

We're leading the way with progressive policies

Over the last ten years we've worked hard to make Scotland the best country it can be. It's no wonder other parties are now taking their lead from the SNP.

I'm hugely proud of what we've achieved in ten years

Ten years ago this very day, the first ever SNP government was formally sworn in at the Scottish Parliament.

European Agenda on Security: Commission sets out new approach on interoperability of information systems

In addition to providing an update on progress made on key files, the report focuses on the ongoing work to improve information management for borders and security and sets out the Commission's new approach towards achieving the interoperability of EU information systems for security, border and migration management by 2020. Following the recent global cyberattack, the report also stresses the Commission's commitment to accelerate work to review the 2013 EU Cybersecurity Strategy in order to provide an effective response to cyber threats.

Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris Avramopoulos said: *"The value of our security information is maximised when our systems talk to each other. The complex and fragmented systems we have today make us vulnerable. Actionable information is not always available for the law enforcement officials that need it. Today, we present a clear vision on how to act to correct this. To connect the dots and to eliminate blind spots to step up the security of our citizens across the EU."*

Commissioner for the Security Union Julian **King** said: *“The recent tragic attacks in Europe have highlighted the importance of effective information sharing between Member State authorities. The approach we are outlining today sets out a targeted and intelligent way of using the existing data to best effect. What we propose would be a step-change in the way we manage data for security, helping national authorities better addressing transnational threats and detecting terrorists who act across borders.”*

In April 2016, the Commission presented a Communication on stronger and smarter information systems for borders and security and launched the work of the High Level Expert Group on Information Systems and Interoperability. The High Level Expert Group delivered its [report on 11 May](#) confirming the views expressed in the April 2016 Communication, and putting forward recommendations towards the interoperability of information systems. Today’s report takes stock of the recommendations of the High Level Expert Group, and proposes the way forward to address structural shortcomings under the three main areas: (i) maximising the utility of existing information systems; (ii) where necessary, developing complementary systems to close information gaps; and (iii) ensuring interoperability between our systems.

Over the past year, the Commission has put forward a number of proposals with the aim of closing the outstanding information gaps, including the establishment of new systems such as the EU Entry/Exist System and the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) as well as reinforcing existing ones such as the Schengen Information System, Eurodac and the European Criminal Records Information System (ECRIS).

Today’s sets out a new approach to the management of data, where all centralised EU information systems for security, border and migration management are interoperable in full respect of data protection and fundamental rights. The main features of this approach are:

- **European search portal** – allowing the systems to be searched simultaneously, in full compliance with data protection safeguards and possibly with more streamlined rules for access to the systems by law enforcement authorities;
- **Shared biometric matching service** – enabling searches across different information systems holding biometric data, possibly with hit/no-hit flags indicating the connection with related biometric data found in another system;
- **Common identity repository** – based on alphanumeric identity data (e.g. dates of birth, passport numbers) and detecting whether a person is registered under multiple identities in different databases.

The proposed approach would overcome the current weakness in the EU’s data management architecture eliminating blind spots. As a result, the EU Agency responsible for information system management, eu-LISA, would play a crucial role in providing technical expertise and bringing the work towards the interoperability of information systems forward. In order to allow eu-LISA to implement this new approach, the Commission will present a legislative proposal to strengthen the Agency’s mandate in June 2017.

Next steps

The Commission will discuss the new approach with the European Parliament and the Council with an aim of reaching a common understanding on the way forward before the end of 2017. The discussion will feed into the proposal on interoperability which the Commission will present as soon as possible.

As the same time, the Commission calls on the European Parliament and the Council to move swiftly on the delivery of legislative priorities on information systems for security, borders and migration management.

In the area of aviation security, the Commission has facilitated contacts at political level to ensure coordinated actions between the United States and the EU. A meeting between the United States and the EU side will take place in Brussels on 17 May 2017, in order to jointly assess the potential risks and work towards a common approach to address possible developing threats.

