



EURO-NET

The Youth European Network



EUROPE DIRECT BASILICATA centre
promoted by the association EURO-NET
and realised with the grant of E.U. in
the framework of the namesake project

Bimonthly newsletter:

- to spread European opportunities and initiatives,
- to disseminate the respect of human rights and the awareness about the development of Europe's cultural identity and diversity,
- to fight discrimination against minorities, xenophobia, intolerance and racism,
- to help, with youth activities, the democratic stability and social inclusion in Europe,
- develop active European citizenship and civil society by giving impetus to the training of youth leaders and youth workers working within a European dimension;
- to promote European youth activities, such as exchanges, seminars, conferences, debates and training courses,
- to encourage exchange of ideas, proposals, experiences and good practises at international level.

**YEAR 11 - NUMBER 1
OF 20TH FEBRUARY 2016
ENGLISH NEWSLETTER**

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1. The Commission presents sustainable energy security package

Implementing Energy Union: The Commission presented its energy security package with necessary proposals to equip the EU for global energy transition as well as to be prepared for possible energy supply interruptions.

The Commission unveiled a package of energy security measures to equip the EU for global energy transition to address possible energy supply interruptions. Energy security dimension is one of the cornerstones of the Energy Union strategy, a key political priority of the Juncker Commission. The package sets out a wide range of measures to strengthen the EU's resilience to gas supply disruptions. These measures include moderating energy demand, increasing energy production in Europe (including from renewables), further developing a well-functioning and fully integrated internal energy market, as well as diversification of energy sources, suppliers and routes. Further, the proposals bring more transparency to the European energy market and create more solidarity between the Member States. The energy security package is presented in the light of the new global and universal agreement on climate change, adopted by world leaders on 12 December 2015 in Paris. The Paris agreement sent a strong signal to businesses and policy-makers placing clean energy on an irreversible pathway and setting the scene for a global energy transition. Vice-President responsible for Energy Union, **Maroš Šefčovič** said: *"The Energy Union Strategy, launched one year ago, promised to provide all Europeans with energy which is secure, sustainable, and competitive. The package focuses on the security of our supply, but touches upon all three overarching goals. By reducing our energy demand, and better managing our supply from external sources we are delivering on our promise and enhancing the stability of Europe's energy market."* Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy, **Miguel Arias Cañete** said: *"After the gas crises of 2006 and 2009 that left many millions out in the cold, we said: 'Never again'. But the stress tests of 2014 showed we are still far too vulnerable to major disruption of gas supplies. And the political tensions on our borders are a sharp reminder that this problem is will not just go away. The proposals are about a reliable, competitive and flexible system in which energy flows across borders and consumers reap the benefits. They are about standing together to protect the most vulnerable. And they are about securing our clean energy future: I can assure that our commitment to a clean energy transition is irreversible and non-negotiable."*



What does the package adopted by the Commission consist of?

- **Security of Gas Supply Regulation**

Gas plays a role in the transition to a low-carbon economy and remains important in the EU energy mix. However the existing external dependence requires the EU to strengthen the resilience of its markets when confronted by gas supply disruptions. To reap full benefits of liquid and competitive market it is necessary to enhance the transparency on EU gas market. To address this fragility of the system, the Commission proposes a shift from national approach to a regional approach when designing security of supply measures. Further, the proposal introduces a solidarity principle among Member States to ensure the supply of households and essential social services, such as healthcare, in case their supply was affected due to a severe crisis.

- **A decision on Intergovernmental Agreements in energy**

The EU needs to ensure that intergovernmental agreements signed by its Member States with third countries and relevant to EU gas security are more transparent and fully comply with EU law. To that end it introduces an *ex-ante* compatibility check by the Commission. This *ex-ante* assessment makes it possible to check compliance with competition rules and internal energy market legislation before the agreements are negotiated, signed and sealed. The Member States will have to take full account of the Commission's opinion ahead of signing the agreements.

- **Liquefied natural gas (LNG) and gas storage strategy**

Europe is the biggest importer of natural gas in the world. Europe's overall LNG import capacity is significant – currently it is enough to meet around 43% of total current gas demand (2015). However, significant regional disparities as regards access to LNG remain. The Commission sets a liquefied natural gas (LNG) strategy that will improve access of all Member States to LNG as an alternative source of gas. The central elements of this strategy are building the strategic

infrastructure to complete the internal energy market and identifying the necessary projects to end single-source dependency of some of the Member States.

- **Heating and Cooling strategy**

The heating and cooling of buildings and industry consumes half of the EU's energy. Further, it is 75% powered by fossil fuels. The proposed Heating and Cooling strategy focuses on removing barriers to decarbonisation in buildings and industry. It also stresses that increased energy efficiency and use of renewables will have an impact on energy security. Looking into this sector more strategically is crucial as the EU wants to improve its interdependence from external suppliers.

Background

One of the priorities of the Juncker Commission is the creation of a resilient European Energy Union with a forward looking climate change policy. The goal of the European Energy Union, as set out in the Framework Strategy of last February, is to give EU consumers – households and businesses – secure, sustainable, competitive and affordable energy. This will require a fundamental transition of our energy landscape. It provides an opportunity for further innovation in the sector, thereby contributing to creating jobs and growth in the EU and protecting our environment. The Commission makes a strong call to the European Parliament and the Council to turn today's proposals into legislation very quickly as a matter of priority to increase Europe's resilience to potential energy disruptions. Security of supply is one of the five interlinked and mutually dependant dimensions of the Energy Union. Key drivers of energy security are the completion of the internal market and more efficient energy consumption, but the EU's energy security is also closely linked with the energy policy choices of its neighbours.

