

TODAYS
News

Friday, 11 December, 2015

All 118 Rural Development Programmes adopted: €99.6 billion for EU rural areas

Today's adoption of [Greece's Rural Development Programme](#) (RDP) marks the end of the adoption process for all 118 programmes for the 2014-2020 period. With €99.6 billion from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and with another €60.6 billion of co-funding from national and regional public funds or private investment, the RDPs will help European rural areas and communities face the current economic, environmental and social challenges, and take advantage of the opportunities ahead of them. Marking this milestone, Commissioner Phil **Hogan** said: *"The Rural Development Programme is about jobs, growth, investment and competitiveness in rural Europe. With smart and strategic investment, the RDPs will drive generational renewal and create the conditions for a vibrant rural economy, society and environment. With COP21 ongoing in Paris, there is an inevitable focus in addressing the considerable climate challenge and the Rural Development Programme has a significant role to play in contributing to meeting this challenge."* Some of the expected achievements of the RDP for 2014-2020 are outlined in this [factsheet](#). Commissioner **Hogan** is chairing a press conference on rural development today at 12:00 which you can follow live on [EBS](#). A press release is also available in all languages [here](#).

AGRIFISH Council: Ministers to decide on fishing catch limits for 2016

EU's Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Karmenu **Vella** will present the Commission's proposals for fixing fishing opportunities for 2016 for the [Atlantic, North Sea](#) and [Black Sea](#) to the Agriculture and Fisheries Council on 14-15 December. This proposal sets out how much EU fishermen may catch from the main commercial fish stocks next year, estimated to be worth more than 4 billion euros. For the first time the Commission has also proposed the so-called [quota "top-ups"](#) for some fisheries that will come under the [landing obligation](#) in 2016. These quotas aim to compensate fishermen for the fish they will have to land, without increasing pressure on stocks. Decisions are taken within the framework of the EU's [Common Fisheries Policy](#), which aims to have all stocks fished at sustainable levels by 2020 at the latest. EU fisheries ministers are set to reach political agreement so that the limits can enter into force on 1 January 2016. On agriculture issues under EU Commissioner for Agriculture & Rural Development Phil **Hogan**, ministers will have an exchange of views on sustainable agriculture in the bio-economy. They will also be updated by the presidency on the state of play of the proposals relating to the supply of fruit, vegetables, bananas and milk in schools following this week's trilogues. The Polish delegation will raise an issue under AOB on the position of the pig meat sector in Poland and the Luxembourg Presidency will brief the Council on the outcome of seminar regarding young people in agriculture. Press conference can be on: <http://video.consilium.europa.eu>.

EU adopts €1 billion package to support reforms and regional cooperation in the Western Balkans and Turkey

The European Commission has adopted its 2015 package of [pre-accession assistance](#) programmes to support reforms and regional cooperation in countries wishing to join the EU, totalling approximately €1 billion. *"This package expresses our strong commitment to the EU perspective for the Western Balkans and Turkey. It is a long-term investment in the EU's own stability, security and prosperity and will support the political and economic reform process of the countries on their EU accession path"*, said Johannes **Hahn**, European Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations. A press release is available [here](#).

The EU continues to support the economic development of the Turkish Cypriot community

Today the European Commission approved the new financial assistance programme for the Turkish Cypriot community, worth €32 million from the EU budget. This is the continuation of the successful [Aid Programme](#) promoting the economic development of the Turkish Cypriot community, improving contacts between the two communities and bringing the Turkish Cypriots closer to the EU. Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina **Crețu** said: *"During his visit to Cyprus in July, President **Juncker** reiterated the Commission's longstanding commitment to the reunification of the island. This process should be facilitated through the economic development of the Turkish Cypriot community and this is why we fund projects which contribute to bringing the two Cypriot communities closer together."* Reconciliation and trust-building efforts will continue to be a strong component of the programme through support to the bi-communal committee on Cultural Heritage and, for the first time, the rehabilitation of the buffer zone in the old town of Nicosia. A [press release](#) is available online.

Vice-President Kristalina Georgieva launches accommodation scheme to support 20,000 refugees in Athens, Greece

European Commission Vice-President in charge of Budget and Human Resources Kristalina **Georgieva** will sign on 14 December an agreement with the UNHCR in Athens, Greece, thus delivering on the commitments made during the [Western Balkans Meeting](#) on 25 October 2015. The agreement will officially launch the rent subsidy accommodation scheme, under which the UNHCR will provide rent subsidies for 20,000 refugees currently based in Greece. Mr George Okoth-Obbo, UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Operations, and Mr Ioannis Mouzalas, Greece's Alternate Minister of Interior and Administrative Reconstruction responsible for Migration Policy, will represent the UNHCR and the Greek government at the event, which will be broadcast live on [EbS](#) at 10 am Brussels time.