Background

President Juncker's [State of the Union](#) address in September 2016 and the European Council conclusions of [December 2016](#) highlighted the importance of overcoming the current shortcomings in data management and of improving the interoperability of existing information systems. Recent terrorist attacks have brought this into even greater focus, highlighting the urgent need for information systems to be interoperable, and to eliminate the current blind spots where terrorist suspects can be recorded in different, unconnected databases under different aliases.

In [April 2016](#) the Commission presented a Communication on stronger and smarter information systems for borders and security, initiating a discussion on how information systems in the European Union can better enhance border management and internal security. In June 2016, the Commission set up a High Level Expert Group on Information Systems and Interoperability to take this work forward and to address the legal, technical and operational challenges to achieve interoperability. The High Level Expert Group held its last meeting on 25 April 2017 and presented the [final report](#) on 11 May 2017.

The [European Agenda on Security](#) guides the Commission's work in this area, setting out the main actions to ensure an effective EU response to terrorism and security threats in the European Union. Since the adoption of the agenda, significant progress has been made in its implementation, paving a way towards an effective and genuine and [Security Union](#).

For More Information

[Communication](#): 7th Progress Report on Security Union

[Communication](#): Stronger and smarter information systems for borders and security

[Communication](#): Delivering on the European Agenda on Security to fight against terrorism and pave the way towards an effective and genuine Security Union

[Communication](#): European Agenda on Security

[Factsheet](#): EU Information Systems

[Factsheet](#): Security Union

[Commission introduces new measures to fight poaching and to end trade in raw ivory](#)

Is the Commission banning ivory exports?

The export of raw ivory is banned. The Commission guidance document recommends that EU Member States cease issuing export documents for **raw ivory**. Without an export document, no export of ivory can take place. Between 2013 and 2016, around 1900 old ivory tusks were exported legally from the EU to Asia, marking a sharp increase compared to previous years. Such exports will no longer be possible under the new guidance document.

The **export of worked ivory** will only be possible under very strict conditions. Only items acquired before 1976 can be exported and it is for the person wishing to export the items to demonstrate that they were acquired before that date. If such evidence cannot be provided by the applicant, then no export document will be delivered by the exporting EU Member State.

The legal export of worked ivory from the EU has also increased in recent years, reaching several thousand items annually. The most commonly exported products are small items made of ivory or containing ivory, musical instruments (especially pianos with ivory keys), carvings and antiques. The Commission guidance document recommends that EU Member States exercise a high level of scrutiny before authorising any export of worked ivory. It details, in particular, what type of evidence demonstrating the legality of the items can be accepted.

What are the international and EU rules on ivory trade?

International ivory trade is banned under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), with narrowly defined exemptions (for example for items acquired before elephants became protected under CITES).

EU rules on ivory trade are more restrictive than the CITES regime in many instances, notably as they regulate domestic trade in ivory, which is not required under CITES.

Can I import ivory into the EU? Can I purchase ivory goods and bring them in

to the EU?

Import of ivory is prohibited, except for very narrow exemptions. Most of the ivory traded into the EU consists of hunting trophies and of old carvings or musical instruments imported as personal belongings (for example as part of a removal). These imports can only take place with the relevant export and import documents and are subject to very strict controls at the borders by customs agencies.

What is the EU doing against illegal ivory trade in the EU?

The Commission is fully committed to fight illegal ivory trade. Tackling ivory trafficking is a priority for the EU. Under the EU Action Plan against wildlife trafficking, the Commission, enforcement agencies in the Member States and Europol have stepped up action against ivory trafficking. This is already delivering first results. Member States seized more than 2.5 tonnes of ivory in 2016, the biggest volume in recent years. Most of this ivory was seized in the EU on its way to Asia.

Why is the EU not banning all intra-EU trade in ivory?

Intra-EU trade in ivory is limited and strictly regulated. Domestic ivory is authorised only for ivory items imported into the EU before elephant species obtained maximum protection under the CITES Convention (18 January 1990 for the African elephant and 1 July 1975 for the Asian elephant) and subject to strict controls. Domestic EU trade can only take place if a certificate has been issued to this effect by the relevant EU Member State, except for “worked items” acquired before 3 March 1947 – , which can be traded in the EU without a certificate.