2. The Netherlands presidency of the Council of the EU

The presidency of the Council rotates among the EU member states every 6 months. During this 6-month period, the presidency chairs meetings at every level in the Council, helping to ensure the continuity of the EU's work in the Council. Member states holding the presidency **work together**



closely in groups of three, called 'trios'. This system was introduced by the Lisbon Treaty in 2009. The trio sets long-term goals and prepares a common agenda determining the topics and major issues that will be addressed by the Council over an 18 month period. On the basis of this programme, each of the three countries prepares its own more detailed 6-month programme. The **current trio** is made up of the presidencies of the Netherlands, Slovakia and Malta.

The Netherlands presidency of the Council of the EU: 1 January-30 June 2016

The Netherlands presidency work programme focuses on four key areas: migration and international security, sound finances and a robust eurozone, Europe as an innovator and job creator and forward-looking climate and energy policy. The presidency wants an EU that focuses on what matters to Europe's citizens and businesses, an EU that creates growth and jobs through innovation and connects with civil society. The presidency will promote action at EU level only if it is more effective than policies at national level.

- [The Netherlands presidency website](#)
- [The Netherlands presidency work programme](#)
- [Provisional calendar of meetings under the Netherlands presidency of the Council](#)
- [Provisional agendas for Council meetings during the Netherlands presidency](#)

The tasks of the presidency

The presidency is responsible for driving forward the Council's work on EU legislation, ensuring the continuity of the EU agenda, orderly legislative processes and cooperation among member states. To do this, the presidency must act as an **honest and neutral broker**.

The presidency has two main tasks:

1. **Planning and chairing meetings in the Council and its preparatory bodies**

The presidency chairs meetings of the different Council configurations (with the exception of the Foreign Affairs Council) and the Council's preparatory bodies, which include permanent committees such as the Permanent Representatives Committee (Coreper), and working parties and committees dealing with very specific subjects. The presidency ensures **that discussions are conducted properly** and that the Council's rules of procedure and working methods are correctly applied. It also organises various formal and informal meetings in Brussels and in the country of the rotating presidency.

2. Representing the Council in relations with the other EU institutions

The presidency represents the Council in relations with the other EU institutions, particularly with the Commission and the European Parliament. Its role is to try and reach agreement on legislative files through **trilogues**, informal negotiation meetings and Conciliation Committee meetings.

The presidency works in close coordination with:

- the President of the European Council;
- the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

It supports their work and may sometimes be requested to perform certain duties for the high representative, such as representing the Foreign Affairs Council before the European Parliament or chairing the Foreign Affairs Council when it discusses common commercial policy issues.

3. Wroclaw and San Sebastian: European Capitals of Culture in 2016

The Polish and the Spanish cities will mark the 31st year of one of the most popular EU projects.

Wroclaw (Poland) and San Sebastian (Spain) are the European Capitals of Culture in 2016. The cultural programme was officially on 17 January in Wroclaw in the presence of **Tibor Navracsics**, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport; and on 23 January in San Sebastian. **Tibor Navracsics** said: *"Being a European Capital of Culture helps cities create a sense of community and brings long-lasting benefits to their citizens and their economies. I wish Wroclaw and San Sebastian every success as they showcase their cultural programmes in the coming year."* The opening of **Wroclaw 2016** was the weekend of 15-17 January with almost 100 cultural events such as concerts, exhibitions and shows. The motto of **Wroclaw 2016** is *Spaces of Beauty*. This is based on the ideas of metamorphosis and diversity, drawing on the city's unique history of transformation. Hundreds of inhabitants of Wroclaw will perform in major public events in 2016. Citizens were invited to run part of the programme through a "microgrant scheme". During the year, the city will also become UNESCO World Book Capital, with a special edition of the European Literature Night. The programme also includes the International



Jazz Day, the Singing Europe Festival and the International Theatre Olympics. European Capitals of Culture are one of the most recognised EU projects. They were launched in 1985 on the initiative of the then Greek Minister of Culture, Melina Mercouri. **San Sebastian** was launched its European Capital of Culture year with a series of events over five days starting on 20 January when the city's grand fiesta, the Tamborrada, will take on a European flavour. The official opening ceremony was on Saturday 23 January, in the Victoria Eugenia Theatre, followed by a concert. The "Constelaciones Gaur" exhibition will be inaugurated the day before. **The Donostia-San Sebastian 2016 programme** "Cultura para la convivencia" (Culture for co-existence) promotes better ways of living together through art and culture. Three lighthouses will reflect the values underpinning the programme: the Lighthouse of Life (the individual and society), the Lighthouse of Peace (respect and co-existence), and the Lighthouse of Voices (diversity and mutual understanding). Programme highlights include the Peace Treaty, an exhibition of how peace and violence have been depicted in Europe; "Travelling Embassies", a project that will bring artists of different nationalities to several European cities by ship, bus and bicycle to create, share and spread works of art which express

linguistic diversity, among others. The 'Waves of Energy' programme will finance cultural projects proposed and evaluated by the citizens themselves throughout the year.

Background

Initiated in 1985 by the then Greek Minister of Culture, Melina Mercouri, **the European Capital of Culture** is one of the most high-profile cultural initiatives in Europe. The cities are selected on the basis of a cultural programme that must have a strong European dimension, foster the participation and active involvement of the city's inhabitants and contribute to the long-term development of the city. It is also an excellent opportunity for the cities to change their image, put themselves on the world map, attract more tourists and rethink their own development through culture. The title has a long-term impact, not only on culture but also in social and economic terms, both for the city and for the surrounding region. For example, a study has shown that the number of tourists visiting the city for at least one night increased by 12% on average compared with the year before the city held the title. The current rules and conditions for hosting the title are set out in a 2006 decision (1622/2006/EC) of the European Parliament and the Council of the EU. Following Wroclaw and San Sebastian in 2016, the future European Capitals of Culture will be Aarhus (Denmark) and Pafos (Cyprus) in 2017, Valletta (Malta) and Leeuwarden (Netherlands) in 2018 and Plovdiv (Bulgaria) and Matera (Italy) in 2019.

