



TODAYS
News

Wednesday, 08 July, 2015

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President Juncker participates in plenary debates on the presentation of the Luxembourgish Presidency, on the June European Council, and following the Extraordinary Euro Summit on Greece

This morning President **Juncker** spoke in the European Parliament plenary on the programme of the Luxembourgish Presidency for the next six months, confirming the Commission's full support for achieving their common goals. President **Juncker** made specific reference to the Energy Union, the Capital Markets Union and the Digital Single Market, calling on the Council Presidency to speed up the process in order to create jobs and growth in Europe. Following on, President **Juncker** addressed colleagues in the Parliament on the results of the June European Council and on the extraordinary Euro Summit in Brussels yesterday evening. On the topic of migration, President **Juncker** said the Council's decision to impose a voluntary system was a decision in the right direction; however he said *"I would have preferred it to be obligatory"*, adding: *"I don't think we are rising to the challenge"*. Referring to Greece, President **Juncker** reiterated that the current context has shown that *"doing nothing is not the right response"*. The right response, he said, is to *"deepen the economic and monetary union, and to make it stronger"*. President **Juncker's** full statements can be found on the EbS [website](#)

EU joining CITES Convention will help in the preparation of the Commission's wildlife trafficking action plan

Today the EU becomes an official party of the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). The Convention aims to ensure that international trade in more than 35 000 wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival. Further to a [public consultation](#) launched in 2014, the European Commission services have started the preparatory work for an EU Action Plan against wildlife trafficking, for which the EU accession to CITES constitutes an important milestone. Karmenu **Vella**, European Commissioner for Environment, Fisheries and Maritime Affairs said: *"Drugs, weapons, human trafficking and wildlife trafficking use the same illegal networks. Joining the CITES Convention is a big step in the preparation of our action plan to step up the fight against wildlife trafficking. CITES is the best response the international community has in the fight against wildlife criminals and their illegal, unsustainable trade"*. A press release is available in [here](#).

Italy: Commission restarts payments under the Operational Programme for the region of Puglia

The European Commission has notified Italy that EU payments under the [Operational Programme for the region of Puglia](#) for the programming period 2007-2013 can now restart. They were interrupted in June 2014 due to identified irregularities and deficiencies in the management and control system, in particular in the audit work, and public procurement. The Commission now considers that all corrective measures have been implemented and will proceed with payments worth €709 million from the [European Regional Development Fund](#) (ERDF) between now and next week. Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina Crețu said: *"This is great news for Puglia and the regional economy. I congratulate the local authorities for their efforts, which do justice to one of the best performing ERDF programmes in Southern Italy. I am looking forward to delivering good news again soon with the upcoming adoption of the 2014-2020 Regional Operational Programme for Puglia."* More information on [Cohesion Policy in Italy](#) and on [Regional Policy](#) is available online.

The European Commission adopts a decision to disburse €600 million in assistance to Ukraine

Yesterday, the European Commission adopted a decision to initiate a process towards disbursing €600 million to Ukraine in the form of a loan. This corresponds to the first instalment under the [new macrofinancial assistance](#) (MFA) programme for [Ukraine](#), which amounts to a total of [€1.8 billion](#) in medium-term loans. The decision builds on the [Memorandum of Understanding \(MoU\)](#) and Loan Facility Agreement (LFA), which Ukraine and the EU agreed on [22 May 2015 in Riga](#). The MoU came into force on 3 July 2015. [Macrofinancial assistance \(MFA\)](#) operations are part of the EU's wider engagement with neighbouring countries and are designed as an exceptional EU crisis response instrument available to EU neighbouring countries experiencing severe balance of payments problems. Through this programme, the EU contributes to cover the urgent financing needs faced by Ukraine, while supporting the country's economic stabilisation. In addition, the EU's MFA package will assist the Ukrainian authorities in implementing important reforms in the areas of public finance management, governance and transparency, the energy sector, social safety nets, the business environment and the financial sector. By supporting the Ukrainian government's reform agenda in those areas, the EU intends to help Ukraine lay the ground for a durable return to economic growth.

Opportunities for Growth and Investments: Romania adopts SME initiative

After Spain, Malta and Bulgaria, Romania has decided to allocate 100 million euro from the [European Regional Development Fund](#) to the SME initiative to help the country's small businesses and start-ups get better access to finance. The SME Initiative is a joint financial instrument of the European Commission, the European Investment Bank and the European Investment Fund. It is a key measure to leverage increased private and public resources for the benefit of small businesses, in line with the objectives of the [Investment Plan for Europe](#) to double the amount of investments from the [European Structural and Investment Funds](#) channelled through financial instruments in 2014-2020. Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina Crețu said: *"I want to congratulate the Romanian authorities on the decision to sign up for the SME initiative; it will help multiply the impact of our funds on the ground, for the direct benefit of SMEs. The SME Initiative does not require co-financing from national or regional resources; without tapping into limited public budget, it is a major opportunity for job creation and economic growth in Romania."* More information on the [SME initiative](#) and on [Cohesion Policy in Romania](#) is available online.

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of joint control over the Westin Excelsior Hotel in Rome by Katara Hospitality and Starwood

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of joint control over the Westin Excelsior Hotel of Rome, Italy, by Katara Hospitality of Qatar and Starwood of the US. Katara Hospitality owns, manages and develops hotels globally; Starwood owns franchises and manages hotels worldwide. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would not raise competition concerns, because of the limited changes in the market brought about by the transaction and the presence of a number of competitors. 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.7650](#).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commission appoints two Directors in the Internal Audit Service

Today the European Commission has appointed Ms Cristiana Giacobbo to the position of Director 'Audit in Commission and Executive Agencies II' in the Internal Audit Service (IAS). Ms Giacobbo, an Italian national, joined the Commission in 1998 as a member of the Special Audit Tourism, a Task Force in charge of auditing the activities in the area of tourism the European Union is co-financing. In 2000, she moved to the IAS as a Principal Auditor. Ms Giacobbo has been Head of Unit in the IAS since 2006. She has a degree in Economics and is also a certified Internal Auditor and a certified Information System Auditor. The Commission has also appointed Mr Jeffrey Mason, a British national, to the position of Director 'Audit in Commission and Executive Agencies I' in the IAS. Mr Mason joined the Commission in 2000 and initially worked in the Directorate-General for Budget. He moved to the IAS in 2005, where he has been Head of Unit since 2006. Mr Mason is a Chartered Public Finance Accountant and a certified Quality Assurance External Assessor / Validator.

MEX/15/5324



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

