



Thursday, 09 February, 2017

### **Political agreement reached on Structural Reform Support Programme – a new tool to help Member States implement reforms**

The European Commission welcomes the agreement yesterday evening with the European Parliament and Council of Ministers on the Structural Reform Support Programme (SRSP). The programme provides financing for the technical support that the Commission makes available to Member States at their request, under the coordination of the [Structural Reform Support Service](#) (SRSS). The SRSS coordinates and provides support to Member States for the design and implementation of administrative and structural reforms, in coordination with the Commission services. The service currently works with nine Member States and more countries have already asked for support. The SRSP, with a budget of EUR 142.8 million to cover 2017-2020, will enable the Commission to strengthen further its support to Member States. Valdis **Dombrovskis**, Vice-President for the Euro and Social Dialogue, also in charge of Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union, said: *"Today's political agreement is a major new step towards enhancing the partnership between the European Commission and Member States. It paves the way for the Commission to provide targeted and tailor-made expertise that helps Member States carry out the reforms they consider necessary to make their economies more competitive and investment-friendly, resulting in stronger economic growth and creating more jobs. We look forward to a formal agreement by the two institutions soon so that work can start in earnest."* A full press release is available [here](#).

### **Commissioner Crețu visits Italy as President Juncker reiterates the EU's readiness to support the reconstruction process after the earthquakes**

From 9 to 11 February, Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina **Crețu** is in Italy. Today she visits the historical site of Pompeii, which is being restored with the support of the [European Regional Development Fund](#). The Commissioner will then hold a [Citizens' Dialogue](#) in Naples with Claudio de Vincenti, Minister for the Territorial Cohesion and Mezzogiorno, and will meet the Presidents of the regions of the South of Italy. On 10 February the Commissioner will participate to a conference on the future of Cohesion Policy in the city of Science in Naples. On 11 February Commissioner **Crețu** will travel to the region of Umbria, which was affected by the earthquakes of August and October 2016 and of January 2017, and will visit the towns of Perugia and Norcia. *"My visit to Italy is a symbol of solidarity, when the country has again been hit by an earthquake last month. As President **Juncker** said, we will stand by Italy throughout the reconstruction process and EU funds will help. I will visit the Basilica of San Benedetto in Norcia, which I hope will soon be restored to its former beauty with the support of Cohesion Policy funds,"* said Commissioner ahead of her visit. President **Juncker** has written to the Mayor of Norcia to recall the

Commission's readiness to provide support, as well as to recall what has been made available so far, including the Commission's commitment to co-finance the construction of the San Benedetto basilica. "I want to express my admiration for the resilience of the population of Norcia, hit repeatedly by earthquakes and for their determination to move forward. I follow very closely the follow up to my announcement concerning the EU's contribution to the reconstruction of the Cathedral of Saint Benedetto and will be happy to visit the town once the reconstruction work is in progress," the President wrote. In November 2016, [the Commission proposed](#) to fully fund reconstruction operations under Structural Funds programmes, with an amendment to the Cohesion Policy regulation introducing an EU co-financing rate of up to 100% for reconstruction operations linked to natural disasters. It also announced a first disbursement of aid worth €30 million under the [EU Solidarity Fund](#) to support Italy after the earthquakes. More information on the European Structural and Investment Funds in Italy is available [here](#).

## **EU opening a new chapter of relations with The Gambia**

Neven **Mimica**, Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, is in The Gambia today, meeting the newly elected President Adama Barrow and his new Government. During his visit, Commissioner **Mimica** made the following statement: *"The peaceful democratic change in The Gambia is the result of the determination of the Gambian people, as well as the regional and international coordinated efforts of the Economic Community of West African States. Gambians have shown commendable resolve, patience and courage during a period of high tension. The EU is fully committed to engage with President Barrow and his Government. We want to be a privileged partner of The New Gambia. In addition to the €75 million package of immediate support signed today, we are already preparing a medium term package of €150 million, which will focus on building the capacities of the State and on job creation."* The Commissioner expressed the EU's readiness to provide immediate financial and technical support to the democratic process in The Gambia and to step up its support to the sustainable and inclusive development of the country in close consultation with the new authorities. The EU is committed to support progress regarding democracy, human rights, good governance and sustainable and inclusive development.

## **Public health: encouraging developments in the area of national cancer screening programmes**

The implementation report on the [2003 Council Recommendation on cancer screening](#), published today, reveals a steep rise in national screening programmes for breast, cervical and colorectal cancer. Vytenis **Andriukaitis**, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, said "Breast, cervical and colorectal cancer claim the lives of around a quarter of a million European citizens each year. Early detection - as well as cancer prevention - saves lives, and so this is where we must continue focusing our efforts. The Council's recommendation and the Commission's quality assurance guidelines have led to most EU countries putting in place organised, high quality screening programmes. This is a major step forward for citizens' health." Today, 25 EU countries have population-based programmes for breast cancer, 22 for cervical cancer and 20 for colorectal cancer screening, as compared with 18, 17 and 12, respectively, since the [first report](#) was published 10 years ago. Nearly 25 million women aged 50-69 years were invited to mammography screening in the last reporting year, and 110 million men and women aged 50-74 years could potentially undergo screening for colorectal cancer. In addition to highlighting the status and volume of screening programmes in EU countries, today's report includes a set of essential indicators to document the quality of screening. Read the [full report](#). For more information see [here](#).

## STATEMENTS

### **Statement by Commissioner Avramopoulos on his meeting yesterday with US Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly**

*"I met with U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security John Kelly to discuss transatlantic cooperation on the global challenges of migration and security. The security threats faced by the United States and the European Union are common – and so should be our response. The existing, tangible cooperation between the U.S. and the EU in the fight against terrorism, the strengthening of border management and enhancing cybersecurity must be furthered. Information sharing is our strongest tool in this effort. On migration, I underlined during our meeting that the refugee crisis today is not just a challenge for Europe, or the U.S. It is a global challenge and it has to be tackled as such. The world needs both the EU and the U.S. to continue playing a leading role in refugee resettlement, in accordance with our ethical and legal values and responsibilities. I look forward to continuing to work closely with the new administration in order to address these global challenges together, and to maintain and deepen the historic bonds of friendship between the United States and the European Union."* The statement is available [here](#).

### **Statement by EU Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos Stylianides on the killing of six Red Cross staff in Afghanistan**

Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management, Christos **Stylianides** issued a statement yesterday condemning the attacks on aid workers of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) working in Afghanistan. *"An attack on those who work to help others is an attack on humanity and a grave violation of International Humanitarian Law. (...) All parties to the conflict in Afghanistan must ensure that humanitarian organisations have unhindered and safe access to people in need. (...) The European Union remains committed to provide lifesaving aid in Afghanistan."* The full statement is available [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.