4. EU launches new European Medical Corps

The European Union launches the European Medical Corps to help mobilise medical and public health teams and equipment for emergencies inside and outside the EU.

Through the European Medical Corps, EU Member States and other European countries participating in the system can make medical teams and assets available for rapid deployment



before an emergency strikes – thus ensuring a faster and more predictable response. The medical corps could include emergency medical teams, public health and medical coordination experts, mobile biosafety laboratories, medical evacuation planes and logistical support teams. *"The aim of the European Medical Corps is to create a much faster and more efficient EU response to health crises when they occur. We need to learn the lessons from the Ebola response; a key difficulty was mobilising medical teams. I thank all the Member States that have already contributed so far, and encourage others to join so the EU's response*

will be able to meet increasing needs and will allow for better planning and preparation before any disaster." said Commissioner **Christos Stylianides**. The framework for the European Medical Corps is part of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism's new European Emergency Response Capacity (otherwise known as the 'voluntary pool'). So far Belgium, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Luxembourg, Germany, Spain, Sweden and the Netherlands have already committed teams and equipment to the voluntary pool.

Background

A key difficulty during the Ebola virus outbreak response was the quick deployment of medical staff, as well as the logistical and management challenges which increased as a result. This led Germany and France in late 2014 to propose the "White Helmets" initiative, which laid the foundations. The European Medical Corps is now part of the European Emergency Response Capacity. The EU Civil Protection Mechanism facilitates cooperation in disaster response among 33 European states (28 EU Member States, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Montenegro, Norway and Serbia). Turkey is also in the process of joining the Mechanism. These participating states pool the resources that can be made available to disaster-stricken countries all over the world. When activated, the Mechanism coordinates the provision of assistance inside and outside the European Union. The European Commission manages the Mechanism through the Emergency Response Coordination Centre. In an effort to step up the EU's preparedness and response to disasters, the European Emergency Response Capacity ('voluntary pool') was created in 2014, bringing together a range of pre-committed relief teams and equipment, for deployment in emergency response

operations all over the world. The European Medical Corps will also be Europe's contribution to the Global Health Emergency Workforce being set up under the helm of the World Health Organisation.

5. Solving disputes online: New platform for consumers and traders

The European Commission launched a new platform to help consumers and traders solve online disputes over a purchase made online.

The Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) platform offers a single point of entry that allows EU consumers and traders to settle their disputes **for both domestic and cross-border online purchases**. This is done by channeling the disputes to national Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) bodies that are connected to the platform and have been selected by the Member States according to quality criteria and notified to the Commission. **Věra Jourová**, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality said: *"Most consumers experiencing problems when buying online don't complain, as they believe the procedure is too long and that it won't be solved. The Online Dispute Resolution platform is an innovative tool saving time and money for consumers and traders. It will improve consumer trust when shopping online and support businesses selling cross border, contributing to Europe's Digital Single Market"*.



Key features of the platform:

- The platform is **user-friendly** and accessible on all types of devices. Consumers can fill out the complaint form on the platform in three simple steps.
- The platform offers users the possibility to conduct the entire resolution procedure **online**.
- The platform is **multilingual**. A translation service is available on the platform to assist disputes involving parties based in different European countries.

Around 117 Alternative Dispute Resolution bodies from 17 Member States are connected to the Online Dispute Resolution platform. The Commission is working with the Member States to achieve **a full coverage of all Member States and sectors** as soon as possible. Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) offers a **quick and inexpensive** way to solve disputes. On average, it takes a maximum of 90 days for cases to be solved. The experience of European consumers who have used Alternative Dispute Resolution tends to be positive: 70% were satisfied by the way their complaint was handled through this procedure. This is an additional way for consumers to solve their disputes and will not replace the possibility of going to court, which is however usually more costly and takes longer (only 45% of consumers are satisfied by the way a court handled their complaint). Traders will also benefit from this new platform, as Alternative Dispute Resolution procedures will help them **avoid costly litigation fees** and maintain good customer relations.

Background

The legal basis for the establishment of the Online Dispute Resolution platform is Regulation on consumer Online Dispute Resolution, which describes the main functions of the platform as well as the workflow for a dispute that is submitted through the platform. The Regulation builds upon Directive on consumer Alternative Dispute Resolution, which ensures that consumers have access to Alternative Dispute Resolution when resolving their contractual disputes with traders.

Access to Alternative Dispute Resolution is ensured no matter what product or service they purchased, whether the product or service was purchased online or offline and whether the trader is established in the consumer's Member State or in another Member State.

Member States establish national lists of bodies offering Alternative Dispute Resolution procedures (ADR bodies). All Alternative Dispute Resolution bodies included in those lists comply with binding quality requirements set by the EU legislation.

6. Winter 2016 Economic Forecast: Weathering new challenges

The European economy is now entering its fourth year of recovery and growth continues at a moderate rate, driven mainly by consumption.

At the same time, much of the world economy is grappling with major challenges and risks to European growth are therefore increasing. The Commission's winter forecast shows that the overall growth outlook has changed little since the autumn but that the risk that growth could turn out worse than forecast has risen, mainly as a result of external factors. In the euro area, growth is projected to increase to 1.7% this year from 1.6% last year, and to climb to 1.9% in 2017. EU economic growth is forecast to remain stable at 1.9% this year and rise to 2.0% next year. Certain factors supporting growth are now expected to be stronger and last longer than previously assumed. They include low oil prices, favourable financing conditions and the euro's low exchange rate. At the



same time, risks to the economy are becoming more pronounced and new challenges are surfacing: slower growth in China and other emerging market economies, weak global trade as well as geopolitical and policy-related uncertainty. **Valdis Dombrovskis**, Vice-President for the Euro and Social Dialogue, said: *"Europe is continuing its recovery, with growth broadly in line with our previous forecast in autumn. We have to remain attentive. Europe's moderate growth is facing increasing headwinds, from slower growth in emerging markets such as China, to weak global trade and geopolitical tensions in Europe's neighbourhood. It is important to continue structural reforms that can help our economies grow, withstand shocks in the future, and improve job opportunities for our population."*

Pierre Moscovici, Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs, Taxation and Customs, said: *"The European economy is successfully weathering new challenges this winter, supported by cheap oil, the euro rate and low interest rates. Nonetheless, the weaker global environment poses a risk and means we must be*

doubly vigilant. There is more work to do to strengthen investment, enhance our competitiveness in a smart way and complete the job of fixing our public finances."