Since the international ban on ivory trade came into effect, the demand for ivory in Europe has fallen considerably. Intra-EU trade consists mostly of antiques and EU Member States have not been identified as important destination markets for ivory of illegal origin. However, there have been some instances of illegal trade in ivory items within the EU, and there are differences between Member States in applying EU rules on ivory trade. Therefore, the new guidance document sets out criteria and recommendations for Member States to further strengthen vigilance and controls.

[Daily News 16 / 05 / 2017](#)

President Juncker consults the European Parliament on Mariya Gabriel as Commissioner for the Digital Economy and Society

President **Jean-Claude-Juncker** interviewed today Mariya Gabriel, the [candidate proposed](#) by the Bulgarian Government for Commissioner to replace former Member of the Commission Kristalina **Georgieva**. On this basis, President

Juncker confirmed the competencies of Mariya Gabriel required under Article 17(3) of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) to become candidate for Commissioner and announced his intention to allocate the Digital Economy and Society portfolio to her. A [Mission Letter](#) sent today by President Juncker to Mariya Gabriel details her main tasks and responsibilities as Commissioner in charge of the Digital Economy and Society. Following today's interview of Mariya Gabriel and the announcement by President **Juncker** of the portfolio allocation, the process will now follow Article 246(2) TFEU and point 6 of the Framework Agreement between the European Parliament and the European Commission. An exchange of views between Mariya Gabriel and the relevant Committee of the European Parliament is expected to take place in the coming weeks. Read the full press release available in all EU languages [here](#). (For more information: Mina Andreeva – Tel.: +32 229 91382)

Commission calls on Member States to meet obligations under the EU's emergency relocation and resettlement schemes and sets out new approach on interoperability of information systems on borders and security

Meeting in Strasbourg, today the College of Commissioners will adopt two reports on the EU's emergency relocation and resettlement schemes and on progress made towards an effective and genuine Security Union. The first report will take stock of actions taken by Member States over the last month to fulfil their commitments under the relocation and resettlement schemes. On the European Agenda on Security, today's report will provide an update on the state-of-play with regards to the important work being carried out to improve security in the EU, and at its borders through better data management and the interoperability of information systems. Full press material will be available [online](#) at the start of the press conference in Strasbourg with Commissioners **Avramopoulos** and **King** which will be livestreamed [here](#). (For more information: Tove Ernst – Tel.: +32 229 86764; Katarzyna Kolanko – Tel.: +32 299 63444)

Commission registers European Citizens' Initiative on reducing the wage and economic differences

The European Commission has today decided to make a partial registration of a European Citizens' Initiative which invites the Commission to propose "Legal acts that clearly demonstrate the EU's intention to eliminate wage inequalities between Member States and which – to achieve this objective – allow for a more efficient cohesion of these states". The formal registration of this Initiative on 22 May 2017 will start a one-year process of collection of signatures of support by its organisers. Should the Initiative receive one million statements of support within one year, from at least seven different Member States, the Commission will have to react within three months. The Commission's Decision makes clear for which kind of legal acts the signatures may and may not be collected in this case, dependent on the competences set out in the Treaties. More information is available in the press release available [here](#). (For more information: Mina Andreeva – Tel.: +32 229 91382; Tim McPhie – Tel.: +32 229 58602)

“Lower Saxony in Europe and Europe in Lower Saxony”: speech by President Juncker at the Lower Saxony Landtag

As part of his discussions with regional parliaments and local authorities, President **Juncker** was in Hannover, Germany yesterday to mark the 70th anniversary of the Parliament of Lower Saxony. Speaking about the importance of national and regional parliaments, President **Juncker** declared: *“Nations are not temporary inventions of history, their presence is permanent. And the same applies to regions. We can only construct Europe with and not against them”*. The President also stressed that *“it is important that the European Commission (...) remains in intensive dialogue with national and regional parliaments”* and invited the Lower Saxony Parliament to be involved in European politics even more and to participate in the debate about the future of Europe. In his speech, the President addressed a wide range of issues, from EU migration policy, to the Digital Single Market, Capital Markets Union, Energy Union, the Juncker Plan and our single currency, the euro. Speaking about the social dimension of Europe, he said: *“We have to pay more attention to the concerns of Europeans in social matters. (...) We must again turn back to those, for whom Europe was invented. Dreaming cannot be forbidden”*. Finally, President **Juncker** also spoke about the benefits Member States derive from the European Union, notably through the EU budget. *“In Europe there are no net payers and net recipients. In Europe, all Member States are net recipients because without Europe they would be net payers,”* he said. The full speech in German is available [here](#), and a recording can be found on the [EbS website](#). (For more information: Mina Andreeva – Tel.: +32 229 91382)

