



Tuesday, 19 April, 2016

EU28 current account surplus €9.1 bn

The EU28 seasonally adjusted current account of the balance of payments recorded a surplus of €9.1 billion in February 2016, compared with surpluses of €15.5 bn in January 2016 and €15.7 bn in February 2015, according to estimates from Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. A full EUROSTAT press release is available [online](#).

Commission sets out path to digitise European industry

Delivering on its Strategy to create a [Digital Single Market](#), the Commission today unveiled its plans to help European industry, SMEs, researchers and public authorities make the most of new technologies. The Commission wants to support and link up national initiatives for the digitisation of industry and related services across all sectors and to boost investment through strategic partnerships and networks. The Commission also proposes concrete measures to speed up the development of common standards in priority areas, such as 5G communication networks or cybersecurity, and to modernise public services. As part of today's plans, the Commission will set up a European cloud that, as a first objective, will give Europe's 1.7 million researchers and 70 million science and technology professionals a virtual environment to store, manage, analyse and re-use a big amount of research data. Andrus **Ansip**, Vice-President for the Digital Single Market, said: "*The industrial revolution of our time is digital. We need the right scale for technologies such as cloud computing, data-driven science and the internet of things to reach their full potential. As companies aim to scale up across the Single Market, public e-services should also meet today's needs: be digital, open and cross-border by design. The EU is the right scale for the digital times.*" A [press release](#) on this set of measures, as well as a [press release](#) focusing on the initiative to create a European cloud, are available in all EU languages. A [Q&A](#) has also been published in English. The press conference with Vice-President **Ansip**, Commissioners **Oettinger** and **Moedas** has been broadcast on [EBS](#).

EU provides €83 million to improve conditions for refugees in Greece

Today the European Commission announces €83 million under the new Emergency Assistance Instrument, proposed by the Commission on 2 March, to improve living conditions for refugees in Greece, with funding made available immediately to the UNHCR, the International Federation of the Red Cross

and six international NGOs. These partners will be working with Greek NGOs who have the necessary local knowledge. EU Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management, Christos **Stylianides**, signed the first contracts in Athens today under the new instrument for emergency support within the EU, set up to help Member States cope with crises, such as large numbers of refugees. *"We have to restore dignified living conditions for refugees and migrants in Europe as swiftly as possible. With the first projects active on the ground we are showing a concrete example of how the EU delivers on the challenges Europe faces. The funding will go to humanitarian aid partners that are working hand-in-hand with the Greek government and local NGOs to ensure that aid is provided in a well-coordinated and structured way in as many places as possible."* said Commissioner Christos **Stylianides**. The Commissioner met with Greek Alternate Minister responsible for Migration Policy Mr Ioannis Mouzalas, and visited projects that will support refugees in Eleonas, alongside both the Minister and the Mayor of Athens, Mr Giorgos Kaminis. Thanks to these new projects, the Commission will help provide tens of thousands of refugees and migrants in Greece with primary health care, food, better hygiene conditions, child friendly spaces and construct temporary housing. A [press release](#), [Q&A factsheet](#) and [video footage](#) of today's press conference are available.

Facility for Refugees in Turkey: Commission delivers an additional €110 million on implementation of EU-Turkey agreement

Today the European Commission is delivering on its commitment to accelerate the implementation of the Facility for Refugees in Turkey by announcing a new set of projects under the Facility. A further €60 million in a special measure will cover expenses for food, health care and accommodation of migrants who have been returned from Greece to Turkey. A further €50 million in humanitarian aid will address the immediate needs of Syrian refugees in Turkey. This brings the Commission's total support so far through the Facility to €187 million. Johannes **Hahn**, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, said: *"With the special measure adopted today, the Facility for Refugees in Turkey is quickly delivering additional means to ensure that migrants who are returned from Greece to Turkey receive all necessary support. This support will go hand in hand with the Commission's efforts to monitor the legal safeguards that Turkey needs to apply to all returned migrants"*. Christos **Stylianides**, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management, said today: *"Make no mistake, the EU is already delivering aid to refugees on the ground in Turkey and has been doing so since the beginning of the crisis. The new Facility for Refugees in Turkey allows us to significantly increase our support to help people live in dignity. Today's additional €50 million in humanitarian aid demonstrates the EU's commitment to quickly mobilise humanitarian partners and help the people who need our assistance most."* A [press release](#) is available online.

