



TODAYS
News

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China announces contribution to the Investment Plan for Europe and a milestone agreement with the EU on 5G

Today, Vice-President **Katainen**, Commissioner **Oettinger** and Commissioner **Bulg** are in Beijing for a High-level Economic and trade Dialogue (HED) with the Chinese government. This continues the strategic engagement on economic, trade and investment issues from the [EU-China Summit](#), which was held in Brussels on 29 June. At the HED today, Chinese Vice-Premier Ma Kai informed Vice-President **Katainen** that [China will contribute](#) to investments in the context of the €315 billion [Investment Plan for Europe](#). China is the first non-EU country to announce a contribution to the Plan. As well as this announcement, the two sides agreed to set up a joint working group to increase cooperation between the EU and China on all aspects of investment. Also at the HED, the EU and China signed a [milestone agreement](#) in the global race to develop 5G networks.

First Vice-President Timmermans gives speech at United Nations Sustainable Development Summit

On Friday 25 September, the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at a special UN Summit in New York which was attended by more than 150 Heads of State and Government. First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** is leading the European Commission delegation in New York. The Commission welcomed the adoption of the [2030 Agenda](#) and published a detailed [Memo](#) on the goals adopted. In his speech to the UN Summit on Sunday 27 September, First Vice-President **Timmermans** said: *"The Sustainable Development Goals are not just for some countries, but for all countries...Yes, the list is long. But these goals are comprehensive because they reflect the reality of today's world – and the way today's problems are daunting, complex, interlinked...The models that worked for so many of us in the past are not ones that will work for all of us in the future. We have to redefine our societies, our relationship with nature."* The full speech of First Vice-President **Timmermans** is available [here](#).

Commission adopts a transnational cooperation programme for the Balkan-Mediterranean area for the first time

The first EU [Transnational Cooperation](#) "Balkan-Mediterranean" programme, covering the Balkan Peninsula and the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, was adopted on Friday. Bringing together three EU countries - Greece, Bulgaria and Cyprus - and two candidate countries - Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia - the programme focuses on supporting entrepreneurship and innovation and on preserving the region's natural and cultural heritage. Over €28 million from the [European Regional Development Fund](#) and

more than €5 million from the [Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance](#) will be allocated to the programme. With national co-financing included, the total budget of the programme amounts to almost €40 million. The descriptions of the 2014-2020 programmes are available on [Commissioner Crețu's webpage](#) and on the [Inforegio website](#).

EU invests €134 million to boost cooperation in the Northern German-Polish border region

The new [cross border cooperation programme](#) "Germany/Mecklenburg-Vorpommern/Brandenburg/Poland", was adopted on Friday. It is worth €157.6 million, with over €134 million coming from the [European Regional Development Fund](#). The programme will foster an enhanced cooperation between public institutions on both sides of the border. It will also improve the cross border road connections and support the preservation and promotion of the region's cultural and natural heritage, in particular through joint tourism activities. Finally, it will provide for common training and education courses. The descriptions of the 2014-2020 programmes are available on [Commissioner Crețu's webpage](#) and on the [Inforegio website](#).

Commission publishes report on tax reforms in EU Member States

EU Member States have made progress towards improving their tax systems but most still face important challenges and should continue their efforts, according to a report on tax reforms in EU Member States published today by the European Commission. [The Tax reforms report 2015](#), published by the Commission's Directorate General for Economic and Financial Affairs (ECFIN) and the Directorate General for Taxation and Customs (TAXUD), presents an overview of recent tax reforms in the Member States and gives an indication of their performance in major areas of tax policy. Tax reforms can help to improve public finances, support growth and job creation, strengthen economic stability and increase fairness. One of the most important challenges for many Member States is to reduce the tax burden on labour. Acknowledging this challenge, euro area Finance Ministers recently committed to benchmarking the performance of their countries in this area to the EU average. Further challenges identified by the report include the design of housing taxation systems, the preferential treatment of debt in corporate income taxation, tax compliance particularly in VAT, the efficiency of tax administrations, and improving fairness. In June, the Commission presented an [Action Plan](#) for fair and efficient corporate taxation, something Commission President Jean-Claude **Juncker** referred to in his recent [State of the European Union](#) speech. An [infographic](#) provides a quick overview of the report's main findings and trends. Further information can be found in the [MEMO](#), and the [full report](#) here.

