



Friday, 10 June, 2016

### **Climate Action: EU prepares the way for a quick ratification of Paris Agreement**

The European Commission today presented a proposal for the European Union to ratify the Paris Agreement, the world's first universal, legally binding deal to tackle climate change. The Commission's proposal comes just weeks after the EU and 174 countries signed the landmark agreement at a ceremony in New York. EU Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy Miguel **Arias Cañete** said: *"After Paris, the EU is doing its homework. We are determined to maintain the momentum and spirit of Paris and ensure the early ratification – and the swift implementation - of this historic agreement. Today's proposal demonstrates our continued commitment to lead the global clean energy transition and build a modern, sustainable and more climate-friendly economy. I am confident that the European Parliament, Council and Member States will complete the respective ratification procedures promptly."* In line with the 2030 climate and energy framework agreed by EU leaders in October 2014, the Commission intends to propose in the coming months the Member State targets to reduce emissions in those sectors not covered by the Emissions Trading System, such as transport, agriculture and buildings. The Commission will also propose how to integrate land use into the 2030 framework and a communication on low-carbon mobility. The Commission's proposals this summer, together with the revision of the Emissions Trading System, will deliver the remainder of the EU's commitments under the Paris Agreement and are an integral part of the Energy Union's ambitious and forward-looking climate policy. Read the full press release in [here](#). More information is available on the [Energy Union website](#).

### **Commission extends safety net measures for EU fruit and vegetables**

The European Commission has today formally extended until the end of June 2017 the safety net measures for the EU fruit and vegetables sector. Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Phil **Hogan**, had announced *"a prolongation of the measures for another year, reflecting the new market situation"* at the Council meeting of EU agriculture Ministers in March this year. The safety net measures were first introduced in 2014 in response to the Russian ban on the import of EU fruit and vegetables and were already extended one year ago. The measures aim to ease market pressures for those fruits and vegetables that were previously exported to Russia. They consist mainly of withdrawals of produce for free distribution to charitable organisations and for "other purposes" (such as animal feed, composting, and distillation). The measures cover tomatoes, carrots, cabbages, sweet peppers, cauliflowers and headed broccoli, cucumbers and gherkins, mushrooms, apples, pears, plums, soft fruit, fresh table grapes, kiwifruit, sweet oranges, clementines, mandarins, lemons, peaches and nectarines, sweet cherries and persimmons. Since the beginning of the Russian ban in August 2014, total quantities of fruits and

vegetables that have benefited from the exceptional measures exceed 1.13 million tons covered by a Union aid of almost € 280 million. In the face of the Russian ban, EU farmers have proved to be exceptionally resilient, with agri-food exports to third countries having increased by 4% in value compared with the previous year. However, the impact was uneven across sectors and countries. Commissioner **Hogan** commented today on the extension: *"The extension of safety net measures for the fruit and vegetable sector is a concrete demonstration of solidarity by the European Commission with European fruit and vegetable producers, who have been particularly badly-affected by the ongoing Russian ban. Since the ban was introduced, the Commission has implemented a series of measures to support producers in a number of sectors, recognising the difficult market situation in which they have found themselves."*

## **18 Member States agree to clarify the rules applicable to property regimes for Europe's international couples**

At the Justice Council yesterday, the Council adopted a decision authorising enhanced cooperation on rules applicable to property regimes for international married couples or registered partnerships, and reached a political agreement on two accompanying implementing Regulations. The Regulations will establish clear rules in cases of divorce or death and bring an end to parallel and possibly conflicting proceedings in various Member States, for instance on property or bank accounts. It will bring more legal clarity for international couples. First Vice-President **Timmermans** said: *"I welcome this important step forward towards giving more certainty to international couples – whether married or in registered partnerships – about what happens if one of the partners dies or their dream of a life together does not work out. Although I wish we had been able to take this forward in the EU as a whole, many people going through difficult times will directly benefit from this cooperation between 18 Member States."* Vera **Jourová**, EU Justice Commissioner added: *"I welcome the swift progress of Member States. This is important for 16 million international couples who often have to go through burdensome administrative procedures and unclear legal situations, in case of divorce or death of a partner. The new proposed rules will bring legal clarity and ease the complicated process of dividing up joint assets no matter where they are located."* Since it was not possible to reach unanimity among 28 Member States on proposals originally brought forward in 2011, the Commission proposed enhanced cooperation to Member States willing to join this initiative in March 2016. Now **Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Slovenia, Finland** and **Sweden** have enhanced their cooperation. Other Member States are free to join at any time after the formal adoption of the proposals. The European Parliament is expected to vote on the proposals on 22 June and the final adoption by the Council of the two Regulations will take place on 27 June. In this respect, **Estonia** announced its intention to take part. More information is available [here](#).

