



TODAYS  
News

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### **New EU funding for Palestine refugees and vulnerable Palestinian families through United Nations Relief and Works Agency**

The European Union will provide €10 million of additional support to Palestine Refugees through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). This contribution, which comes in addition to the €10 million granted in October, will help UNRWA keep schools open and maintain core services for Palestinian refugees. This brings the 2015 EU support for UNRWA's General Fund up to €102 million. High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President Federica **Mogherini** said: *"UNRWA is doing invaluable work with the Palestinian children whose experience has been marked too often by war, violence, displacement and insecurity. Thanks to UNRWA, their right to go to school and build a better future for themselves and the region can be guaranteed. The EU will continue to stand by UNRWA as it provides Palestine refugees not only with critical quality services, but also with stability and hope for the future in very difficult circumstances."* Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes **Hahn** commented: *"I am delighted that more Member States are joining the EU [PEGASE mechanism](#) in support of the Palestinians. Today's additional funds will benefit the most vulnerable Palestinian families, which remain in dire need of assistance. I am also happy to announce the additional €10 million EU contribution, thanks to which UNRWA will be able to keep schools open and provide Palestinian refugees with access to health and social services"*. Read the full press release [here](#).

### **The European Commission announces development support for Madagascar**

The European Commission today announced it will provide €518 million to Madagascar, as part of its development cooperation programmes to help reduce poverty in the African country covering the period 2014-2020. *"The new programme we are signing today will help tackle poverty through inclusive and sustainable growth in one of the poorest countries in the world. The European Union is fully committed to working in close cooperation with Madagascar to achieve this ambitious goal. Yet bold reforms are needed to reduce poverty to benefit the population. That's why I have encouraged the President of Madagascar to show strong leadership and effective action, which the success of our development programmes ultimately depend on."* said European Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven **Mimica**, who signed today the National Indicative Programme with HE Hery Rajaonarimampianina, President of the Republic of Madagascar. A press release available [here](#).

## **State aid: Commission approves resolution plans for four small Italian banks Banca Marche, Banca Etruria, Carife and Carichiati**

The European Commission has found the resolution plans of Banca delle Marche, Banca Popolare dell'Etruria e del Lazio, Cassa di Risparmio di Ferrara and Cassa di Risparmio della Provincia di Chieti (combined market share of about 1% in Italy) to be in line with EU state aid rules. This follows the decision of the Bank of Italy to put the four banks, all of which had already been under special administration, into resolution in line with [EU rules on Bank Recovery and Resolution](#). In particular, the Commission found that Italy's plans to use the national resolution fund minimise the need for state aid and limits distortions of competition, while preserving financial stability. Customer deposits will remain fully protected. EU Commissioner in charge of competition policy, Margrethe **Vestager** said: "*The Commission's decisions enable the four banks' orderly exit in a way that minimises the use of public funds and any competition distortions resulting from the measures. It is critical that shareholders and junior creditors bear the costs and losses of the bank failures rather than taxpayers. I also welcome Italy's decision to use the bank resolution tools for the first time in Italy, allowing these failing banks to be managed while preserving financial stability.*" A press release is available [here](#).

## **State Aid: Commission opens in-depth investigation into Hungarian investment support for Paks II nuclear power plant**

The European Commission has opened an in-depth state aid investigation into Hungary's plans to provide financing for the construction of two new nuclear reactors in Paks. It will in particular assess whether a private investor would have financed the project on similar terms or whether Hungary's investment constitutes state aid. If the project is found to involve state aid, the Commission will investigate whether as planned it would lead to distortions of competition in particular on the Hungarian energy market. Margrethe **Vestager**, Commissioner in charge of competition policy, stated: "*Given the size and importance of the Paks project, the Commission has to carefully assess whether Hungary's investment is indeed on market terms or whether it involves state aid. This requires a complex analysis. I think it is important that stakeholders can also submit their views.*" A press release is available [here](#).

## **EUROSTAT: 7 persons out of 10 in the EU live in a dwelling they own**

In the European Union (EU), more than half (59.3%) of the population were living in houses and 40.0% in flats in 2014. A majority of people in the EU were owners of their dwellings, with over two-thirds (70.1%) of the population living in owner-occupied dwellings, while 29.9% were renting their dwelling. One of the key challenges of public policy is to provide decent housing for everyone, both in terms of cost and quality. Regarding housing affordability, 11.4% of the EU population were confronted in 2014 with housing cost overburden, meaning that they had to spend more than 40% of their disposable income for their accommodation. For the quality of housing conditions, a major element is the availability of sufficient space in the dwelling. In 2014, the overcrowding rate, as defined by the number of rooms available to the household, stood at 17.1% in the EU. Overall, with an average score of 7.5 on a scale from 0 to 10, satisfaction with accommodation was the second best rated domain by the EU population aged 16 and over, behind satisfaction with personal relationships. This selection of figures on housing conditions in the EU comes from a [report](#) published by Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. 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.

