



Friday, 31 March, 2017

President Juncker's speech at the 2017 EPP Congress in Malta: "The time has come for convinced Europeans to stand up for Europe"

President **Juncker** yesterday delivered a speech at the 2017 EPP Congress in Malta focusing on the European Union's achievements in the last 60 years and looking ahead towards its future: *"We have had peace for 60 years, a peace which is not relative but comprehensive."* Following the triggering of Article 50 by the United Kingdom, President **Juncker** highlighted the need to look forward: *"Brexit is not the end of everything (...) we have to make it the beginning of something that will be new, stronger and better"*. The European Union project must now continue with *"the completion of the internal market, with the deepening of the European Economic and Monetary Union [...] We must also continue in the social matters"*, President **Juncker** stated.

New report highlights how EU Cohesion Policy improves the investment environment in Europe

One of the key elements of the Cohesion Policy reform for 2014-20 was the introduction of preconditions for Member States to receive money from the European Structural and Investment Funds.

A first assessment published today shows that this additional step has a high value, and that the preconditions proved to be a powerful incentive for Member States and regions to carry out reforms which would have otherwise been delayed or not necessarily implemented. More information [here](#)

Eurostat: Flash estimate - March 2017 - Euro area annual inflation down to 1.5%

Euro area annual inflation is expected to be 1.5% in March 2017, down from 2.0% in February 2017, according to a flash estimate from **Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union**. Full text available [here](#)

European Commission secures 10-year pledge to save fish stocks and protect employment in the Mediterranean

The European Commission reached yesterday an important milestone in its objective to save the Mediterranean fish stock and protect the region's ecological and economic wealth. Months of negotiations at ministerial level culminated in the signature of the [Malta MedFish4Ever Declaration](#), which sets out a detailed work programme for the next 10 years, based on ambitious but realistic targets. This Declaration, signed by the European Commission, 8 Member States of the EU (Spain, France, Italy, Malta, Slovenia, Croatia, Greece, Cyprus) and 7 third countries (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Turkey, Albania, Montenegro) – 80% of the total Mediterranean fleet – is a great success and a sign of political ownership. It is also another contribution by the EU to achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

Commissioner for Environment, Fishers and Maritime Affairs Karmenu **Vella**, said on the occasion: *"Today we are making history. In signing the Malta MedFish4Ever Declaration, we are affirming our political will to deliver tangible action: on fisheries and other activities that have an impact on fisheries resources, on the blue economy, on social inclusion, and on solidarity between the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean. I hope that this declaration will come to be seen as a turning point – for a bright future for fishermen, coastal communities and fishing resources alike."* Commitments made by the signatories include adequate data collection and scientific assessment of the fish stock, multi-annual management plans for all key fisheries, elimination of illegal fishing by 2020 by ensuring a legal framework, as well as control and inspection capacities in the States, and support sustainable small-scale fisheries and aquaculture by streamlining funding schemes for local projects. The [declaration](#) and a full [press release](#) are online.

EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey: steady progress and new projects for education and health launched

Today, the sixth Steering Committee meeting of the [EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey](#) is taking place in Brussels to report on the progress made to date. Gathering together the European Commission (chairing), EU Member State representatives, and representatives of Turkey, participants will discuss about the latest projects adopted that will support education of Syrian youth and will focus on protection and access to health. A [press release](#) and a [factsheet](#) with the outcome of the meeting will be online at approximately 13:00.

State aid: Commission approves amendments to Northern Ireland Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme

The European Commission has approved amendments to the Northern Ireland Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme as in line with EU state aid rules. The United Kingdom notified these amendments to the Commission in March 2017. They introduce a 'tiered' tariff system, whereby medium-sized biomass operators will move to a lower fixed tariff after a set number of operating hours. They also introduce an overall cap on the number of operating hours for which these beneficiaries can receive support in any given year. The Northern Irish authorities will also conduct a full review of the scheme with a view to assessing compliance in practice with the scheme rules and objectives. In the meantime, the amended scheme will remain in place until 31 March 2018. The United Kingdom initially introduced the Northern Ireland Renewable Heat Incentive in 2012, having obtained [approval by the Commission](#) under EU state aid rules. The non-confidential version of the decisions will be published in the [state aid register](#) on the [competition](#) website under the case number SA.47501. The [State Aid Weekly e-News](#) lists new publications of state aid decisions on the internet and in the EU Official Journal.

Statement by Commissioner Stylianides on protecting civilians inside Mosul, Iraq

Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides** has issued a statement on the need to protect civilians during the conflict in Mosul, Iraq. "A few weeks ago I was in Iraq, visiting

the conflict areas and seeing how our humanitarian aid can best help those in need.(...) Despite Da'esh war crimes and despite the enormous challenges of conducting this battle in such a densely populated urban setting, the protection of civilians couldn't be more crucial.(...) We must preserve humanity during conflict. (...) Concretely what is needed are safe evacuation routes, capacity to extract the injured and lifesaving aid to reach civilians. To help, the European Union is leading international humanitarian efforts and giving priority to medical response. We are funding trauma care facilities and also providing emergency supplies such as food, water and healthcare". Read the full statement [here](#) and watch Commissioner **Stylianides'** video statement [here](#). Photos of his recent mission to Iraq are also available [here](#).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

First European conference on Connected and Automated Driving technologies on 3 and 4 April in Brussels

The European Commission is strongly committed to support connected and automated driving (CAD) technologies in Europe and will host on Monday and Tuesday in Brussels its first dedicated conference. Significant progress has been made in CAD technologies such as advanced vehicle control and vehicle localisation systems and the European Commission acknowledges their potential positive impact on road safety and driving efficiency. This conference will be a unique opportunity for major road transport stakeholders and EU high-level representatives to discuss on how to boost the development and deployment of such technologies by focusing on transport policy issues, technological challenges, legal and regulatory frame, and digital transformation. Commissioners Violeta **Bulc**, in charge of Transport, and Carlos **Moedas**, in charge of Research, Science and Innovation, will give opening speeches from 9:15 on Monday. You can find the full programme [here](#) and more information [here](#). You can also follow the plenary sessions via Web streaming [online](#).

Commissioner Arias Cañete in Israel for EastMed Energy Summit

Climate Action and Energy Commissioner Miguel **Arias Cañete** will travel to Tel Aviv Monday 3 April to discuss the potential of gas from the eastern Mediterranean region for Europe. The ministerial EastMed Energy Summit will be held by Commissioner **Arias Cañete** and the Energy Ministers from Israel, Greece, Cyprus and Italy. The Commissioner and Ministers will discuss East Med developments in the energy sector and options for meeting the needs of the Israeli and European gas markets. Commissioner **Arias Cañete** said: *"In the next decades gas flows from the eastern Mediterranean region will play a vital role in the energy security of the European Union. The Commission strongly supports the construction of the necessary energy infrastructure and developing a competitive and liquid gas market in the region"*. The East Mediterranean gas findings could play an important role in helping both producing and neighbouring countries to address their energy security problems. They could also have a growing role in the EU's diversification strategy. In this context the EastMed Gas Pipeline is one of the possible future infrastructure options to bring gas reserves of the East Med region to Europe and other international markets. The ending of energy islands and [diversification of EU gas supplies](#) is an important objective of this Juncker Commission as laid down in the [Energy Union Strategy](#). As part of this, the EU is working with countries in north Africa, the Middle East and the eastern Mediterranean to open up new routes that can bring gas to Europe.



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