A broad-based recovery across Member States

In 2015, economic output either increased or was stable in every Member State. By 2017, the economies of all Member States are expected to be expanding. GDP growth rates will, however, continue to differ substantially due to both structural features and different cyclical positions. Private consumption is expected to remain the main driver of growth this year and next, supported by an improving labour market and growing real disposable incomes. Investment should also gradually benefit from increasing demand, improved profit margins, favourable financing conditions and gradually lower pressure to deleverage.

Labour market conditions continue to improve

Employment should continue to rise modestly. Unemployment rates are set to continue falling, albeit at a slower pace than last year. The decline should be more pronounced in Member States where labour market reforms have been implemented. The unemployment rate in the euro area is expected to fall from 11% in 2015 to 10.5% in 2016 and 10.2% in 2017. In the EU unemployment should fall from 9.5% in 2015 to 9.0% this year and 8.7% next.

More supportive fiscal stance; deficits decline further

The aggregate general government deficit in the euro area is expected to decline further thanks to stronger economic activity and, to a lesser extent, lower interest expenditure. In the euro area, the general government deficit is expected to have fallen to 2.2% of GDP in 2015 (EU 2.5%) and should fall further to 1.9% of GDP this year (EU 2.2%) and 1.6% of GDP in 2017 (EU 1.8%). The fiscal stance of the euro area is expected to become slightly more supportive to the economic recovery this year. In the EU, it is set to remain broadly neutral. The debt-to-GDP ratio of the euro area is forecast to decline from its peak of 94.5% in 2014 (EU 88.6%) to 91.3% in 2017 (EU 85.7%).

Further decline in oil prices temporarily drives down inflation

Annual inflation in the euro area was only slightly above zero towards the end of 2015, mainly due to a further drop in oil prices. Consumer price increases in the euro area are expected to remain very low in the first half of the year and should start picking up in the second half when the impact from the sharp fall in oil prices abates. For 2016 as a whole, euro area annual inflation is now forecast at only 0.5%, partly because wage growth remains subdued. Inflation is expected to pick up gradually and to reach 1.5% in 2017 as higher wages, higher domestic demand and a moderate pick-up in oil prices increase price pressures.

Exports resilient to further slowdown in global growth

Given the deterioration of the global economic outlook, the recovery of the global economy (excluding the EU) is now forecast to be slower than expected in the autumn. In fact global growth

in 2015 is set to have been at its weakest since 2009. Euro area export growth should accelerate over the course of 2016 following a moderation in the second half of 2015. This is due to lagging effects from the euro's past depreciation, lower unit labour costs, and a gradual increase in foreign demand.

Outlook is subject to increased risks

The economic outlook remains highly uncertain and overall risks are increasing. These include lower growth in emerging markets, a disorderly adjustment in China, and the possibility that further interest rate rises in the United States could cause disruption in financial markets or hurt vulnerable emerging economies and weigh on the outlook. A further fall in oil prices could also have a negative effect on oil-exporting countries and lower demand for EU exports. Risks from within the EU could also have an impact on confidence and investment. On the other hand, the combination of current supportive factors could translate into greater momentum than anticipated, especially if investment were to rebound.

Background

This forecast takes into consideration all relevant available data and factors, including assumptions about government policies, up until and including 22 January 2016. Only policies credibly announced and specified in adequate detail are incorporated. Projections assume no policy changes. This forecast is also based on a set of external assumptions concerning exchange rates, interest rates and commodity prices. The numbers used reflect market expectations derived from derivatives markets at the time of the forecast.

7. Start-ups to gain access to over € 200 million from equity funds

Equity funds in Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and France have announced fund closings with total commitments of EUR 90 million from the European Investment Fund (EIF), backed by the European Commission's COSME and Horizon 2020 InnovFin programmes.

These four agreements will enable fund managers to invest equity in promising start-ups, SMEs and midcaps needing early-stage to growth-stage capital investments. By mobilising other investors, including funds from the private sector, this is expected to result in eventual overall investments of more than EUR 200 million. The Dutch EUR 50 million *SET Fund II* C.V. will support the underserved market of early-stage companies in Europe active in the cleantech sector, particularly smart energy solutions, over the next seven years. The fund will target around 13 companies. The *Panakès Fund I* will be the first Italian-based fund solely focused on the medtech sector (i.e. medical devices, diagnostics and healthcare IT). It will focus on areas such as personalised medicine, cardiovascular, oncology, immunology and orthopaedics over the next five years. *Bullnet Capital III SCR* will deploy EUR 40 million to invest in 11 Spanish early-stage ICT



companies with a strong intellectual property component and a business-to-business model. The fund will primarily support companies operating in sectors such as semiconductors, engineering software, and hardware-software systems. CapHorn 2 Fund recently held a first closing and will support companies in the digital sector across Europe with a main focus in France, in particularly targeting digital solutions in traditional sectors over the next 4 years. The Fund will target around 20 companies. **EIF Chief Executive, Pier Luigi Gilibert** commented: "I am delighted that the first four funds under the European Commission's COSME and Horizon 2020 InnovFin programmes have reached closing. High-tech companies in the digital, ICT, medtech and cleantech sectors can benefit from investment and industry know-how from the funds we are working with in Italy, France the Netherlands and Spain, in order to scale up their businesses and boost innovation within the EU."

