



Monday, 07 March, 2016

Ahead of today's meeting of EU Heads of State and Government and Turkey

Today, EU Heads of State and Government will hold a meeting with Turkish Prime Minister Davutoğlu as part of the reinforcement of high-level dialogue agreed in the [statement](#) of the EU-Turkey meeting on 29 November. The EU and Turkey are expected to underline the need to fully implement the [EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan](#) to deliver a sustainable and sufficient reduction in the flow of irregular migration. The meeting will be followed by an informal European Council where leaders are expected to give their support to the [proposals](#) presented by the Commission last week for a faster, more targeted response to major crises, including helping Member States, such as Greece, to cope with large numbers of refugees and to endorse the [Commission's Roadmap](#) for returning to a normal functioning of the Schengen area by the end of 2016 at the latest. The leaders are also expected to strengthen their commitment to implementing the resettlement and emergency relocation schemes agreed in 2015, based on the proposals presented under the [Commission's European Agenda on Migration](#). In this regard, the Commission welcomes the news that 214 successful relocations from Greece to France, Portugal and Lithuania over the weekend have brought the total number of relocations to date to 874. President **Juncker** will also highlight the importance of working quickly to deliver on the [European Border and Coast Guard](#) in order to have it operational this summer. Press conferences will take place following the working lunch with Turkey and following the informal European Council and can be followed live on [EbS](#).

Preparation of the Eurogroup meeting and of the ECOFIN Council meeting

This afternoon, Vice-President **Dombrovskis** and Commissioner **Moscovici** will participate in the Eurogroup meeting. The Eurogroup will take stock of the developments in the economic programmes of Greece and Cyprus. The Ministers are also due to hold a follow-up debate on the implementation of the [draft budgetary plans for 2016](#). Finally, the Commission will take part in a discussion on the use of benchmarking in respect of structural policy aspects in order to work towards best practices. On Tuesday 8 March, Vice-President **Katainen**, Commissioner **Moscovici** and Commissioner **Hill** will represent the Commission at the ECOFIN Council meeting. On the legislative front, Ministers will be asked to reach [a general approach on a draft directive](#) on the exchange of tax-related information of multinational companies between tax administrations. They will also take note of progress on banking union files. In the context of the Semester discussion, the Commission will present Member states with findings regarding the implementation of structural reforms at national level to tackle barriers to investment, in line with the third pillar of the [Investment Plan for Europe](#). Ministers will also exchange views on the [Country reports](#) published on 26 February, which take stock of the on the progress made in addressing their 2015 country

specific recommendations. Finally, the Commission will report jointly with the Presidency on the outcome of the [G20 meeting](#) held in Shanghai. Commissioner **Moscovici** will represent the Commission at both press conferences (streamed live on [EBS](#)) following the Eurogroup and the ECOFIN meeting respectively.

Launch of 'PRIME' scheme to pave the way for promising medicines

Today, the European Medicines Agency launches the PRIME (PRIority MEDicines) scheme, which builds on existing EU regulatory tools to strengthen support to accelerate medicines that target an unmet medical need. The scheme offers early, proactive and enhanced support to medicine developers to optimise the production of robust data on a medicine's benefits and risks and enable accelerated assessment. To support earlier access to patients, the Commission has shortened the timeframe for adopting decisions that authorise medicines for unmet needs that have been evaluated under an accelerated assessment procedure. Welcoming the initiative, Vytenis **Andriukaitis**, EU Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, said "*The launch of PRIME is a major step forward for patients and their families that have long been hoping for earlier access to safe treatments for their unmet medical needs. Through enhanced scientific support this scheme could help, for example, to accelerate the development and authorisation of new classes of antibiotics or their alternatives in an era of increasing antimicrobial resistance. It is also a potential godsend for those suffering from diseases for which there are currently no treatment options, such as rare cancers, Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. Furthermore, it optimises the use of the current regulatory framework that can contribute to the European Commission's priorities in terms of boosting innovation, jobs, growth and competitiveness.*" For more information, see [here](#).

Commissioner Mimica opens EU-CELAC seminar on Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment

Neven **Mimica**, Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, today opened the European Union-Latin America and Caribbean Community of States (CELAC) Seminar on "Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment" in Brussels (Read the Speech [here](#)). Taking place ahead of the International Women's Day (March 8), the seminar offers an opportunity for open, high-level discussions on women's economic empowerment and participation in the economy and paid labour markets, as key to sustainable development and economic growth worldwide. The event will bring together representatives of government, civil society organisations and other entities from both regions to exchange ideas, expertise and best practices, detect the main obstacles to gender equality in the economy and to make recommendations on follow-up actions in bi-regional cooperation. It is a concrete contribution to the implementation of the gender chapter of the EU-CELAC Action Plan and a confirmation of the EU's commitment to gender equality in external relations, confirmed by the adoption of the new EU Gender Action Plan for the period 2016-2020. For more information: see [here](#).

State aid: Commission invites comments on draft provisions to simplify implementation of unproblematic state support for ports and airports

This first public consultation on draft provisions to extend the 2014 General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER) is open until 30 May 2016. The Commission will take into account views and comments by stakeholders and prepare an updated draft, which will be subject to a second public consultation, currently planned for autumn this year, before deciding on the final Regulation. Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, stated: "*Ports and airports are key infrastructure for economic growth and regional development. Our proposals aim at facilitating unproblematic public investments in ports and airports that can create jobs, by exempting them from scrutiny under EU state aid rules. I would like*

to encourage all public authorities, companies and others that would benefit from this simplification of state aid rules to participate in this consultation." The full press release is available [online](#).

Mergers: Commission clears joint venture of LÖWEN, Safari and SCHMIDT for the prevention of gambling addictions

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the creation of a joint venture named Gesellschaft für Spielerschutz und Prävention by LÖWEN Entertainment, Safari Holding and SCHMIDT Gruppe Service, all of Germany. LÖWEN produces and leases slot machines and sports gaming machines; Safari operates gambling arcades in Germany under the name LÖWEN PLAY; SCHMIDT provides administration and other services to fitness studios, entertainment centres and real estate properties. The joint venture will be active in the field of player protection, youth protection and addiction prevention in the gambling sector. 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.7903](#).

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of N&W Global Vending by Lone Star

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of N&W Global Vending of Italy by Lone Star of the US. N&W Global Vending manufactures, markets and sells automatic food and beverage vending machines within the European Union as well as world-wide. Lone Star is a private equity firm that invests in real estate, equity, credit and other financial assets. 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.7909](#).

EUROSTAT: 8 March 2016: International Women's Day - Part-time employment of women in the EU increases drastically with number of children-Women earned on average 16% less than men in the EU

In 2014, the gender pay gap stood at 16.1% in the European Union (EU). In other words, women earned on average 84 cents for every euro a man makes per hour. Across Member States, the gender pay gap in 2014 ranged from less than 5% in Slovenia and Malta to more than 20% in Estonia, Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany and Slovakia. A Eurostat press release is available [online](#).

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