



Wednesday, 20 April, 2016

Managing the Refugee Crisis: Commission reports on implementation of EU-Turkey Statement

The Commission has today reported on the implementation of the [EU-Turkey Agreement](#) and finds that good progress has been made to operationalise the Statement. Continued efforts and commitments are needed to consolidate this position and carry out sustained return and resettlement operations, given that this aspect of implementation still largely lies ahead. On 18 March 2016, 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. This new approach has started to deliver results, with a sharp decrease seen in the number of people irregularly crossing the Aegean from Turkey into Greece. European Commission First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** said: *"The first result of our cooperation with Turkey is that the message is starting to get through that turning to smugglers is the wrong choice to make. In the past three weeks we have seen a sharp decrease in irregular arrivals, which now needs to go hand-in-hand with opening up the legal channel of resettlement to those in need of protection. Although we have seen good progress in the initial stages of implementation, the Commission will remain engaged to ensure full and timely delivery of all elements of the EU-Turkey Statement, including projects for refugees from Syria in Turkey, the visa liberalisation process and compliance with EU and international laws."* A [press release](#) and a [Q&A](#) on the report as well as a [factsheet](#) on the Facility for Refugees in Turkey are available. A state of play on the operational implementation of the EU-Turkey agreement can be found [here](#).

European Agenda on Security: Paving the way towards a Security Union

The Commission is today setting out the way forward towards the achievement of an effective and genuine EU Security Union – building on the [European Agenda on Security](#) presented on 28 April 2015. Whilst responsibility for security lies primarily with Member States, transnational threats such as terrorism cannot be addressed effectively without a common European approach. The necessary tools, infrastructure and environment are being built at European level for national authorities to work effectively together to meet the shared challenge. But the full added value of a Security Union depends crucially on the use that is made of this framework, to close operational loopholes and plug information gaps. This requires a step change at the level of Member States and their law enforcement authorities, working closely with EU Agencies. First Vice-President **Frans Timmermans** said: *"Terrorism knows no borders. National authorities are responsible for internal security. But they need to be able to cooperate seamlessly to prevent terrorism and track down the perpetrators. The EU can and must provide the right framework and tools for this, but what will make the difference is how the Member States use them. Law*

enforcement authorities in all our Member States should both 'think European' and 'act European', as internal security is a shared responsibility." Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Commissioner **Dimitris Avramopoulos** added: *"The European Union is designed to deliver an area of freedom, security and justice, without internal borders for its citizens. The internal security of one Member State is the internal security of all Member States. Fragmentation makes us vulnerable. It is exploited to the full by terrorists and criminals, as the recent attacks in several of our Member States have shown. We need to overcome this and turn our commitments into action to achieve a true EU Security Union."* A [press release](#) is available along with a [Q&A](#).

Antitrust: Commission sends Statement of Objections to Google on Android operating system and applications

The European Commission has informed Google of its preliminary view that the company has, in breach of EU antitrust rules, abused its dominant position by imposing restrictions on Android device manufacturers and mobile network operators. The Commission's preliminary view is that Google has implemented a strategy on mobile devices to preserve and strengthen its dominance in general internet search. First, the practices mean that Google Search is pre-installed and set as the default, or exclusive, search service on most Android devices sold in Europe. Second, the practices appear to close off ways for rival search engines to access the market, via competing mobile browsers and operating systems. In addition, they also seem to harm consumers by stifling competition and restricting innovation in the wider mobile space. Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *"A competitive mobile internet sector is increasingly important for consumers and businesses in Europe. Based on our investigation thus far, we believe that Google's behaviour denies consumers a wider choice of mobile apps and services and stands in the way of innovation by other players, in breach of EU antitrust rules. These rules apply to all companies active in Europe. Google now has the opportunity to reply to the Commission's concerns."* The Commission's concerns are outlined in a Statement of Objections. Sending a Statement of Objections does not prejudice the outcome of the investigation. A press release is available online in [here](#) A Factsheet is available in [here](#).