## **EU signs Economic Partnership Agreement with Southern African countries**

The European Union and six countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) today signed an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), the first of its kind between the EU and an African region pursuing economic integration. The signature took place in Kasane, Botswana. The Economic Partnership Agreement with Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland – i.e. the so-called "SADC EPA group" – is a development-oriented free trade agreement. In addition to this agreement, other regional agreements could also soon be signed with West Africa and the East African Community. At the signature ceremony in Botswana today, Commissioner **Malmström** gave a speech on the benefits of the agreement, which is available [here](#). More information is available in the [press release](#).

## Ten actions to help equip people in Europe with better skills

Today, the Commission has adopted a new and comprehensive Skills Agenda for Europe. The aim is to ensure that people develop a broad set of skills from early in life and to make the most of Europe's human capital, which will ultimately boost employability, competitiveness and growth in Europe. The Agenda calls on Member States and stakeholders to improve the quality of skills and their relevance for the labour market. 70 million Europeans lack adequate reading and writing skills, and even more have poor numeracy and digital skills. On the other hand, a large number of Europeans, particularly highly qualified young people, work in jobs that do not match their talents and aspirations. At the same time, 40% of European employers report that they cannot find people with the right skills to grow and innovate. Increasing skills levels, promoting transversal skills and finding ways to better anticipate the labour market's needs, including based on dialogue with industry, are therefore essential to improve people's chances in life, and support fair, inclusive and sustainable growth as well as cohesive societies. To help tackle skills challenges, the Commission will launch 10 actions which will address these issues and make skills more visible and improve their recognition at local, national and EU levels, from schools and universities to the labour market. Vice-President for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, Jyrki **Katainen**, said: *"This new Skills Agenda aims both at making sure that no-one is left behind, and that Europe nurtures the high-end skills that drive competitiveness and innovation. Skills, knowledge and competences are of strategic importance for Europe's economic success. Skills are vital for prosperity, jobs, growth and sustainable well-being."* Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne **Thyssen**, added: *"I am positive that the Skills Agenda will help ensure that everyone has access to quality education and training throughout life, starting with a solid level of basic skills on which to build for active participation in society and employment. By working together at EU level, we can make sure each and every one of us has the best chance to fulfil our potential."* More information can be found in the [press release](#) and [memo](#) online. Country-specific information is available [here](#). Watch Vice-President **Katainen's** and Commissioner **Thyssen's** press conference [here](#).

## Air Passenger Rights: Commission wants better enforcement of rules ahead of summer holidays

As millions of European citizens will be travelling during the summer period, today the Commission is taking action for the better enforcement of air passenger rights in the European Union. [New guidelines adopted today](#) will clarify the existing rules and facilitate their application, for the benefit of travellers and businesses. This is yet another deliverable of the [Aviation Strategy for Europe](#) adopted by the Commission in December 2015 to strengthen the competitiveness of European aviation and maintain the highest standards. EU Commissioner for Transport Violeta Bulc said: *"Transport is first and foremost about people, and I am proud that the EU protects its passengers across all forms of transport. The guidelines published today will bring further clarity and legal certainty to ensure that the rules are applied properly. All EU citizens travelling by plane should receive the level of protection they are entitled to."* More information can be found in a press release available in [here](#)

## ESI Funds support cutting-edge technology in Europe

Extreme Light Infrastructure (ELI) is a pan-European research project on high-tech laser technology, with facilities in Hungary, the Czech Republic and Romania. The Commission recently approved the allocation of over €250 million from [the European Regional Development Fund](#), to support the development of the Hungarian facility in Szeged and of the Romanian facility in Măgurele. The research performed in these centres can be applied in chemistry, material science and engineering, and industry. The objective of the ELI project is to promote national and European scientific research by creating a globally renowned structure, openly available for researchers from the academic world but also for the private scientific sphere and the business community. *"ELI is a symbol of excellence and a true European success story; I'm glad that the European Structural and Investment Funds are a part of it,"* said Commissioner for Regional

Policy Corina Crețu. Full research capacity should be achieved by the end of 2018 in both facilities. More information on [ESI Funds investments in Research and Innovation](#) is available online.

### **Financial stability: New EU rules on central clearing for credit derivative contracts denominated in specific European currencies**

The European Commission has today adopted a new set of rules that require certain over-the-counter (OTC) credit derivative contracts denominated in specific European currencies - namely the Norwegian Krone (NOK), Polish Zloty (PLN) and Swedish Krona (SEK) - to be cleared through central counterparties (CCPs). Mandatory central clearing is a vital part of the response to the financial crisis; it follows commitments made by world leaders at the G-20 Pittsburgh Summit in 2009 to improve transparency and mitigate risks. As of June 2015, OTC credit derivatives make up around 2.6% of all global OTC derivatives. Jonathan Hill, EU Commissioner for Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union, said: *"Today we are taking a significant step to implement our G20 commitments, strengthen financial stability and boost market confidence. This is also part of our move towards markets that are fair, open and transparent."* Today's decision takes the form of a Delegated Regulation and implements the clearing obligation under the European Market Infrastructure Regulation ('EMIR'). This constitutes the third set of classes to be subject to the clearing obligation, following the adoption on 6 August 2015 of rules subjecting some classes of interest rate derivative contracts to the clearing obligation and the adoption on 1 March 2016 of rules subjecting some classes of credit default swaps to the clearing obligation. The clearing obligations will enter into force subject to scrutiny by the European Parliament and the Council of the EU and will be phased in over three years to allow additional time for smaller market participants to comply.

