



Friday, 09 December, 2016



Commission adopts proposal improving collection and use of farm statistics to better support agricultural policy-making

Today, the European Commission adopted a proposal for a Regulation on new, integrated ways to collect and use statistics on farms so as to better support policy making in general and agricultural policy in particular. The proposed framework Regulation on Integrated Farm Statistics will improve the analysis of the state, trends and impacts of European agriculture and contribute to EU responses in the areas of climate change, environmental policies, rural development, and food security. The proposed framework Regulation will increase the comparability and coherence of EU statistics on the structure of European farms, speed up data transmission, and allow for a more elegant, flexible and targeted data collection which reduces the burden on farms in the EU. It is an important step forward to meet today's and tomorrow's needs and requirements for European agricultural statistics, while also reducing the costs and burdens of data collection. Agriculture uses almost half of the land area of the European Union. It has a large impact on climate change and the environment, and many rural communities depend on agriculture. The EU needs the most accurate information in this field to design policies that benefit all citizens of Europe. The European Commission is strongly committed to supporting sustainable development and fighting climate change, and the proposal helps to achieve these goals.

Commission publishes negotiating proposals for modernised EU- Mexico trade deal

The Commission published today - as part of [its commitment](#) for a more transparent trade and investment policy - [six initial European proposals](#) for modernising various elements of the EU-Mexico agreement. These texts represent the EU's initial negotiating position. Together with the proposals, the Commission has made available the report from the second round of talks that took place in Mexico between 22 and 25 November. Trade Commissioner Cecilia **Malmström** said: *"Sixteen years have passed since the current EU-Mexico deal became effective. Today we need to adapt it to a new trade reality. We've had some good initial talks with our Mexican counterparts, but to reach a good agreement we also need constructive engagement from interested parties, including civil society. The proposals published today, in line with our transparency commitments, will contribute to that discussion."* Amongst other things, the texts presented by the EU in the negotiations aim to: increase participation of European companies in Mexican public tenders and vice versa; increase cooperation on imports requirements related to food safety, plant and animal health; facilitate trade in energy products and raw materials; and broaden protection of intellectual property, including names of traditional European products known as 'geographical indications'. The proposals seek to reduce unnecessary regulatory barriers to trade and increase the part of trade benefits that go to small companies. At the same time, their aim is to uphold levels of consumer, worker and environment protection and work together with Mexico towards sustainable development. Further EU proposals will be made

available as the negotiations progress. EU negotiating proposals and other trade documents published since 14 October 2015 are available on the [Transparency in Action](#) portal.

President Juncker delivers speech on the 25th anniversary of the Maastricht Treaty

Today European Commission President Jean-Claude **Juncker** gave a speech to students at the University of Maastricht on the occasion of the 25 year anniversary of the Maastricht Treaty. He spoke of the Treaty's achievements in creating the Economic and Monetary Union. Looking to the future, he called for more unity, structured cooperation and defence of our common achievements. He said *"We can no longer explain European integration through its past. We have to explain the European Union through what it can bring for the future."* President **Juncker** explained that Europe is the smallest continent in the world and that only together can European nations continue to be influential on the world stage, saying "Those who think the time has come to deconstruct, to put Europe in pieces, to subdivide us in national divisions are totally wrong. We won't exist as single nations without the European Union".

Investment Plan for Europe: EUR 116 million to support digital commerce upgrade

The European Investment Bank (EIB) has signed a EUR 116 million loan agreement with El Corte Inglés to finance the company's digital transition. The loan is guaranteed under the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the heart of the [Investment Plan for Europe](#). El Corte Inglés will use this EIB financing to expand the investment needed to provide its customers with a new integrated online retail platform, enabling it to strengthen its multichannel online and mobile sales, and create efficient synergies with its brick-and-mortar stores. The project will allow El Corte Inglés to create the new highly qualified positions to implement this digital transformation. European Commission Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, said: *"The Investment Plan can play a crucial role in helping European businesses to embrace the digital technologies that will drive their future growth. I welcome the news that today's agreement will allow El Corte Inglés to take full advantage of the benefits of adopting advanced digital technologies to aid their continued success."*

Commission launches two new and one review anti-dumping investigation on steel and iron products

The European Commission is launching [today](#) and tomorrow three investigations on steel and iron products originating in China and India. Two of the investigations relate to potential new anti-dumping duties to be imposed on one product of Chinese origin (corrosion resistant steel) and another product (certain cast iron articles) originating in China and India. The third investigation concerns an expiry review of existing anti-dumping measures on imports from China of certain seamless pipes and tubes of stainless steel. For the two new investigations, the Commission now has up to nine months to establish whether conditions to impose provisional duties are met, and a further six months to decide whether to impose definitive measures. On the third investigation, the expiry review will determine whether it is justified to continue for another five years the anti-dumping duties already in place since 2011, or whether they should be discontinued. Corrosion resistant steels are mainly used in the construction sector and in domestic appliances. Stainless seamless pipes and tubes are mainly used in the chemical and petrochemical industries, fertiliser production, power generation, civil engineering and construction, food processing, pharmacology and medical applications, biotechnology, water treatment and waste incineration. Anti-dumping investigations follow a strict procedure in line with EU and World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules. The EU currently has an unprecedented number of trade defence measures in place targeting unfair exports of steel products from third countries, with a total of 40 anti-dumping and anti-subsidy measures, 18 of which on products

originating from China. 20 more investigations concerning steel products are still ongoing, including three cases for which duties are being provisionally applied.