European Commission proposes visa-free travel for citizens of Ukraine

The European Commission is today proposing to the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament to lift visa requirements for the citizens of Ukraine by transferring Ukraine to the list of countries whose citizens can travel without a visa to the Schengen area. This proposal comes after the Commission gave a [positive assessment](#) last December, confirming that Ukraine successfully met all benchmarks under the Visa Liberalisation Action Plan (VLAP). Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Dimitris **Avramopoulos** said: *"Today we follow up on our commitment to propose short-stay visa-free travel to the EU for Ukrainian citizens with biometric passports – facilitating people-to-people contacts and strengthening business, social and cultural ties between the EU and Ukraine. This is the result of the success of the Ukrainian government in achieving far-reaching and difficult reforms in the Justice and Home Affairs area and beyond, impacting on areas such as the rule of law and justice reform. I am very satisfied with the progress achieved, it is an important achievement for the citizens of Ukraine, and I hope that the European Parliament and the Council will adopt our proposal very soon."* Once the proposal will be adopted by the European Parliament and the Council, Ukrainian citizens with biometric passports will no longer require visas when travelling for short stays of up to 90 days to the Schengen area. A press release is available [here](#).

Rail Transport: Landmark deal will deliver better rail services to passengers

The European Commission welcomes the agreement reached yesterday evening by the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers of the EU on the [Fourth Railway Package](#). This agreement will improve the performance of rail services in the EU to the benefit of passengers, through a gradual opening of domestic rail markets. The agreement now needs to be endorsed by the Member States and the European Parliament in the coming days. Once adopted, the package will complete the single European rail area and therefore deliver on this Commission's agenda of a [fairer and deeper internal market](#). EU Commissioner for Transport Violeta Bulc said "This agreement opens a new chapter for European railways. For too long, the rail sector had no incentives to adapt to consumer-demand and as a result the market share of rail steadily declined. Gradual market-opening will improve the performance of rail services. This agreement will also create new investment opportunities and foster job creation in the sector. Finally, it should encourage Europeans to make a greater use of rail, contributing to our decarbonisation objectives. When railways become more attractive, everybody wins." A [press release](#) is available, along with a [MEMO](#) and a [video](#).

Mergers: Commission clears joint venture between the Erste Group Bank and Global Payments in the Czech Republic, Romania and Slovakia

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the creation of a joint venture between the Erste Group Bank AG of Austria, a provider of banking, financial services and payment card services in Central and Eastern Europe, and Global Payments of the United States. Global Payments provides card payment processing services in the European Economic Area and globally. The joint venture will provide merchant acquiring services in the Czech Republic, Romania and Slovakia. It will also combine the companies' activities in merchant acquiring for international cards in the Czech Republic. The Commission concluded that the transaction would raise no competition concerns given the limited presence of Global Payments in this market. Likewise, no concerns were identified for the provision of payment processing services by Global Payments in the Czech Republic. This is because Global Payments will not have the ability to prevent competitors of the joint venture from accessing these services, given that many alternative solutions to Global Payments exist in the Czech Republic. More information is available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.7950](#).

EUROSTAT: Asylum decisions in the EU - EU Member States granted protection to more than 330 000 asylum seekers in 2015, Half of the beneficiaries were Syrians

The 28 Member States of the European Union (EU) granted protection status to 333 350 asylum seekers in 2015, an increase of 72% compared with 2014. Since 2008, a total of nearly 1.1 million asylum seekers have been granted protection status in the EU. The largest group of beneficiaries of protection status in the EU in 2015 remained citizens of Syria (166 100 persons, or 50% of the total number of persons granted protection status in the EU Member States), followed by citizens of Eritrea (27 600 or 8%) and those of Iraq (23 700 or 7%). Syrians, for whom the number of decisions granting protection status has more than doubled compared with 2014, represented in 2015 the largest group granted protection status in more than half of the Member States. Of the 166 100 Syrians granted protection status in the EU, more than 60% were recorded in Germany (104 000). Of the 27 600 Eritreans granted protection, more than three-quarters were registered in three EU Member States: Germany (9 500), Sweden (6 600) and the Netherlands (4 900). Of the 23 700 Iraqis, 15 500 were granted protection status in Germany and 2 800 in France. A full [EUROSTAT press release is](#) available online.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Justice and Home Affairs Council in Luxembourg

Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Dimitris **Avramopoulos** will represent the European Commission at the Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting in Luxembourg tomorrow, 21 April 2016. Following the extraordinary meeting of 24 March 2016 after the Brussels attacks, the Ministers will discuss security issues and will focus on the use and interoperability of databases including the Commission proposals made in the [Smart Borders Package](#) adopted on 6 April 2016 and the [Communication](#) on the implementation of the European Agenda on Security and the way towards a Security Union adopted today by the Commission. They will also exchange views on the [Commission's communication](#) for reforming the Common European Asylum System and discuss the progress on the Commission's proposal for a [European Border and Coast Guard](#), on which the Council adopted its position on 6 April 2016. Ministers will also discuss the implementation of the March European Council conclusions and the [EU-Turkey statement](#). Commissioner **Avramopoulos** will present to the Ministers the [First Report](#) on the progress made in the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement, which the Commission adopted today.

Vice-President Šefčovič and Commissioner Arias Cañete to visit New York for Paris Agreement signing ceremony

On Thursday 21 April, European Commission Vice-President Maroš **Šefčovič** in charge of the Energy Union, and Climate Action and Energy Commissioner Miguel **Arias Cañete** will visit New York ahead of Friday's high-level signing ceremony for the Paris Agreement on climate change. Vice-President **Šefčovič** will meet with UN Secretary-General Ban-Ki moon and Michael Bloomberg, UN Special Envoy for Cities and Climate Change, as well as with representatives from the Covenant of Mayors initiative. Commissioner **Arias Cañete** will participate in the special meeting of the High Ambition Coalition, the alliance of developing and developed nations that was instrumental in securing a successful outcome at the Paris climate conference in December 2015. On Friday 22 April, Vice-President Maroš **Šefčovič** and Dutch Environment Minister Sharon Dijksma will sign the Paris Agreement on behalf of the European Union. Commissioner **Arias Cañete** will deliver the official statement on behalf of the EU. During his visit, Commissioner **Arias Cañete** will also meet with the climate and energy ministers of China, USA, India, Turkey, Canada and Thailand to advance negotiations towards Marrakesh's COP 22. On Sunday 24 April, the Commissioner will participate in the [Major Economies Forum](#) meeting focused on the international collaborative efforts to implement the Paris Agreement. More information [here](#).

Commissioner Johannes Hahn visits Ukraine

Johannes **Hahn**, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, will visit Kyiv on 20-21 April. During his stay the Commissioner will meet with the President of [Ukraine](#) Petro Poroshenko, the Prime Minister Volodymyr Groysman Deputy Prime Minister Ivanna Klympush-Tsyntsadze and Minister of Finance, Oleksandr Danylyuk. Prior to the visit, Commissioner **Hahn** said: *"Ukraine's new government needs to act swiftly to implement key economic and rule of law reforms and step up the fight against corruption. The European Union remains committed to supporting Ukraine politically, financially and through the technical assistance. The more Ukraine reforms, the more support it will be able to draw on from the EU and other international partners."* Videos and photos of the visit will be available on [EbS](#).

Commissioner Thyssen visits Greece

On Thursday and Friday, 21-22 April, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne **Thyssen**, will travel to Greece. On Thursday, she will be in Athens, where she will meet the Greek Minister of Labour, Social Insurance and Social Solidarity, Mr Georgios Katrougalos; the Greek Minister of Economy, Development and Tourism, Mr Georgios Stathakis; the Alternate Minister responsible for Social Solidarity Mrs. Theano Fotiou, the Alternate Minister responsible for the fight against unemployment Mrs. Ourania Antanopoulou; and the Greek President of the Manpower Employment Organisation, Mrs Maria Karamesini. The meetings will be an occasion to discuss job creation and growth in Greece. Commissioner **Thyssen** will also meet business representatives to discuss skills development and apprenticeships. Finally, the Commissioner will also have a discussion on the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) with the Greek social partners. On Friday, Commissioner **Thyssen** will head to Thessaloniki, where she will visit the [European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training \(CEDEFOP\)](#) in light of the forthcoming "New Skills Agenda for Europe". During her stay, the Commissioner will also visit two projects funded by the [European Social Fund \(ESF\)](#) in Athens and in Thessaloniki.

Upcoming events .

- [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.