European Commission Vice-President Jyrki Katainen, responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, said: "This announcement of EU venture capital investment in innovation and growth of European SMEs is very good news. EU-funding will help to give a boost to high-potential companies active in different sectors, such as clean technology, improving medical devices, diagnostics and healthcare IT, and the digital economy. Together with private sector partners and the EIF, we are making a difference to our citizens, reinforcing investor confidence throughout Europe and creating growth and jobs."

More information

About the European Investment Fund

The European Investment Fund's (EIF) is part of the European Investment Bank group. Its central mission is to support Europe's micro, small and medium-sized businesses by helping them to access finance. EIF designs and develops both venture and growth capital, guarantees and microfinance instruments which specifically target this market segment. In this role, EIF fosters EU objectives in support of innovation, research and development, entrepreneurship, growth and employment.

About the COSME Equity Facility for Growth (EFG)

The Equity Facility for Growth (EFG) is dedicated to investments in risk-capital funds that provide venture capital and mezzanine finance to expansion and growth-stage SMEs, in particular those operating across borders. It is expected that some 500 firms will receive equity financing through the programme, with overall investment reaching up to EUR 4 billion. The EFG is part of COSME, the EU programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) running from 2014 to 2020. It has a total budget of EUR 2.3 billion and at least 60% of the programme will be devoted to ease access to finance for SMEs in Europe.

About InnovFin SME Venture Capital

InnovFin SME Venture Capital is an early stage equity product offered in cooperation with the European Investment Fund aims at improving access to risk finance by early-stage RDI-driven SMEs and small midcaps through supporting early-stage risk capital funds that invest, on a predominantly cross-border basis, in individual enterprises. SMEs (and small midcaps) located in Member States or in Horizon 2020 Associated Countries are eligible as final beneficiaries. The aggregate investments to venture capital funds made out of InnovFin SME Venture Capital are expected to support between EUR 1.6 to EUR 2 billion of equity financing to final beneficiaries. InnovFin SME Venture Capital is part of InnoFin – EU Finance for Innovators, the new generation of EU financial instruments and advisory services developed under Horizon 2020 to help innovative firms access finance more easily. "InnovFin – EU Finance for Innovators" will help to inject up to EUR 48 billion in investments in Research and Innovation across Europe. Businesses can contact selected financial institutions in their country to access EU financing: <http://www.access2finance.eu/>.

8. European Commission tightens rules for safer and cleaner cars

The European Commission has tabled legislative proposals to ensure car manufacturers comply strictly with all EU safety, environmental and production requirements.

The Commission is proposing a major overhaul of the so-called EU type approval framework. Under current rules, national authorities are solely responsible for certifying that a vehicle meets all



requirements to be placed on the market and for policing manufacturers' compliance with EU law. The proposals will make vehicle testing more independent and increase surveillance of cars already in circulation. Greater European oversight will strengthen the system as a whole. The Commission was already reviewing the EU type approval framework for motor vehicles prior to the Volkswagen revelations. It has since concluded on the need for more far-reaching reform to prevent cases of non-compliance from happening again. This proposal for a Regulation on the approval and market surveillance of motor vehicles complements efforts to introduce more robust emissions testing (Real Driving Emissions testing).

Jyrki Katainen, Vice-President for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, said: *"In a Single Market where goods circulate freely, everyone must play by the rules. The Volkswagen revelations have highlighted that the system which allows cars to be placed on the market needs further improvement. To regain customers' trust in this important industry, we need to tighten the rules but also ensure they are effectively observed. It is essential to restore a level playing field and fair competition in the market."* Commissioner **Elżbieta Bieńkowska**, responsible for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, said: *"The Single Market requires rigorous enforcement across sectors, including the car industry. With our proposals we will raise the quality and independence of vehicle testing and improve the oversight of cars already in circulation. This*

complements our efforts to introduce the most robust emissions testing procedures in the world, which we will keep refining and reviewing to ensure the strictest emissions limits are really met." The current type approval system is based on mutual trust: once a car is certified in one Member State, it can circulate freely throughout the EU. While the EU sets the legal framework, national authorities are fully responsible for checking car manufacturers' compliance. The draft Regulation on the approval and market surveillance of motor vehicles maintains the principle of mutual recognition, which is at the core of the EU Single Market, but seeks to correct the flaws in the system. The proposal for a Regulation will help to achieve three objectives:

- **Reinforce the independence and quality of testing that allows a car to be placed on the market:** The majority of Member States designate technical services, which are paid directly by car manufacturers, for the testing and inspection of the vehicle's compliance with EU type approval requirements. The Commission proposes to modify the remuneration system to avoid financial links between technical services and manufacturers, which could lead to conflicts of interest and compromise the independence of testing. The proposal also foresees more stringent performance criteria for these technical services, which should be regularly and independently audited to obtain and maintain their designation. National type approval authorities will be subject to peer reviews to ensure that the relevant rules are implemented and enforced rigorously across the EU.
- **Introduce an effective market surveillance system to control the conformity of cars already in circulation:** While the current rules deal mainly with *ex ante* controls, in the future Member States and the Commission will carry out spot-checks on vehicles already on the market. This will make it possible to detect non-compliance at an early stage, and ensure that immediate and robust remedial action is taken against vehicles that are found to be non-compliant and/or to present a serious safety risk or harm to the environment. All Member States should be able to take safeguard measures against non-compliant vehicles on their territory without waiting for the authority that issued the type approval to take action. Member States will have to review regularly the functioning of their market surveillance activities and make the results publicly available.
- **Reinforce the type approval system with greater European oversight:** The Commission will have the power to suspend, restrict or withdraw the designation of technical services that are underperforming and too lax in applying the rules. In the future the Commission will be able to carry out ex-post verification testing (through its Joint Research Centre) and, if needed, initiate recalls. By allowing the Commission to impose financial penalties, the proposal will deter manufacturers and technical services from allowing non-compliant vehicles onto the market. The Commission will also chair an Enforcement Forum which will develop common compliance verification strategies with Member States and organise joint audits of technical services and peer reviews of type-approval authorities.

