



Thursday, 07 April, 2016

### **World Health Day: Commissioner for Health and Food Safety Vytenis Andriukaitis highlights the Potential for the Prevention of Diabetes**

Today, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety Vytenis **Andriukaitis** issues a statement on preventing diabetes, which is this year's theme of World Health Day. Commissioner **Andriukaitis** highlights that in the fight against diabetes and other preventable diseases, the main challenge is to start seriously tackling the risk factors— not only obesity, poor nutrition, lack of exercise, tobacco, alcohol misuse and stress, but also wider social inequalities that amplify the risks for our most vulnerable citizens: *"My deepest wish is to see a radical shift from treatment of diseases towards promotion of good health. We have solid evidence that this works"* the Commissioner said. Worldwide, the number of adults living with diabetes is on the rise, having increased from 153 million in 1980 to 415 million in 2015. Diabetes is expected to be the 7<sup>th</sup> cause of death worldwide by 2030. In the European Union, 32 million people are currently living with diabetes. The silver lining is that type 2 diabetes can in many cases be prevented and in some even reversed by lifestyle changes. For type 1 diabetes, increasing patient access to quality care across Europe and supporting research for finding new and more effective treatments will remain key objectives of Health policy. The full statement is available [online](#).

### **VAT Action Plan: Commission presents measures to modernise VAT in the EU**

The European Commission today presented an [Action Plan](#) setting out ways to reboot the current EU VAT system to make it simpler, more fraud-proof and business-friendly. Today's Action Plan is the first step towards a single EU VAT area which is equipped to tackle fraud, to support business and help the digital economy and e-commerce. Vice-President Valdis **Dombrovskis**, responsible for the Euro and Social Dialogue said: *"Today, we are starting a dialogue with the European Parliament and the Member States for a simpler and more fraud-proof VAT system in the EU. Every year, cross-border VAT fraud costs our Member States and tax payers about EUR 50 billion. At the same time, the administrative burden for small businesses is high and technical innovation poses new challenges for VAT collection. This Commission has already proposed clear measures to address corporate tax avoidance, and we will be equally decisive in tackling VAT fraud."* Pierre **Moscovici**, Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs, Taxation and Customs, said: *"VAT is a major source of tax revenue for EU Member States. Yet we face a staggering fiscal gap: the VAT revenues collected are €170 billion short of what they should be. This is a huge waste of money that could be invested on growth and jobs. It's time to have this money back. We are also keen to*

grant Member States more autonomy on how to define their VAT reduced rates. Our Action Plan will deliver on each of these points." For more information, see our full press material [here](#).

## **Cyprus rejoins the regular cycle of economic policy coordination**

Having exited its financial assistance programme last week, Cyprus has rejoined the standard economic policy coordination framework of the European Semester. The Commission today publishes a [Country Report](#) for Cyprus, including an in-depth review that assesses its situation under the European Semester and in the Macroeconomic Imbalances Procedure in particular. The debt level and challenges in the financial sector, the labour market and in competitiveness are flagged as issues that still need to be addressed. Along with five other Member States already indicated by the Commission in its Communication of [8 March](#), Cyprus is also considered to be experiencing excessive imbalances. Accordingly, the Commission has amended today the [Communication of 8 March](#) to include references to Cyprus. An updated overview of the macroeconomic imbalances across the EU Member States can be found [here](#). A [factsheet](#) is also available for more information on Cyprus' programme achievements and on the European Semester's next steps.

## **President Juncker promotes European Fund for Strategic Investments**

European Commission President, Jean-Claude **Juncker**, has urged businesses and investors across the world to take advantage of the Investment Plan for Europe. Speaking at a conference organised by the European Political Strategy Centre, the President said, *"We know there are good projects waiting for finance. We know there is finance waiting for good projects. Together, let us make sure that everyone knows what the European Fund for Strategic Investments can do for them. Let us send a message to investors across the globe: we are ready and they are welcome."* In its first nine months, the European Fund for Strategic Investments has already mobilised €76 billion of new investment across 22 EU Member States, while 125,000 small and medium enterprises enjoy better access to finance. President **Juncker's** speech to EPSC conference 'Europe as an Investment Destination' is available [online](#) as is the [speech](#) of Vice-President **Katainen** who also spoke at the event.

