



**TODAYS
News**

Monday, 30 November, 2015

EUROSTAT: R&D expenditure in the EU stable at slightly over 2% of GDP in 2014

In 2014, the Member States of the European Union (EU) spent all together around €283 billion on Research & Development (R&D). The R&D intensity, i.e. R&D expenditure as a percentage of GDP, stood at 2.03% in 2014, the same as in 2013. Ten years ago (2004), R&D intensity was 1.76%. With respect to other major economies, R&D intensity in the EU was much lower than in South Korea (4.15% in 2013) and Japan (3.47% in 2013) and lower than in the United States (2.81% in 2012), while it was about the same level as in China (2.08% in 2013) and higher than in Russia (1.15%). In order to provide a stimulus to the EU's competitiveness, an increase by 2020 of the R&D intensity to 3% in the EU is one of the five headline targets of the Europe 2020 strategy. The business enterprise sector continues to be the main sector in which R&D expenditure was spent, accounting for 64% of total R&D conducted in 2014, followed by the higher education sector (23%), the government sector (12%) and the private non-profit sector (1%). This information on Research and Development in the EU is published by Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. R&D is a major driver of innovation, and R&D expenditure and intensity are two of the key indicators used to monitor resources devoted to science and technology worldwide. A Eurostat press release can be found [here](#).

Consolidating peace and deepening reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border region of Ireland

Today the Commission adopted the new EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (PEACE IV) worth almost €270 million, with €229 million coming from the [European Regional Development Fund](#). PEACE IV is a unique Cohesion Policy programme aiming to reinforce a peaceful and stable society by fostering reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland. Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina Crețu said: *"The PEACE programme is at the very core of what the European Union is about. It is a concrete example of the Union's longstanding commitment to peace and reconciliation. This new programme will help support the consolidation of peace within the region and tackle remaining challenges, through investments in education, shared services and projects that will bring people together."* A press release is available [here](#). More information on Regional Policy is available [online](#).

The Commission proposes to modernise prospectus rules to ease access to finance for companies and simplify information for investors

As part of its Capital Markets Union action plan, the European Commission has today proposed an [overhaul](#) of the rules that allow companies to raise money on public markets or by means of a public offer with potential investors. The prospectus rules proposed today will enable investors to make informed investment decisions, simplify the rules for companies that wish to issue shares or debt and foster cross-border investments in the Single Market. Commissioner for Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union Jonathan **Hill** said: *"We need a prospectus regime that gives investors the information they need, but that does not pile up unnecessary costs and put companies off raising money on the public markets. Today's proposal strikes a better balance. It will make the system simpler, cheaper and quicker. It will safeguard investors, while making it easier for small and medium-sized enterprises and other businesses to raise money."* A press release can be found [here](#).

Eu-Turkey Summit re-energises EU-Turkey relations

Yesterday's summit opened a new chapter in the EU's partnership with Turkey. The meeting between the European Union and Turkey concluded with the adoption of a joint statement containing a number of shared commitments and actions in many areas. The implementation of the [joint Action Plan](#) on migration management will bring order to migratory flows and help stem irregular migration. Turkey has committed to implementing immediately the elements agreed on in the Action Plan, notably immediate action to stem the flow of irregular migrants to the EU; and to improve the socio-economic situation of Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey. To help refugees in Turkey, the EU committed to providing an initial €3 billion of additional resources. Regular summits and high-level political dialogue will be held and cooperation on foreign and security policy, including on counter-terrorism, will be reinforced. In the press conference following the summit, President **Juncker** underlined that without a joint EU-Turkey response there would not be a solution to the refugee crisis. He said: *"Today's meeting focused on questions related to migration, but our relationship with Turkey should be part of a wider context. The Commission is ready to do the necessary preparatory work in order to open new chapters."* The video of the press conference is available [here](#). The EU-Turkey statement can be found [here](#).

European Commission welcomes the successful ratification of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Single Resolution Mechanism

The European Commission welcomes today's news that the Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) for the Single Resolution Mechanism (SRM) has been successfully ratified by a sufficient number of participating Member States. The ratification of the IGA will ensure that the Single Resolution Board - the resolution authority which was established in 2015 to deal with banks in difficulty in the euro zone - becomes fully operational and that the Single Resolution Fund will start being filled up from national resolution funds in the euro area. Jonathan **Hill**, Commissioner for Financial Stability and Financial Services, said: *"This is a further sign that the Banking Union is gathering pace, less than a week after the Commission came forward with its proposal for a European Deposit Insurance Scheme (EDIS) and accompanying risk reduction measures. It is very good news that the Single Resolution Board can now take up its full responsibilities in the New Year as planned. But let's remember that the IGA took more than 20 months to be ratified, following several reminders, illustrating that this is not a very effective way to work in the future."* For more information: see the [full statement](#).

SME initiative: €100 million of EU funds to support small businesses in the South of Italy

The Commission adopted today a programme worth €100 million from the [European Regional Development Fund](#) to ease access to finance and boost the competitiveness of SMEs in the South of Italy. Investments under this programme, in the form of securitisation of existing loans portfolios, are expected to generate €600 million of fresh loans for SMEs. European Commission Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, said: *"Helping Italian SMEs get access to finance to grow their businesses is a major priority as we know that they have struggled in the past. SMEs provide 80% of employment in Italy so it's essential we support their growth as much as possible at EU level. This goes hand in hand with the good work being undertaken by the European Investment Fund who have signed agreements with Italian banks [CREDEM](#) and [BPER](#) to provide new loans to SMEs, backed by the EU guarantee EFSI."* Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina **Crețu** said: *"Italy is now in the leading group of EU countries benefiting from this innovating tool. Small businesses are the engines of growth and job creation in Europe and improving their access to finance is crucial. I congratulate the Italian authorities on signing up for [the SME initiative](#) and I encourage other EU Member States to do the same!"* Italy is the fourth EU country after Spain, Malta and Bulgaria to adopt such an investment programme. This is in line with the objectives of [the Investment Plan](#) to double the use of [European Structural and Investment Funds](#) channelled through innovative financial instruments.

