by almost one to three across EU Member States

Actual Individual Consumption (AIC) is a measure of material welfare of households. Based on first preliminary estimates for 2014, AIC per capita expressed in Purchasing Power Standards (PPS) varied from 49% to 140% of the European Union (EU) average across the Member States. Ten Member States recorded AIC per capita above the EU average in 2014. The highest level in the EU was recorded in Luxembourg, 40% above the EU average. Germany and Austria were more than 20% above. They were followed by Denmark, Belgium, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Finland, France and the Netherlands which all recorded levels between 10% and 15% above the EU average. AIC per capita for twelve Member States lay between the EU average and 30% below. In Italy, Ireland, Cyprus and Spain, the levels were 10% or less below the EU average, while Greece, Portugal and Lithuania were between 10% and 20% below. Malta, the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia were between 20% and 30% below the average. Six Member States recorded AIC per capita more than 30% below the EU average. Estonia, Latvia and Hungary were between 30% and 40% below, while Croatia and Romania had AIC per capita between 40% and 45% below the EU

average and Bulgaria was around 50% below. These figures for Actual Individual Consumption per capita, expressed in PPS, are published by Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. A press release is available [here](#).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Vice-President Šefčovič on Energy Union Tour to Hungary

As part of the [Energy Union Tour](#) launched last month, Vice-President **Šefčovič** will visit Budapest on 16 June. The Vice-President will convey the benefits of the Energy Union for Hungary. This will include meetings with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Péter Szijjártó, a joint meeting with the Hungarian National Assembly Committee on European Affairs, the Committee on Economic Affairs and the Committee of Sustainable Development. Moreover, Vice-President **Šefčovič** will have a meeting with energy sector stakeholders and will deliver a public speech on the Energy Union at 15:00 at the House of the European Union, "Európa Pont" in Budapest. In this context he will meet with representatives of think tanks, civil society organisations, companies from the energy and climate sectors, and students. Finally, Vice-President **Šefčovič** will visit the MOM Cultural Centre and he will participate in a showcase project co-funded by the EU, in the field of energy efficiency, accompanied by municipal decision-makers. On the occasion, Vice-President **Šefčovič** said: "*Hungary has a good level of inter-connectivity to the regional electricity grids. Yet, it can still benefit a great deal from the Energy Union, through increasing its energy efficiency, gaining better diversification of supply, and more targeted energy research funds*". Follow the Energy Union Tour on its [dedicated web page](#),

High Representative / Vice-President Mogherini and Commissioner Stylianides to discuss Sahel cooperation with ministers from Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Chad and Burkina Faso

Security challenges, development cooperation and the humanitarian situation in the Sahel region will be on the table of tomorrow's meeting of High Representative / Vice-President Federica **Mogherini** and the Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides** with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Chad and Burkina Faso. The meeting is meant to further increase the European Union's bilateral relations with these countries and enhance our cooperation. High Representative / Vice-President **Mogherini** will present the EU's new [Regional Action Plan for the Sahel](#) which focuses on prevention and fight against radicalisation, improvements in the lives of young people, migration, mobility and border management and the fight against trafficking and organised crime. The EU and its Member States have a solid engagement with the Sahel countries through its relief aid, development support and the three Common Security and Defence Policy missions in Niger and Mali. Statements by High Representative / Vice-President **Mogherini** and the five Ministers are envisaged for 16:45 tomorrow at the VIP corner of the EEAS

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