## **European Commission and Chile conclude agreement on trade in organic products**

The European Union and Chile have concluded negotiations on an agreement on trade in organic products. Through this agreement, the EU and Chile will mutually recognise the equivalence of their organic production rules and control system and ensure a high level of respect of the principle of organic production. European Commissioner for agriculture, Phil **Hogan** met today in Paris his Chilean counterpart, Minister Carlos Furcher. Commissioner **Hogan** stated at that occasion: *"I very much welcome the end of negotiations with Chile with a view to concluding an agreement on trade in organic products. The European organic sector continues to be one of our most dynamic production sectors and Chile has great potential in developing opportunities for organic farmers and businesses. This agreement will contribute to creating jobs and growth for both partners, with the guarantee for the consumer of solid control systems."* The agreement is broad in scope, including all EU organic products, and will allow for products produced and controlled according to EU rules to be directly placed on the Chilean market and vice versa. It will also aim at reciprocally protecting the organic logos as well as providing for a system of updates of the product's coverage, along with increased co-operation, information exchange and dispute settlement in organic trade. More information on the agreement is available online in [EN](#).

## **.eu celebrates 10 years with 4 million internet domain names**

Today the EU's internet address turns ten years old. Since 7 April 2006 .eu has provided a unique European domain for people and organisations in the EU. At the end of 2015 .eu was [the eleventh largest top-level domain](#) in the world, with almost 4 million domain names, with the most registrants in Germany (1 million), the Netherlands (497,000), France (343,000), Poland (308,000) and the United Kingdom (307,000). Vice-President **Ansip**, in charge of the [Digital Single Market](#), said in his [blog](#): "*I am pleased to see that more and more users are choosing the .eu domain, which connects more than 500 million people to one internet identity, across the 28 countries of the European Union as well as in Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. A .eu website gives confidence and security to whoever is using it.*" From its origins, .eu has been administered by [EURid](#), a non-profit organisation that operates on behalf of the Commission. Organisations such as [Fairtrade International](#) and companies like [Orangina](#) have adopted it in Europe, while various [.eu success stories](#) have emerged, such as [generous.eu](#), a Brussels' bakery offering a range of handmade, organic and gluten free biscuits and for which online presence is essential to sell its products in shops around Europe. More information [here](#).

## **STATEMENTS**

### **International Roma Day: Statement by First Vice-President Timmermans, Commissioner Thyssen, Commissioner Jourová and Commissioner Crețu**

*"Equality before the law and non-discrimination are fundamental values of the European Union. Yet, anti-Gypsyism is still very common worldwide and in Europe. The exclusion, inequality and discrimination many Roma continue to face, is in strong contradiction with the Union's core values. Roma do not have the same access to jobs, education, housing and healthcare. Forced evictions of Roma continue to cause concern. Moreover, the fact that Roma children often cannot benefit from the same quality of education as other children, perpetuates their vicious cycle of poverty. This is why we believe that there is an urgent need for Roma children in particular to get better access to education."* The full statement is available [online](#). You'll find Young Roma integration success stories [here](#).

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini travels to Indonesia**

The High Representative/Vice-President Federica **Mogherini** will travel to Jakarta on 8 April for a two-day visit focussing on EU-Indonesia and EU-ASEAN relations. The visit will provide an opportunity to discuss a range of bilateral issues, including enhanced political dialogue, cooperation in the security field and on countering radicalisation, advancing trade relations, protecting the environment and combatting climate change, as well as matters of regional and international importance such as the South China Sea and the Middle East. On Friday, the HR/VP will meet with President of Indonesia Joko Widodo before co-chairing, alongside Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi, the first Indonesia-EU Ministerial Strategic Dialogue. A joint press conference is foreseen to take place at 19:20 local time in the Gedung Pancasila. On 9 April, the High Representative will meet with the Secretary General of ASEAN, Le Luong Minh, as well as with the ASEAN Committee of Permanent Representatives. While in Jakarta, the High Representative will also open "Destination Europe", the European travel and culture fair in Indonesia, will address Defence University Students on the EU's role and cooperation with Indonesia on international and

regional security issues and will visit the Indonesian Peace and Security Center. Find the factsheet on EU-Indonesia relations [here](#), and on EU-ASEAN relations [here](#).