The Commission's proposal maintains the current ban on **defeat devices**, which national authorities have a standing obligation to police and enforce, but goes a step further. Under the draft Regulation, the manufacturer will have to provide access to the car's software protocols. This measure complements the **Real Driving Emissions** package, which will make it very difficult to circumvent emission requirements and includes an obligation for manufacturers to disclose their emissions reduction strategy, as is the case in the US.

Next steps

The draft Regulation will now be sent to the European Parliament and Council for adoption. Once adopted, it will be directly applicable. It will repeal and replace Directive 2007/46/EC (the 'Framework Directive').

9. Commission presents new measures against corporate tax avoidance

The proposals aim for a coordinated EU wide response to corporate tax avoidance, following global standards developed by the OECD last autumn.

New rules are needed to align the tax laws in all 28 EU countries in order to fight aggressive tax practices by large companies efficiently and effectively. The European Commission has opened up a new chapter in its campaign for fair, efficient and growth-friendly taxation in the EU with new proposals to tackle corporate tax avoidance. The Anti Tax Avoidance Package calls on Member States to take a stronger and more coordinated stance against companies that seek to avoid paying their fair share of tax and to implement the international standards against base erosion and profit shifting. Key features of the new proposals include:

- legally-binding measures to block the most common methods used by companies to avoid paying tax;
- a recommendation to Member States on how to prevent tax treaty abuse;
- a proposal for Member States to share tax-related information on multinationals operating in the EU;
- actions to promote tax good governance internationally;
- a new EU process for listing third countries that refuse to play fair.

Collectively, these measures will hamper aggressive tax planning, boost transparency between Member States and ensure fairer competition for all businesses in the Single Market.

Vice-President **Valdis Dombrovskis**, responsible for the Euro and Social Dialogue said: *"We are taking another step to strengthen confidence in the entire tax system, making it fairer and more efficient. People have to trust that the tax rules apply equally to all individuals and businesses. Companies must pay their fair share of taxes, where their actual economic activity is taking place. Europe can be a global leader in tackling tax avoidance. This requires coordinated European action, avoiding a situation of 28 different approaches in 28 Member States."*

Pierre Moscovici, Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs, Taxation and Customs, said: *"Billions of tax euros are lost every year to tax avoidance – money that could be used for public services like schools and hospitals or to boost jobs and growth. Europeans and businesses that play fair end up paying higher taxes as a result. This is unacceptable and we are acting to tackle it. We are taking a major step towards creating a level-playing field for all our businesses, for fair and effective taxation for all Europeans."* The package is based around the three core pillars of the Commission's agenda for fairer taxation:



Ensuring effective taxation in the EU

The fundamental principle of corporate taxation is that companies should pay tax where they make their profits. The Package makes specific proposals to help Member States ensure that this happens. The Commission proposes an **Anti Tax Avoidance Directive** with legally-binding measures to tackle some of the most prevalent tax avoidance schemes. Its **Recommendation on Tax Treaties** advises Member States on the best ways to protect their tax treaties against abuse, in a way that is compatible with EU-law.

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Increasing tax transparency

Transparency is crucial to identifying aggressive tax planning practices by large companies and to ensuring fair tax competition. This Package seeks to boost transparency on the taxes that companies are paying, through a **revision of the Administrative Cooperation Directive**. Under the proposed rules, national authorities will exchange tax-related information on multinational companies' activities, on a country-by-country basis. As such, all Member States will have crucial information to identify risks of tax avoidance and to better target their tax audits. The Commission is also currently looking at the separate issue of public country-by-country reporting, for which an impact assessment is currently underway in view of an initiative to be presented in early spring.

Securing a level playing field

Tax avoidance and harmful tax competition are global problems. Action to prevent them must extend beyond the EU's borders. As Member States work to implement new global standards of tax transparency and fair tax competition, it is important that the EU's international partners follow suit. Developing countries should also be included in the international tax good governance network, so that they can benefit from the global fight against tax avoidance too. The Package contains a **Communication on an External Strategy for Effective Taxation**. Its aim is to strengthen cooperation with international partners in fighting tax avoidance, enhance EU measures to promote fair taxation globally based on international standards and create a common approach to external threats of tax avoidance. This will help to ensure a fair and level playing field for all businesses and countries. The Package also contains a **Chapeau Communication** and **Staff Working Document**, which explain the political and economic rationale behind the individual measures and the Commission's broader agenda against tax avoidance. It is accompanied by a new **Study on Aggressive Tax Planning**, which looks at the main channels used by companies to avoid taxes.

Background

This Package reflects the current global political and economic approach to corporate taxation. Last October, OECD countries agreed on measures to limit tax base erosion and profit shifting (BEPS). The European Parliament has also developed recommendations on corporate tax avoidance.

The Commission is rapidly making good on President Juncker's promise of delivering a comprehensive agenda to tackle corporate tax avoidance, ensuring a fairer Single Market and promoting jobs, growth and investment in Europe. Major initiatives put forward by the Commission in 2015 to boost tax transparency and reform corporate taxation are already reaping results: the proposal for transparency on tax rulings was agreed by Member States in only seven months and a number of other substantial corporate tax reforms have been launched. The Commission will continue its campaign for corporate tax reform throughout 2016, with important proposals such as the re-launch of the Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base (CCCTB).

Next Steps

The two legislative proposals of the Package will be submitted to the European Parliament for consultation and to the Council for adoption. The Council and Parliament should also endorse the Tax Treaties Recommendation and Member States should follow it when revising their tax treaties. Member States should also formally agree on the new External Strategy and decide on how to take it forward as quickly as possible once it has been endorsed by the European Parliament.

