



TODAYS
News

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Meeting on the Western Balkans Migration Route: Leaders agree on 17-point plan of action

Yesterday evening, at the invitation of President **Juncker**, the Heads of State or Government of Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia, agreed on a [17-point action plan](#) to improve cooperation on border management and step up the provision of humanitarian support to asylum seekers along the Western Balkan Route. The action plan includes measures that will be operational as of today, including the establishment of contact points to ensure a permanent exchange of information, providing shelter to refugees, managing migration flows together, and increased efforts to manage borders. Leaders agreed to improve communication of information on the rights and obligations of refugees and migrants and to monitor their agreed commitments under the action plan on a weekly basis. President **Juncker** said: "*Countries affected should not only talk about and at each other but also with each other. Neighbours should work together not against each other. Refugees need to be treated in a humane manner along the length of the Western Balkans route to avoid a humanitarian tragedy in Europe. I am therefore pleased that today we were able to jointly agree on a 17-point plan of pragmatic and operational measures to ensure people are not left to fend for themselves in the rain and cold*". A [press release](#) is available online. The joint [press conference](#) following the Leaders' Meeting with President **Juncker**, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres is available on [EbS](#). Tomorrow, President **Juncker** will address Members of the European Parliament in Strasbourg on the conclusions of the European Council meeting on 15 October, as well as on yesterday's Leaders' Meeting on refugee flows along the Western Balkans route. The President will speak in the Parliament at 10:00 and you can follow it live on [EbS](#). Furthermore, today, on 26 October Croatia activated the [EU's Civil Protection Mechanism](#) for material support to help cope with the large numbers of refugees and asylum seekers in the country. The European Commission's [Emergency Response Coordination Centre \(ERCC\)](#) is working closely with the Croatian authorities and the other participating states in the Mechanism to coordinate a swift response to the request. Croatia has requested material support such as winter tents, beds, blankets, mattresses and sanitary equipment.

Investment Plan for Europe: over €1 billion of equity investments for SMEs and start-ups across Europe since January

Since the start of 2015, the European Investment Fund (EIF) and equity funds across Europe have signed investment agreements worth over €1 billion which will provide [equity financing for businesses](#). These

agreements, which enable fund managers to invest in promising start-ups, SMEs and midcaps, have the full support of the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the heart of the [Investment Plan for Europe](#). They are expected to result in overall investments of more than €12 billion across the EU. Speaking at an event held today in Brussels, "[EFSI boosts innovation](#)", Commission Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, said: *"The investment plan for Europe aims at providing the financial instruments that the market is not providing today so that Europe can invest in its future. This is particularly true for SMEs that are lacking equity financing in Europe, so I welcome the news that the EIF has reached €1 billion in equity financing through EFSI."* His full speech is available [here](#). Commissioner Carlos **Moedas**, responsible for Research, Science and Innovation, said: *"Too many start-ups leave our continent because they can't raise the finance to commercialise innovative ideas. That is why it is so encouraging to see the European Fund for Strategic Investments off to such a good start, investing in promising innovative projects and SMEs from biotech to renewable energy."* His speech is available [here](#). Additional information can be found in the [press release](#).

European Commission and Greece publish partnership agreement for technical cooperation to support reforms

Today, the European Commission and Greece published a [partnership agreement](#) for technical cooperation to support the Greek reform process. The Commission will provide targeted technical support and expertise, through its [Structural Reform Support Service](#), in areas such as combatting tax evasion and corruption, modernising the welfare system and creating a better business environment. Speaking in Athens, Vice-President Valdis **Dombrovskis**, responsible for the Euro and Social Dialogue, said: *"It is crucial that there is political will and national ownership of reforms in Greece, and that they are carried out in dialogue with social partners. I am convinced that through the implementation of the reform programme, and effective use of the EU funds in support of investment, employment and social inclusion, Greece will return to financial stability, economic growth and jobs creation."* During his visit to Athens today and tomorrow, Vice-President **Dombrovskis** will meet with Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, as well as with Greek Ministers including Minister of Economy, Development and Tourism, Giorgos Stathakis, Minister of Finance Euclid Tsakalotos, Alternate Minister Giorgos Houliarakis, Minister of Labour, Social Insurance and Social Solidarity, Giorgos Katrougalos and Members of the Parliamentary Committees of European Affairs, Economic Affairs, Production and Trade. The Vice-President will meet with Yannis Stournaras, Governor of the Bank of Greece, after which he will visit '[InnovAthens](#)' – an innovation project co-funded by the EU. He will be accompanied by the Mayor of Athens, Giorgos Kaminis. Video coverage of the Vice-President's visit will be available on [EbS](#).

State aid: Commission finds that Hungarian measures resulting in lower mining fees for MOL involve no state aid

The Commission has concluded that Hungarian measures reducing mining fees for the Hungarian integrated gas and oil company MOL Nyrt. did not involve state aid within the meaning of EU rules. In particular, this concerns a 2005 agreement between the Hungarian government and MOL and a 2008 amendment to the Hungarian Mining Act. The decision reflects a judgment by the EU Court of Justice (case [C-15/14P](#)) which in June 2015 annulled [a Commission decision of 2010](#) that the combination between the 2005 agreement and the 2008 legislative amendment had conferred an unfair advantage on the company in breach of EU state aid rules. The Commission has now re-assessed the measures in light of the guidance provided by the Court and concluded that the measures involved no state aid. The non-confidential version of the decision will be made available under the case number SA.24571, in the State Aid Register on the DG competition website once any confidentiality issues have been resolved.

EUROSTAT: Labour market flows: movements between employment, unemployment and inactivity

Out of all persons in the European Union (EU) who were unemployed in the first quarter 2015, 64.6% (14.2 million persons) remained unemployed in the second quarter 2015, while 18.6% (4.1 million) moved into employment and 16.8% (3.7 million) towards economic inactivity in Q2 2015. Of all those initially in employment, 97.1% (167.9 million persons) remained in employment, while 1.3% (2.2 million) of those employed in the first quarter were observed to be unemployed in the second quarter, and 1.6% (2.8 million) transitioned into economic inactivity. A Eurostat press release can be found [here](#).

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