### **Commissioner Karmenu Vella on official visit to Algeria**

EU Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Karmenu **Vella** is in Algeria today to discuss the need for a common strategy for the Mediterranean Sea. The visit follows the [agreement](#), reached by EU Mediterranean Ministers in Catania last February, on the urgent action needed to reverse the worrying decline of fish stocks in the Mediterranean and surmounting pressure on the competitiveness of the fisheries sector. The Commissioner is scheduled to meet with the Algerian Prime Minister Sellal, with Mr Nouri, Minister of Water Resources, Mr Talai, Minister for Transport and Mr Ferroukhi, Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries. He will invite the Algerian government to the Ministerial fisheries conference on the Mediterranean in Brussels on 27 April, where their participation will be key to support ambitious measures for the sustainable development of the region. *"The Mediterranean is a politically, culturally and economically diverse sea-basin having shared resources and potential, vital for the entire region. Healthy ecosystems are vital to keep generating wealth; a healthy Mediterranean Sea where natural richness is used responsibly will enable us to harness the full potential of the blue economy contributing significantly towards driving regional competitiveness and stability"*, said Commissioner **Vella**. More information is available [here](#).

### **Commissioner Jourová on official visit to Bulgaria**

Tomorrow, 8 April 2016, Commissioner Vera **Jourová**, will travel to Sofia, Bulgaria, to discuss priorities in the area of justice reform, consumer policy, gender equality and Roma inclusion. She will meet Prime Minister Boyko Borissov, Deputy Prime Minister for European Policies Coordination and Institutional Affairs and Minister of Education and Science, Ms Meglena Kuneva, Deputy Prime Minister for Demographic and Social Policies and Minister of Labour and Social Policy, Mr Ivaylo Kalfin as well as the Minister of Justice, Ms Ekaterina Zaharieva. The Commissioner will also meet with the Bulgarian Union of Judges, and with Prosecutor General, Mr. Sotir Tsatsarov. Finally, she will also have meetings with Bulgaria's National Ombudswoman and the Head of the Consumer Protection Commission. A press point will take place at 12:30 local time (11:30 CET).

### **Commissioner Crețu in Hungary**

Today and tomorrow, Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina **Crețu** is in Hungary. She meets with Mr János Lázár, Minister of the Prime Minister's Office, Mr Balázs Rákossy, Secretary of State responsible for EU funds and with national and regional stakeholders involved in the implementation of Cohesion Policy. Today in Budapest she visits an EU-funded project, the Liszt Ferenc Music Academy. Tomorrow in Makó, she visits a Hungarian-Romanian [cross-border cooperation](#) medical project and participates in the opening of an EU-funded laser technology research facility, ELI-ALPS, in Szeged. *"I'm glad to see that the implementation of the 2014-20 period has started smoothly in Hungary, with the valuable lessons of the Task Force for Better Implementation,"* the Commissioner said ahead of her visit, *"I will invite the Hungarian authorities to fully seize the opportunities of combining ESI Funds with the EFSI and praise their commitment to significantly increase their use of financial instruments."* [€25 billion of ESI Funds](#) will be invested in Hungary over 2014-2020.

## Upcoming events

- [Thursday 7 April: The African Union Commission and the European Commission meet to address shared EU-Africa challenges](#) European Commission - Upcoming events The news: The African Union Commission and the European Commission will hold their annual College-to-College meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. This is the biggest EU-Africa event of the year.
- [Monday 11 April: Commission publishes the 2016 EU Justice Scoreboard](#) European Commission - Upcoming events The news: On 11 April, the European Commission will publish the 2016 EU Justice Scoreboard. The aim of the Scoreboard is to assist national authorities in their efforts to improve their justice systems by providing this comparative data.
- [T](#) European Commission - Upcoming events The news: On 14 April, the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) will launch its two-year Europe-wide campaign called "Healthy Workplaces for All Ages". The background: This is the world's biggest workplace safety and health campaign.
- [Thursday 28 April: The Commission adopts its monthly infringements package](#) European Commission - Upcoming events The news: On Thursday, 28 April 2016, the European Commission will adopt its monthly infringements package. These decisions seek to enforce EU law across Europe so that citizens and businesses can benefit fully from the internal market.
- [26-27 May: The EU at the G7 summit in Japan](#) European Commission - Upcoming events The news: The 42nd edition of the G7 will take place from 26 to 27 May in Ise-Shima, in the Mie Prefecture (Japan), under Japanese presidency. The European Union, who is a full member of the G7 (and the G20), will be jointly represented by by the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, and the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk.

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