10. Erasmus+: Providing more and better opportunities to support Europe's future generations

In its first year, Erasmus+, the bigger and more fit-for-purpose programme for education, training, youth and sport, is already living up to expectations.

With a budget of over €2 billion in its initial year, Erasmus+ has already offered more than one million people the opportunity to take part in 18.000 funded projects. More flexible opportunities for collaboration across sectors are also helping Europe's education, training, youth and sport systems to try out innovative practices and contribute to reform and modernisation. **Tibor Navracsics**, EU Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, said: *"During the first year Erasmus+ has proved a true success. The impressive number of participants is proof that the programme is making a difference in improving young people's employment prospects, helping them acquire new skills and experiences and supporting the modernisation of Europe's education, training and youth systems. We will continue to build on this popularity to reach out to more people with different interests, profiles and social backgrounds."* The figures published reveal that in 2014, Erasmus+ already benefited **more people through a wider range of opportunities**. In its first year, the programme



supported a record 650,000 mobility grants for students, trainees, teachers, volunteers and other young people and paved the way for the first student loans for a full Master degree abroad. For the first time, the programme also funded policy support projects involving public authorities and international organisations and provided funding for projects in the field of sport. **A strengthened Erasmus+ is also delivering stronger support to its beneficiaries.** This can be seen in improved recognition of studies abroad once students return to their home countries. Moreover, teacher and staff mobility is being integrated better into professional development strategies backed by their home institutions. The new **Erasmus+ is also more open**, with a strong focus placed on promoting social inclusion, active citizenship and tolerance. To achieve this, more financial support than ever has been made available to participants with fewer financial means or those with special needs. A further €13 million has also been committed for 2016 to fund projects tackling issues like social inclusion of minorities and migrants and other disadvantaged social groups. The programme has also strengthened initiatives to **improve young people's employment prospects** and facilitate their transition from education to work. This has seen an increase in traineeship and apprenticeship opportunities in the programme.

Spain, Germany and France still top destinations for students

In a separate report, the Commission is also publishing the statistics on student and staff mobility for the final academic year (2013-2014) of the former Erasmus programme for higher education, which formed part of the umbrella Lifelong Learning Programme. The data reveals that a record number of students (272,000) and staff (57,000) took part compared to any previous year. Spain, Germany and France remained the three most popular destinations for Erasmus students to study or train abroad in 2013-2014. In addition, a new Erasmus Regional Impact Study confirms that while undertaking an Erasmus student exchange significantly improves young people's chances of securing high quality, managerial jobs, this is especially true for students coming from Southern and Eastern Europe.

Background

The Erasmus+ programme aims to support the modernisation of Europe's education, training and youth systems while improving students' skills, employment prospects and their active participation in society. The seven year programme (2014-2020) has a budget of €14.7 billion - a 40% increase compared to previous spending levels, reflecting the EU's commitment to invest in these areas. Erasmus+ will provide opportunities for over 4 million Europeans to study, train, gain work experience and volunteer abroad. The programme also supports transnational partnerships among education, training and youth institutions to foster cooperation and bridge the worlds of education and work. For the first time, the programme also offers dedicated funding for actions in the area of sport to contribute to developing its European dimension and tackle major cross-border threats such as match fixing and doping. The programme also supports the development of teaching and research on European integration through Jean Monnet actions. The main report published offers the first results one year after the start of the Erasmus+ programme. It assembles data gathered by the Commission, as well as the National Agencies and relevant Executive Agencies in charge of implementing the programme. In addition, the two other reports published provide insight into the last year of the Erasmus programme for higher education. They also offer a regional perspective on the programme's impacts.

11. #WeAreAllImmigrants photo competition!



Europe has a long history of immigration. Help us showcase this rich diversity and highlight our shared histories by entering our #WeAreAllImmigrants photo competition! Do you or does someone you know have an interesting story about moving to a new country? Upload a portrait and 100 word migration story of yours or theirs to win! The winner will receive a travel voucher! Enter by **midnight CET on 18 March 2016**. For more information visit this [link](#).

12. International Children's Peace Prize 2016

The International Children's Peace Prize is awarded annually to a child who fights courageously for children's rights. Each year's winner has, in his or her own way, demonstrated tremendous commitment to combating problems that millions of children face. The winner will receive the statuette 'Nkosi, which shows how a child sets the world in motion, a study grant, and a worldwide platform to promote his or her ideals to the benefit of children's rights. Furthermore, KidsRights will invest a project fund of €100,000 in projects that are closely connected to the winner's area of work, in the country of the winner. We invite you to inform us about the children you meet and work with and whom you feel might be a good candidate for this prize. The nomination form and additional information can be found [here](#). Please note that the deadline to submit your nomination is **March 14th, 2016**.



13. RegioStars Awards 2016

The objective of the **RegioStars Awards** is to identify **good practices** in regional development and to highlight original and **innovative projects** which could be attractive and inspiring to other regions.



After being selected by an independent jury, representatives from the finalist projects will be invited to attend the Award Ceremony and receive a certificate and a medal. They will also be included in a brochure, published by the European Commission, as well as in the online database of best practices on the Inforegio website.

From today until 15 April, regions can submit their [applications online](#) for the **RegioStars Awards**, which honour each year Europe's most inspiring and innovating projects supported by Cohesion Policy funds. This year the jury will select an EU-funded project in each of the following five categories:

- **Cat. 1 Smart Growth:** Emerging opportunities in the global economy
- **Cat. 2 Sustainable Growth:** Circular Economy
- **Cat. 3 Inclusive Growth:** Integrated living – building inclusive and non-segregated communities
- **Cat. 4 CityStar:** Innovative solutions for sustainable urban development
- **Cat. 5 Effective management:** Making a difference by managing differently

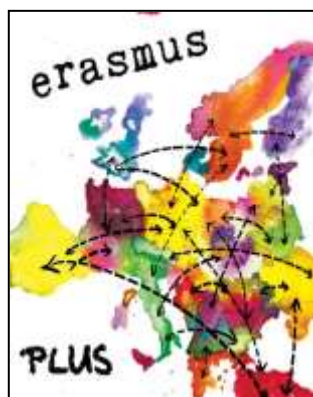
The winners will be announced during the RegioStars Award ceremony, which will take place on 11 October, during the 2016 European Week of Regions and Cities. [More information on the RegioStars Awards 2016](#). Applications can be sent by the regional or local Managing Authority, **or** by the project manager, but with the endorsement of the responsible Managing Authority. If you have any other questions contact us at regiostars2016@iservice-europa.eu.