Commission registers European Citizens' Initiative on EU fundamental values in Hungary

Today the European Commission has registered a European Citizens Initiative (ECI) which asks the Commission to propose the triggering of [Article 7](#) of the Treaty on European Union for alleged breaches of the EU's fundamental values by Hungary. If – and only if – a registered ECI receives the signatures on one million validated statements of support from at least seven Member States, the Commission must decide whether or not it would act, and explain the reasons for that choice. The College of Commissioners discussed the legal admissibility of the proposed ECI on 24 November 2015 and concluded that the legal conditions for the registration of the ECI were fulfilled. The College has not analysed the substance of the initiative at this stage. A press release with more information is available [here](#).

State aid: Commission approves aid for Piraeus Bank on the basis of an amended restructuring plan

In the context of the third economic adjustment programme for Greece, the European Commission has approved additional state aid of €2.72 billion to Greek Piraeus Bank under EU state aid rules, on the basis of an amended restructuring plan. The Commission concluded that the measures already implemented as part of the bank's existing restructuring plan of July 2014, in addition to those envisaged in the amended plan, will enable Piraeus Bank to ensure lending to the Greek economy in line with EU state aid rules, in particular the 2013 Banking Communication, and the Bank Recovery and Resolution Directive. Piraeus Bank is the largest lender to Greek companies and households. EU Commissioner in charge of competition policy, Margrethe **Vestager**, said: *"I welcome that Piraeus Bank has covered a significant part of its capital needs from private investors. This is a sign of market confidence. The additional public support and further implementation of its restructuring plan should enable the bank to return to long-term viability and continue supporting the recovery of the Greek economy."* More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number [S.A. 43364](#). The full press release is available [online](#).

State aid: Commission adapts notification procedures following State aid modernisation package

The European Commission has adopted a new state aid Implementing Regulation. In the context of the [State Aid Modernisation](#) (SAM) initiative, State aid guidelines and frameworks have been modified. The Commission has therefore updated certain procedural rules set out in the Implementation Regulation in order to align notifications of planned state aid measures submitted by Member States with the new rules. The new Implementing Regulation contains revised notification forms and information sheets to be completed by Member States. It allows the Commission to collect all the necessary information for conducting a sound assessment. The new Implementing Regulation also provides further guidance to Member States on how to comply with transparency requirements introduced by SAM. In particular, it includes which information Member States should publish about aid measures above a certain threshold. This will improve the transparency of public funding, reduce uncertainties and enable companies to check aid granted to competitors. The full text of the new regulation will be published on the DG Competition website today. It will then be published in the EU Official Journal and enter into force 20 days after its publication there.

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Grupo Konectanet and KAI by Banco Santander and PAI

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of Grupo Konectanet, S.L. and Konecta Activos Inmobiliarios, S.L ("KAI"), both of Spain, by Banco Santander, S.A. also of Spain and PAI Partners, S.A.S. of France. Grupo Konectanet provides business process outsourcing services. KAI owns and operates real estate. Banco Santander is a banking and financial company operating in Europe, the United States and Latin America. PAI is a private equity company. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, because of its limited impact on the market structure. Indeed, there are no overlaps between the companies' activities. 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.7836](#).

STATEMENTS

World AIDS Day 2015: Joint Statement by High Representative / Vice-President Mogherini and Commissioners Andriukaitis, Mimica and Moedas

On the eve of World AIDS Day, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission, Federica **Mogherini**, Commissioner for Health & Food Safety, Vytenis **Andriukaitis**, Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven **Mimica** and Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, Carlos **Moedas**, on behalf of the Commission, expressed their commitment to maintaining momentum in the global fight against HIV/AIDS and their determination to achieve the global target of ending AIDS by 2030. The statement is available [here](#).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Avramopoulos visits Sweden for discussions on migration and the fight against terrorism

Today, Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris **Avramopoulos** is in Stockholm for discussions with the Swedish authorities on migration, the refugee crisis, security and the fight against terrorism. The Commissioner will be received by Mr Morgan Johansson, Minister for Justice and Migration, and Mr Anders Ygeman, Minister for Home Affairs. The discussions will cover the current situation regarding the refugee crisis as well as migration policy, and measures to fight terrorism, including a better control of firearms and the strengthening of controls at external borders. A press conference will take place at 17:00 and will be broadcast by [EbS](#) at 19:15.

EU Agricultural Outlook conference, 1-2 December

About four hundred stakeholders will take part in the two-day high-level '[EU Agricultural Outlook conference](#)', taking place in Brussels on 1-2 December. The conference will focus on the state of agriculture, and the global issues which lie ahead. The participants represent EU institutions, national governments and international organisations, those involved in the food chain, the socio-professional sector, market experts, academics and think tanks, and the broader civil society. On day one of the conference, EU Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development Phil **Hogan** and US Secretary for Agriculture Tom **Vilsack** will discuss the challenges facing the farm sector. In addition, high-level panel discussions will take place. The functioning of the food supply chain will be at the center of the debates. The conference will also highlight the challenge for agriculture to provide food in an environmentally sustainable way while adapting to / mitigating the effects of climate change. On the second day, the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development of the European Commission will present its latest projections on the outlook for EU dairy, meat and arable crop markets for the next ten years. The conference may be followed live on web-streaming [here](#) (on 1 December) and [here](#) (on 2 December). The programme, the outcomes and speakers' presentations from the event will be available [here](#).

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

