



Tuesday, 04 April, 2016

### **Implementing the EU-Turkey Agreement: First returns and resettlements under the 18 March Agreement**

Today the first resettlements from Turkey and returns from Greece are taking place in the context of the 18 March [EU-Turkey Agreement](#). With this Agreement, EU Heads of State or Government and Turkey agreed to end the irregular migration from Turkey to the EU and replace it instead with legal channels of resettlement of refugees to the European Union. The aim is to replace disorganised, chaotic, irregular and dangerous migratory flows by organised, safe and legal pathways to Europe for those entitled to international protection [in line with EU and international law](#). The agreement took effect as of 20 March, and 4 April was set as the target date for the start of returns of people arriving in Greece after 20 March and of the first resettlements. Today thus saw the start of two processes: returns from the Greek islands to Turkey to make clear that this is a dangerous route and the wrong route; and the first resettlements of Syrian refugees from Turkey to Europe, to underline that this is how Europe lives up to its responsibilities as a continent committed to the Geneva Convention and to the fundamental right to asylum. Greece and Turkey are the two governments in charge of implementing the agreement. It is their authorities who have to do the legal and operational work. The Commission is assisting Greece with advice, expertise and support from the EU budget and by coordinating – via the [EU Coordinator Maarten Verwey](#) – the support which is being provided by other Member States and EU agencies. A [memo](#) is available online.

### **Commission presents Nuclear Illustrative Programme (PINC)**

Today the Commission presented a Nuclear Illustrative Programme (PINC). This is the first report since the Fukushima accident in 2011. The report presents transparent information focusing for the first time on the investments related to post-Fukushima safety upgrades and to the safe operation of existing facilities. In addition, it highlights the estimated financing needs related to nuclear power plants' decommissioning and to the management of radioactive waste and spent fuel. PINC provides a basis for discussion and aims to include all stakeholders, especially civil society, in the discussion on nuclear energy trends and related investments for the period up to 2050. While Member States are free to decide their energy mix, the Energy Union Strategy and the European Energy Security Strategy stressed that Member States who decide to use nuclear energy in their own energy mix need to apply the highest standards of safety, security, waste management and non-proliferation as well as diversify nuclear fuel supplies. The Commission also presented today a recommendation to Member States concerning the application of Article 103 of the Euratom Treaty. The recommendation requires Member States to have the Commission's opinion on agreements with third countries on nuclear matters before concluding them. This

recommendation aims to make that process more efficient by clarifying the key aspects and requirements that Member States have to take into account when negotiating such agreements, in particular regarding the new directives on nuclear safety and the safe management of spent fuel and radioactive waste. A press release is [available](#) online, and further information can be found on the website of [DG Energy](#).

## **U-Multirank university ranking confirms need to boost regional impact of European higher education institutions**

The third and largest ever edition of the [U-Multirank](#) university ranking has been published today, providing a multi-dimensional overview of over 1,300 universities from more than 90 countries. U-Multirank is the first global ranking allowing users - notably students - to easily compare universities' performance. Universities can be ranked according to research performance, teaching and learning, knowledge transfer, international orientation and regional engagement. The ranking shows that European universities lead the world in regional impact, with institutions such as Polytechnic Institute Coimbra (Portugal) or Hanze UAS (the Netherlands) contributing strongly to the development of their respective regions. But for many universities the regional impact does not go far enough. In fact, impact on regional innovation was identified as a central issue in the Commission's recent consultation on the modernisation of higher education: only one fifth of the more than 1,400 respondents considered that universities play a strong role in national or regional innovation, while three-quarters strongly supported more EU level cooperation in this field. European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, **Tibor Navracsics**, said: *"U-Multirank provides valuable information for applicants while giving us a better picture of how effective universities are as drivers of economic growth and social cohesion. Europe needs high-performing research universities as well as technical and regional institutions that can connect with businesses and act as innovation engines for their regions. The EU needs to do more to support them and I will focus on this in a renewed strategy for the modernisation of higher education later this year."* U-Multirank receives €4 million in funding from the [Erasmus+ programme](#) for 2013-2017. The future goal is for an independent non-profit organisation to manage the ranking on an open source basis. More information can be found in the [press release from U-Multirank](#).

## **Open Science: Commissioner Moedas outlines vision for the opening up of scientific results and data**

At a major EU Conference in Amsterdam today, Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation **Carlos Moedas** will outline his vision for a common EU approach to Open Science in Europe in a keynote speech. The Conference gathers key stakeholders from the research and science sectors to discuss how to accelerate the transition towards open access to scientific publications and the best possible re-use of research data. In his speech, Commissioner Moedas will announce the imminent launch of the "Open Science Policy Platform", which will advise the Commission on policy actions required to implement this agenda. Its member will be announced at the Competitiveness Council on 26 and 27 May 2016. Commissioner **Carlos Moedas** will say: *"Open Science raises scientific excellence and integrity by opening up results to be analysed and re-used, including in a multi-disciplinary way. On top of that, it generates income and involves the public in what they pay for. The days of "publish or die" are dwindling, and the days of Open Science have arrived"*. Open Science is one of Commissioner **Moedas**' three strategic priorities, [set out in June 2015](#), and the EU is already leading by example on Open Science by requiring that all Horizon 2020 funded research publications [are openly accessible](#), free of charge. The speech will be [streamed live](#) at 13:30 CET. For more information on the Open Science conference, please see the [website of the conference](#) and the [invitation to the press](#) .

**EUROSTAT: February 2016 - Euro area unemployment rate at 10.3%, EU28 at 8.9%**

The euro area (EA19) seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate was 10.3% in February 2016, down from 10.4% in January 2016, and from 11.2% in February 2015. This is the lowest rate recorded in the euro area since August 2011. The EU28 unemployment rate was 8.9% in February 2016, stable compared to January 2016, and down from 9.7% in February 2015. This is the lowest rate recorded in the EU28 since May 2009. These figures are published by Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. Eurostat estimates that 21.651 million men and women in the EU28, of whom 16.634 million were in the euro area, were unemployed in February 2016. Compared with January 2016, the number of persons unemployed decreased by 59 000 in the EU28 and by 39 000 in the euro area. Compared with February 2015, unemployment fell by 1.971 million in the EU28 and by 1.303 million in the euro area. Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne **Thyssen**, said: *"Our efforts to reduce unemployment are slowly but surely bearing fruit. This being said, work remains to be done and the Commission will continue to help Member States tackle this issue. Today the European Employers Days start and run until 15 April; and for the first time, they will take place in all Member States. The aim is to bring together Public Employment Services and employers to foster dialogue and promote employment policies. I am convinced that the active involvement of employers is key to helping reduce unemployment."* A Eurostat press release is [available online](#).

### **EUROSTAT: Industrial producer prices down by 0.7% in euro area**

In February 2016, compared with January 2016, industrial producer prices fell by 0.7% in the euro area (EA19) and by 0.6% in the EU28, according to estimates from Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. In January 2016 prices decreased by 1.1% in both zones. A Eurostat press release is [here](#).

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