Commission welcomes European Parliament vote on extension and reinforcement of the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the heart of the Juncker Plan

The Commission welcomes the vote by Members of the European Parliament’s Budgets and Economic and Monetary Affairs committees to agree their position on extending, expanding and reinforcing the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the so-called “EFSI 2.0”. The proposal seeks to extend the EFSI’s duration and enhance its financial capacity. The target of investment mobilised is to be increased from EUR 315 billion by 2018 to at least half a trillion euro by 2020. The proposal also places a greater emphasis on additionality and aims to further enhance the EFSI’s transparency and geographic balance. European Commission Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, said: *“The European Fund for Strategic Investments has already proven to be an important tool to boost investment, support jobs and spur growth across all 28 Member States. The extension of the EFSI represents an opportunity to build on that success. I look forward to continue working with Members of the European Parliament and Member States in the weeks to come to secure a final agreement.”* The Commission now calls on the Parliament and Member States to continue working towards the final adoption of the EFSI 2.0 proposal as quickly as possible to the benefit of public and private promoters driving investment projects in Europe. A full press release is available [here](#). (For

more information: Annika Breidhardt – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Enda McNamara – Tel.: +32 229 64976)

Juncker Plan: EUR 80 million for Italian SMEs

The [Juncker Plan](#) has backed a European Investment Fund (EIF) agreement with Banca Popolare Pugliese, an Italian financial intermediary, to provide EUR 80 million in financing to innovative Italian small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and small mid-caps over the next two years. The European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the central pillar of the Juncker Plan, was a crucial factor in making this loan agreement possible. European Commission Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, said: *“The Investment Plan has already proven to be a success and Italy is amongst the Plan’s top beneficiaries. I am delighted that, with today’s agreement, even more Italian small and medium-sized businesses will gain access to the finance they need to innovate, grow, hire new employees and expand their activities.”* The Juncker Plan is now expected to trigger over EUR 31 billion in investments in Italy and EUR 183.5 billion across Europe. For the latest figures country-by-country, see [here](#). A full press release is available [here](#). (For more information: Annika Breidhardt – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Enda McNamara – Tel.: +32 229 64976)

Commission introduces new measures to fight poaching and end trade in raw ivory

The Commission is moving to end the export of old raw ivories as of 1 July, with the adoption of [new guidance on the EU rules governing ivory trade](#). Today’s decision, foreseen in the [EU Action Plan against wildlife trafficking](#), will help to prevent that legal ivory trade fuels international ivory trafficking, which has risen significantly over the last decade. The Commission will also grant new financial support of € 2.25 million to the Secretariat of the [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora](#) (CITES) to help with the implementation of the decisions on international wildlife trade agreed at the [CITES Conference of Parties](#) in October 2016. Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Karmenu **Vella** said: *“Fighting international ivory trafficking is a battle we can’t afford to lose. By ending the export of ivory tusks and other raw ivory we are living up to our responsibility. And we are delivering on the next commitment in our Action Plan against wildlife trafficking. Our financial support for developing countries will strengthen their capacity to implement the CITES Convention. This is essential to achieve progress in the fight against poaching and for sustainable wildlife trade.”* A [press release](#) and [Q&A](#) on the new guidelines are available online. (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Iris Petsa – Tel.: + 32 229 93321)