State aid: Commission opens in-depth investigation into the exemptions for transfer and transit passengers from Irish air travel tax

The European Commission has opened an in-depth investigation into Ireland's exemption for airlines from paying air travel tax for transfer and transit passengers. This follows a judgment by the General Court on 25 November 2014 (case T-512/1) annulling the Commission's 2011 findings that the exclusion of transfer and transit passengers did not result in state aid. The Court held that the Commission should have initiated the formal investigation procedure in order to gather any relevant information to verify whether the disputed measure was selective and allow interested third parties to present their observations. The Commission will now investigate whether the tax exemption provides certain companies with a selective advantage, in breach of EU state aid rules. The investigation will examine in particular whether the exemption serves to avoid levying the tax twice on the same journey, and whether exempting transfer flights only when they were booked in a single-booking discriminates airlines not applying a single-booking policy. The opening of an in-depth investigation gives interested third parties an opportunity to submit comments. It does not prejudice the outcome of the investigation. The non-confidential version of the decision will be made available under the case number SA.29064 in the [State aid register](#) on the [DG Competition](#) website once any confidentiality issues have been resolved.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Vice-President Ansip in Berlin, Germany to discuss the Digital Single Market Strategy

Vice-President **Ansip**, in charge of the Digital Single Market, is in Berlin today and tomorrow to discuss how Germany and Europe can make the best of digital opportunities. He will present the [Commission's Strategy for a Digital Single Market](#) to the Bundestag Committees for Justice and Consumer Protection and for the Digital Agenda. He will highlight the potential benefits of upcoming initiatives (on consumer protection, copyright, telecoms, standards, e-commerce – to name a few) for German citizens, start-ups and industries, and the importance of Germany's support to make a Digital Single Market a reality in Europe as soon as possible. Vice-President **Ansip** will also meet with the German Federal Ministers of Interior, Mr Thomas de Maizière, and of Justice and Consumer Protection, Mr Heiko Maas. Vice-President **Ansip** will also have discussions with members of the local arts communities.

Commissioners Crețu and Hogan in Dublin, Ireland to discuss rural broadband

Corina **Crețu**, Commissioner for Regional Policy, and Phil **Hogan**, Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, are participating in an event today in Dublin on the topic of rural broadband. The European Commission has recognised the importance of rural broadband rollout, and has prioritised it in the EU Digital Single Market package. The ambition is to close the digital gap between urban and rural areas, by providing fast or ultra-fast broadband across the EU by 2020. Speaking ahead of the event, Commissioner **Crețu** said: *"With a clear focus on the EU Digital agenda, we are committed to supporting Ireland in its plans to ensure faster broadband speeds in rural communities. €75 million from the European Regional Development Fund will be invested in broadband deployment and an increased connectivity in the country, providing the right conditions to create new opportunities for jobs and growth in rural areas."* Commissioner **Hogan** added *"rolling out high speed broadband for rural areas is an important policy priority for my mandate. From the CAP budget, the estimated contribution from Rural Development funding will be between €1.6 and €2 billion. This money will, among other things, help to prepare communities throughout the EU by providing training so that they are ready to make the most of connectivity when it is in place."* Commissioner **Crețu** also meets today with the Irish Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Mr Brendan Howlin, and visits EU-funded projects in the field of research and innovation.

Climate diplomacy: Commissioner Arias Cañete in New York for climate negotiations ahead of Paris conference

European Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy Miguel **Arias Cañete** will be in New York on 28 - 30 September. The Commissioner will participate in the meeting of the Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate, a regular meeting convened by the United States where Ministers from major developed and developing economies will seek convergence of views on key issues in the ongoing climate negotiations. He will also meet with Mr Xie Zhenhua, China's Special Representative for Climate Change, US Special Envoy on Climate Change Mr Todd Stern, and Mr Thoriq Ibrahim, Minister of Environment and Energy of Maldives and current chair of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS). Commissioner **Arias Cañete** will attend a Ministerial meeting of the Cartagena Dialogue for Progressive Action on Climate Change and a high-level discussion on the foreign policy dimension of climate change with the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany Mr Frank-Walter Steinmeier and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of France Mr Laurent Fabius. The visit takes place just two months ahead of the UN climate conference in Paris ([COP21](#)), where a new global climate change agreement for the post-2020 period is due to be concluded. Commissioner **Arias Cañete** said: *"The EU has a solid negotiating position. Now we need to step up the pace of the negotiating process. We look forward to the new text from the co-chairs guiding the negotiations – due in the coming days. With just five negotiating days left before we meet in Paris, we really need all countries to step out of their comfort zones and start making compromises."*



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