### **State aid: Commission finds public financing in favour of Italian bus operator Arfea in breach of state aid rules**

The European Commission has found that a retroactive public service compensation of €1.29 million granted by the Region of Piedmont (Italy) to Italian bus operator Arfea for the provision of regional public bus transport services has given the company a selective advantage over its competitors in breach of EU State aid rules. In October 2013, the Regional Administrative Court of Piedmont had ordered the Piedmont Region to compensate Arfea for the financial burden that the company had allegedly suffered in 1997 and 1998 as a result of the imposition of public service obligations. The Commission's in-depth investigation opened in February 2015 has shown that the public service obligation was not imposed on Arfea by the Italian authorities. Moreover, the parameters to determine the amount of compensation had not been set in advance and Arfea had not implemented a proper separation of accounts between its public service activities and its commercial activities, in order to avoid overcompensation. The Commission therefore concluded that the compensation paid by Italy to Arfea was not in line with EU state aid rules on compensation for public transport services and ordered Italy to recover the undue advantage from the beneficiary. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number [SA.38132](#).

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini travels to Oslo for official visit**

Federica **Mogherini**, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission will travel to Oslo on Monday, 13 June for a two-day visit to Norway. The visit will be the High Representative's first visit to Norway in her current role, and will provide an opportunity to review [EU-Norway relations](#) across a broad range of areas, including foreign policy cooperation, security, migration, the Arctic, energy and the functioning of the European Economic Area. During her visit, HR/VP Mogherini will meet with Prime Minister Erna Solberg as well as Børge Brende, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Elisabeth Aspaker, Minister of EU/EEA affairs and Nordic Co-operation, and Ine Marie Eriksen Søreide, Minister of Defence. The High Representative is also scheduled to meet with Iranian Foreign Minister, Javad Zarif, after which both will deliver speeches at the opening plenary of the [Oslo Forum](#), alongside Foreign Minister Brende as Moderator. Whilst in Norway, the High Representative will also speak on "Common challenges for Europe: a strategy for foreign and security policy" at the Nobel Peace Centre.

### **Commissioner Johannes Hahn visits the Middle East**

Johannes **Hahn**, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, will travel to Jerusalem on Monday, 13 June and Ramallah and Gaza on Tuesday, 14 June for meetings with Israeli and Palestinian authorities. In Jerusalem, Commissioner **Hahn** will meet key interlocutors including Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister, Isaac Herzog, leader of the Opposition, as well as civil society and business representatives from both communities. In Ramallah, Commissioner Hahn will meet President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah and visit EU-funded projects such as the Small Scale Desalination Plant in Gaza, and projects operated by the EU's close partner, UNRWA. Videos and photos of the visit will be available on EbS.

### **European Sustainable Energy Week 2016 puts consumers in the centre of the energy transition**

The European Sustainable Energy Week 2016 comes back to Brussels, with a Policy Conference taking place from 14-16 June. The event is held annually by the European Commission and the Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises to discuss clean, secure and efficient energy. This year's focus lies on shaping the debate about empowering consumers for an active role in the energy transition and the establishment of an [Energy Union](#). Vice-President for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness Jyrki **Katainen** and Climate Action and Energy Commissioner Miguel **Arias Cañete** will open the event on Tuesday, 14 June and discuss how the [European Fund for Strategic Investments](#) (EFSI) is contributing to the modernisation of the economy and a sustainable, energy-secure and climate resilient growth in Europe by supporting long-term decarbonisation objectives. In the evening, a ceremony will take place to award the best European stories in clean, secure and efficient energy, among the categories of businesses, public sector and consumers. For the first time European citizens will award their prize too. The EU Sustainable Energy Awards competition recognises projects helping to achieve EU energy goals, while hundreds of Energy Days events are taking place across Europe throughout June to engage citizens and energy stakeholders in helping to build and strengthen the [Energy Union](#). These public events involve exhibitions, workshops, educational events and more. Please see the full agenda of the European Sustainable Energy Week on the [EUSEW](#) website. The Policy Conference with Vice-President **Katainen** and Commissioner **Arias Cañete** takes place in the Charlemagne Building and is open to media. Follow on twitter via #EUSEW16.

### **Upcoming Events.**

**10 June:** [Commission presents the New Skills Agenda for Europe](#) The European Commission will present the New Skills Agenda for Europe. The aim of this Agenda is to ensure that people develop a broad set of skills from early on in life and to make the most of Europe's...

**15 June:** [10th edition of the European Development Days European](#) The tenth edition of the European Development Days will take place in Brussels on 15-16 June. The background: The European Development Days is Europe's leading forum on international cooperation and development

**16 June:** [The Commission adopts its monthly infringements package](#) 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.

**MEX/16/2164**



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