14. Young Leaders Programme

Are you aged between 21 and 26 and proactive about finding solutions to the world's most pressing problems? Are you ready to sit shoulder to shoulder with world leaders at a global forum on international development? Apply now for your chance to be one of 16 Young Leaders at EDD 2016, speak on a high-level panel, and showcase your development work to global audiences. Young Leaders are also invited to take part in activities and workshops, share their views, draft recommendations and meet with development decision-makers from around the world. How to apply? Applicants must show leadership and knowledge in one of the EDD 2016 topics, demonstrate expertise in their chosen field, and explain how they will represent young people at the forum. All expenses for the 16 selected Young Leaders will be covered by the European Commission. **Deadline to submit applications: 18 March 2016.** For more information visit this [link](#).



15. Approved new Erasmus Plus projects



In recent weeks we have received various approvals of projects of which we will give you in-depth details in the coming issues of our newsletter. For the moment we indicate the approval of the following initiatives:

KA1 Erasmus Plus:

1. Youth training course "Social Entrepreneurship as a tool for a change" (for 3 young people aged between 20 and 30 years) to be realized in the period 15-21 April 2016 Kolin (Czech Republic);
2. Youth Exchange "European Diversity Towards Unity and Integration" (for 6 young people aged between 18 and 30 years and 1 leader regardless of age) to be realized in the period 24 February-2 March 2016 in Zakopane (Poland);
3. Youth training course in Turkey titled "Understanding cultures tool of discovering ourselves" (Action no. 2015-3-TR01-KA105-024214). The

project should be realized in summer presumably between 25/07/2016 and 31/07/2016. The project partners are coming from 6 countries: France, Turkey, Italy, Estonia, Bulgaria and Poland.

KA2 Erasmus Plus Capacity Building

4. Project of Capacity Building "New Born Memory".

16. Fourth meeting of the Start-Up VET4 project in Madrid

In the period 17-20 January 2016, took place in Madrid the fourth meeting of the "Vet4Start-Up" project, approved under the Erasmus KA2 - Vet program (2014-1-IT01-KA202-002487 action).



The project aims to educate and train anyone interested in a start-up thanks to an e-learning platform MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) and other materials and resources. VET4Start-UP wants to improve the level of key competences and skills needed for new entrepreneurs through vocational and pedagogical training. The goal of the meeting was to define the project's step and to check the status of implementation of the activities already carried out till now. It was also



an opportunity for partners to overcome the difficulties so far emerged and set new goals to be developed. For our association took part in the project meeting the following 2 delegates: mr. Franco Peppino and mr. Gianluca Lagrotta.

17. Concluded the fourth meeting CCB in Prague

From 7th till 10th of February took place in Prague (Czech Republic) the 4th meeting of the initiative Clear Cyber Bullying (an action funded under Erasmus Plus Programme - KA2). During the meeting were presented some activities planned for the 2nd project year. The project is about the possible ways to prevent the Bullying phenomena increased today within teenagers and kids. During the 2nd project year are going to be developed several actions such as flash mob and an electronic game for students.



18. Concluded the first meeting and asap the website of the NEFELE



The first meeting of the project "Nefele - Networking European Festivals For Mental Life Enhancement" – action n. 559274-CREA-1-2015-1-ELCULT-COOP1" took place in Dublin in January 2016 from the 9th to 12th (Including travelling days). The meeting had the aim to permit the European partners to know each others, to start all the activities planned in the project, and in particular to develop a creativity festival for disabled youngsters in each partnership countries. Now our technicians and operators are realizing the

website envisaged in the project. For our organization participated at the kick off meeting mr. Antonino Imbesi and mr. Rocco Calandriello.

19. Third meeting of the project "EURbanities" in Bucarest

From 20th to 22nd March 2016 will be held in Bucarest, Romania, the third



meeting of the project "EURbanities - empowering civil participation through game based learning" – approved from the German Erasmus plus National Agency under the programme Erasmus Plus KA2 Strategic Partnerships for adult education – action 2015-1-DE02-KA204-002434. During this third meeting the partners will discuss all the activities of the first year already realised and all the actions to be develop in order to create the elettronic game scheduled.

20. Concluded the first meeting of the NET-NET project in Romania



From 14th till 17th February took place in Piatra Neamt – Roznov (Romania) the first meeting of the of our European project "ENT-NET: Promoting self-employment and entrepreneurship through a training network" (Action no. 2015-1-ES01-KA204-015882). The project, approved under the program Erasmus Plus KA2 Strategic Partnerships for adult education, has a partnership of four organizations from Italy, Greece. Romania and Spain



(coordinating country). The partnership has already developed the first newsletter and is now taking care of the first structure of the web site that will serve as base for a platform for the courses provided in the initiative. For more details about the project visit the website: <http://www.ent-net.eu/>

21. Concluded Startup Europe Week Potenza



see some moments of the event.

From 1st to 5th February 2016 took place the Startup European week. This event is organized every year by the European Commission to disseminate the tools for business development and increase entrepreneurial knowledge locally. Also Potenza has participated this year with a day dedicated to the promotion of the culture of enterprise: in date 05/02/2016, at the headquarters of GoDesk, was realised the event called "Potenza, Let's Start", the first major marathon to ideas and Startups. The event was attended by over 400 people! Another success of Godesk. Above you can