European Commission presents follow-up actions from Fundamental Rights Colloquium on media pluralism and democracy

Today, the European Commission publishes the follow-up actions from this year's [Annual Colloquium on Fundamental Rights](#), dedicated to fostering and improving media pluralism and democracy. The discussions in which journalists, academics, NGOs and politicians participated, were focused on six key points: 1) protecting media freedom and independence from political pressure, 2) safeguarding the independence of the media, 3) protecting journalists and their freedom of expression, 4) preventing hate speech against journalists and new media actors, 5) defending whistleblowers and investigative journalists and 6) promoting media literacy as well as media ethics. The European Commission defined a number of actions to attain these goals. This includes a call for a swift adoption of the [Audiovisual Media Services Directive](#) by the Parliament and Council in order to strengthen the independence of regulatory authorities of the media. The Commission also recommends the swift adoption of the revised [Copyright Directive](#), which should ensure a sustainable financial basis for the media. In order to protect journalists' freedom of expression, the Commission wants to monitor and enhance public awareness on media freedom and pluralism, encourage dialogue with civil society, business and new media. It will also offer funding for independent projects on the freedom of expression and support projects tackling hate speech against journalists. To enhance the protection of whistleblowers, the Commission will assess whether further EU level legislation is necessary to strengthen their protection. Finally, the European Commission will undertake a number of actions to increase media literacy. This includes funding for media actors, industry, researchers and NGOs to explore issues such as the 'filter-bubble' effect and the roles of algorithms. More information on the 2016 Colloquium are available [online](#). The full set of conclusions is available [here](#).

EUROSTAT: Personal transfers in the EU- Amounts sent abroad by EU residents up at €31.3 billion in 2015- Amounts received from abroad at €11.0 bn

In 2015, flows of money sent by residents of the European Union (EU) to a non-EU country, referred to as personal transfers, amounted to €31.3 billion, compared with €29.9 bn in 2014. As inflows to the EU totalled slightly less than €11.0 bn in 2015, this resulted in a negative balance (-€20.4 bn) for the EU with the rest of the world. The majority of personal transfers consist of flows of money sent by migrants to their country of origin. [Full text available on EUROSTAT website](#)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Vice-President Dombrovskis and Commissioner Thyssen close successful first European Vocational Skills Week

Today, Vice-President for the Euro, Social Dialogue, Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union, Valdis **Dombrovskis**, and Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne **Thyssen** will close the very [first European Vocational Skills Week](#). Almost 900 activities took place during and around the week, in Brussels and several EU Member States, reaching an audience of up to 600,000 people. At the closing conference, Vice-President **Dombrovskis** said: "*Skills – or the lack of them – make all the difference for a person to succeed on the labour market, and for economies to flourish. Even the most basic tasks in our economy become more and more closely related to a broader set of digital, service and people-oriented skills. If European citizens do not acquire the necessary skills, they – and the EU as a whole - misses out on opportunities. We need therefore to up our*

game, and this first European Vocational Skills Week has been an great step in that direction". During the closing ceremony in Brussels, Commissioner **Thyssen** will present the 2016 VET awards, showcasing the excellence and attractiveness of vocational education and training (VET). Ahead of the award ceremony, the Commissioner said: "*We have seen that vocational education gives young people opportunities to acquire initial qualifications that pave the way to a fulfilling life. That it allows adults to upskill and reskill throughout life – so they can better their careers, adapt to fast changing technologies, and enhance their employability. And that for many people, it opens the door to a successful and fulfilling career.*" The VET Skills Week is part of the EU's efforts to make VET a first choice, rather than a 'second-chance option', as outlined in the [New Skills Agenda for Europe](#). Better opportunities for learners, trainees and apprentices in VET are also contained in the [Youth Package](#) that was adopted on Wednesday. For 2017, the Commission intends to create a quality framework for apprenticeships, setting out key principles for the design and delivery of apprenticeships and work-based learning. Moreover, the Commission wants to increase quality cross-border opportunities for VET students apprentices. In this spirit, the Commission launched yesterday its first [learning mobility scoreboards](#) for initial vocational education and training and higher education. The scoreboards show how well different EU countries do in creating a favourable environment for learning and studying in another country. The closing ceremony can be followed via webstreaming [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.