EU announces support for Eritrea up to 2020

The European Union today has announced €200 million in new long term support to promote poverty reduction and socio-economic development in Eritrea through the [11th European Development Fund \(EDF\)](#). Under the [National Indicative Programme \(NIP\)](#), the European Union will support two main areas - energy and governance until 2020. The programme has the full agreement of the EU's 28 Member States. Announcing the new programme on behalf of the European Union, European Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven **Mimica**, said: *"The EU provides development aid where it is most needed to reduce poverty and support people. In Eritrea, we have agreed to promote activities with concrete results for the population, such as the creation of job opportunities and the*

improvement of living conditions. At the same time, we are insisting on the full respect of human rights as part of our ongoing political dialogue with Eritrea. As in other countries, the EU engages with governments around the world to promote human rights, democracy, and people-centred development everywhere." A press release is available [here](#).

Mergers: Commission approves acquisition of automotive components company Montupet by Linamar

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of Montupet S.A. of France by Linamar Corporation of Canada. Linamar is a diversified group, whose activities include the machining of precision metallic components, modules and systems for the automotive industry. Montupet designs and produces automotive components through a casting process and is specialised in aluminium cylinder heads for the automotive industry. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns because several alternative suppliers would remain active after the merger in both the market for machining of automotive components and the market for aluminium cylinder heads. The transaction was examined under the normal merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.7796](#).

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of two hotels in London by AXA, ATP and Club Quarters

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of joint control over Cleavon S.à.r.l of Luxembourg, owner of two hotels in London, by AXA S.A. of France and Arbejdsmarkedets Tillægspension ("ATP") of Denmark. The two hotels are located in Central London and are currently jointly controlled by Cleavon and Club Quarters Management LLC of the US by virtue of hotel management agreements. AXA is a global insurance group. ATP is a public pension fund that administers welfare and social security schemes for Danish citizens. Club Quarters owns, manages and operates hotels worldwide. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because of its very limited impact on the market structure. 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.7848](#).

EUROSTAT: Consumption per capita varied between 51% and 141% of the EU average

Actual Individual Consumption (AIC) is a measure of material welfare of households. Across the Member States in 2014, AIC per capita expressed in Purchasing Power Standards (PPS) varied from 51% of the European Union (EU) average in Bulgaria to 141% in Luxembourg. These data, published by Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, are based on revised purchasing power parities, and the latest GDP and population figures. A Eurostat press release can be found [here](#).

EUROSTAT: 1 out of 2 persons in the EU purchased online in 2015

In the **European Union** (EU), the proportion of individuals aged 16 to 74 having ordered goods or services for private use over the internet ("e-buyers") has continuously risen, from 30% in 2007 to 53% in 2015. This means that the **EU** has exceeded its Digital Agenda target of 50% by 2015. Among **EU** internet users who did not make any on-line purchase in 2015, 75% reported that they preferred to shop in person and 27% were concerned about payment security and privacy. A Eurostat press release can be found [here](#).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Crețu in Bulgaria

Today Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina **Crețu** is in Bulgaria. She is meeting with Mr. Rosen Plevneliev, the President of the Republic of Bulgaria, Mr. Boyko Borissov, the Bulgarian Prime Minister, Mr. Tomislav Donchev, the Bulgarian Deputy Prime Minister in charge of European Funds and Economic Policies, as well as with the Bulgarian Ministers dealing with EU funds. They will discuss the achievements of the [Task Force for Better implementation](#) in the country and the way to ensure the efficient implementation of the new programmes, with a result-oriented approach and sound management. She will also attend the official opening of the [Sofia Tech Park](#), an EU-funded science and technology park. *"My visit to Bulgaria will focus on how the [European Structural and Investment Funds](#) can further contribute to the competitiveness and sustainability of the country's economy, learning the lessons from the past programming period. Almost 10 billion of ESI Funds will be invested in the country over the next decade, to support Bulgarian small businesses, key network infrastructures, improved health care services, innovation and modern institutions,"* the Commissioner said ahead of her visit. More information on [Cohesion Policy and Bulgaria](#) and on [Regional Policy](#) is available online.

Commissioner Oettinger and EU ministers discuss digital skills and review of EU telecoms rules

Last night, Commissioner for the Digital Economy and Society Günther H. **Oettinger** and Luxembourg Prime Minister Xavier Bettel hosted an informal dinner with EU ministers responsible for telecoms, economic or digital affairs and education ([video coverage on EbS](#)). They discussed how Member States perceive and tackle digital skills gaps in their countries, how they ensure effective collaboration across ministries and with stakeholders, and how the EU can support Member States in tackling the digital skills gaps and mismatches. The objective is to prepare the ground for a joint commitment to develop adequate levels of digital skills in the EU in the face of rapid digitisation. In 2016, the Commission will present a comprehensive skills agenda. At today's Telecoms Council, Commissioner **Oettinger** encouraged Member State to endorse the agreement reached earlier this week on [the first EU-wide legislation on cybersecurity](#). EU Ministers also hold an orientation debate on the [ongoing review of the EU's telecoms framework](#), one of the fundamental elements of the [Digital Single Market Strategy](#). More information can be found [here](#). A press conference is foreseen at 13:00 at the Council and will be live streamed [here](#).

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