Space: Commission seeks views on future space strategy

Today the European Commission launched a [public consultation](#) to collect views on the objectives of the EU future space strategy, the main challenges and opportunities for the European space sector, as well as the future of EU space programmes. Maroš **Šefčovič**, Vice President for Energy Union, said: *"The EU already today plays a major role in the global space sector. Our competitiveness, new jobs and market opportunities, but also our security, rely on the use of space. Therefore this Commission wants to deliver an ambitious EU space strategy that will define our way forward. I encourage all stakeholders from all areas to participate in this public consultation"*. Elżbieta **Bieńkowska**, Commissioner for Internal market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, said: *"With its Galileo and Copernicus programmes, Europe is developing a strong global position in space. In the face of a fast changing global industrial landscape and acute competition through disruptive innovation, Europe needs to prepare the right conditions for a strong market uptake of space technologies. The purpose of the upcoming Space Strategy for Europe is also to develop a strategy for an autonomous access to space, and increase synergies between space and other domains such as emergency humanitarian aid, agriculture, transport, energy, climate change,*

defence and security". Between 2014 and 2020, the EU is investing over €12bn in the implementation of the EU's space programmes on satellite navigation ([Galileo](#) and [EGNOS](#)), Earth observation ([Copernicus](#)) and space research under [Horizon 2020](#).

EUROSTAT: February 2016 compared with January 2016 - Production in construction down by 1.1% in euro area, down by 0.4% in EU28

In February 2016 compared with January 2016, seasonally adjusted production in the construction sector fell by 1.1% in the euro area (EA19) and by 0.4% in the EU28, according to first estimates from Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. In January 2016, production in construction grew by 2.4% in the euro area and by 0.9% in the EU28. In February 2016 compared with February 2015, production in construction grew by 2.5% in the euro area and by 2.3% in the EU28. A full EUROSTAT press release is available [online](#).

STATEMENTS

Transport Commissioner Violeta Bulc outlines vision for a competitive road sector for people and businesses

Speaking on the occasion of the [Road Transport Conference "Driving change for business and people"](#), EU Commissioner for Transport Violeta **Bulc** kicked-off a consultation process on the future of the road sector. Commissioner **Bulc** said *"A strong transport sector is necessary to support the EU economy as a whole, to increase the competitiveness of our industry and our global presence. We need to make sure that it keeps developing and we deliver value. How can we make this a reality? Firstly, we need a well-functioning and fully integrated Internal Market for road transport to support people and businesses (...). A second challenge relates to the rights of transport workers (...). A third area to be looked at is the environment (...). Technology can provide a big contribution to transport and road transport in particular"*. Her full speech is available [here](#).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Thyssen participates in informal meeting of Employment and Social Affairs Ministers

Today and tomorrow, 19 – 20 April, Commission for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne **Thyssen**, will attend the informal meeting of Employment and Social Affairs Ministers (EPSCO), taking place in Amsterdam. Today will be devoted to a very first in-depth discussion on the recent [Commission's proposal to revise the 1996 Posting of Workers Directive](#). Ahead of this important debate, Commissioner **Thyssen** said: *"It is my political conviction that we need to facilitate the free movement of workers and services across Europe, but it needs to happen in a fair way. I believe that the Commission's proposal is the right one. It represents a balanced approach by applying the principle of equal pay for equal work at the same place, without interfering with national competences for wage setting systems. This meeting will be an opportunity for a first exchange of views with Ministers, and I am looking forward to further dialogues in the Council and in the European Parliament in the weeks to come."* The discussion will be concluded by a press conference at 17:45 tonight, which will be attended by Commissioner **Thyssen** as well as Dutch Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Social Affairs and Employment, Lodewijk Asscher. The Commissioner's speaking points will be made available [here](#). During tomorrow's morning session, the Ministers will discuss the content and scope of the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#). Finally, the EPSCO will be concluded by a plenary session on what should be the

priority actions of the [Platform against Undeclared Work](#), which [has been given green light](#) by both the European Parliament and the Council on 9 March 2016

Upcoming events

- **[Friday 15 April: EU launches world's biggest health and safety campaign](#)** European Commission - Upcoming events The news: On 15 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.