Aviation Safety: Commission clears all airlines from Benin and Mozambique

from EU Air Safety List

The European Commission updated the [EU Air Safety List](#), the list of non-European airlines that do not meet international safety standards, and are therefore subject to an operating ban or operational restrictions within the European Union. The [EU Air Safety List](#) seeks to ensure the highest level of air safety for European citizens, which is a top priority of the [Aviation Strategy](#) adopted by the Commission in December 2015. Following today's update, all airlines certified in Benin and Mozambique are cleared from the list, while four individual airlines are added (Med-View, Mustique Airways, Aviation Company Urga and Air Zimbabwe). Commissioner for Transport Violeta **Bulc** said: *"I am glad that we are able to take all carriers from Benin and Mozambique out of the air safety list. Their reforms have paid off. This is also a signal to the 16 countries that remain on the list. It shows that work and cooperation pays off. The Commission and the European Aviation Safety Agency are ready to assist them and raise the safety standards worldwide"*. More information is available in a press release in [EN](#), [FR](#) and [DE](#). (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Alexis Perier – Tel.: +32 229 6 91 43)

European Commission marks the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia

Ahead of the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia on 17 May, First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** said: *"Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) people are our parents, our children, our siblings, our friends, our neighbours and our fellow Europeans. Let's treat them as such. It's time we put an end to the widespread discrimination against LGBTI people together."* Commissioner Věra **Jourová** added: *"No matter who you love or who you are, everyone should enjoy the same rights and be protected from discrimination in the same way. We call on Member States to unblock discussions on the Equal Treatment Directive which would prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in education, social protection and access to goods and services."* Last year, the Commission published a [list of actions](#) to advance LGBTI equality, which sets out the EU's activities in this field for 2016-2019. Outside the EU, engaging in same-sex relationships is still considered a crime in more than 70 countries. You can find [online](#) a statement by High Representative/ Vice-President Federica **Mogherini**. For the first ever, the Commission will organise, under the responsibility of Commissioner Günther **Oettinger**, an event for European Commission staff on the occasion of IDAHOT tomorrow, on the theme of 'Inclusion and Identity in the Workplace: an asset for all of us'. To show the Commission's support for diversity and for LGBTI equality, the European Commission's Berlaymont headquarters and the headquarters of the European External Action Service will be lit up tonight in the colours of the rainbow flag. A [factsheet](#) on advancing LGBTI equality is available online, as well as the first testimony in the series of #EU4LGBTI stories – [Roberto & Andrea](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: + 32 229 67083; Mélanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659; Tim McPhie – Tel.: +32 229 58602)

EUROSTAT: Le PIB en hausse de 0,5% tant dans la zone euro que dans l'UE28

Au cours du premier trimestre 2017, le PIB corrigé des variations saisonnières a augmenté de 0,5% dans la zone euro (ZE19) ainsi que dans l'UE28 par rapport au trimestre précédent, selon l'estimation rapide publiée par Eurostat, l'office statistique de l'Union européenne. Au cours du quatrième trimestre 2016, le PIB avait crû respectivement de 0,5% et 0,6%. Un communiqué de presse est disponible [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Annika Breidhardt – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Juliana Dahl – Tel.: +32 229 59914)

EUROSTAT: Excédent de 30,9 milliards d'euros du commerce international de biens de la zone euro

D'après les premières estimations pour le mois de mars 2017, les exportations de biens de la zone euro (ZE19) vers le reste du monde se sont établies à 202,3 milliards d'euros, en hausse de 13% par rapport à mars 2016 (178,9 mrds). Les importations depuis le reste du monde ont quant à elles été de 171,4 mrds d'euros, en hausse de 14% par rapport à mars 2016 (150,7 mrds). En conséquence, la zone euro a enregistré en mars 2017 un excédent de 30,9 mrds d'euros de son commerce international de biens avec le reste du monde, contre +28,2 mrds en mars 2016. Le commerce intra-zone euro a progressé à 168,1 mrds d'euros en mars 2017, soit +12% par rapport à mars 2016. Un communiqué de presse est disponible [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Daniel Rosario – Tel.: + 32 229 56185; Kinga Malinowska- Tel.: +32 229 Kinga 51383)

STATEMENTS

Statement by Commissioner Stylianides on the Ebola outbreak in the Northeast of the Democratic Republic of Congo

Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management and EU Ebola Coordinator Christos **Stylianides** has issued a statement following the declaration of an Ebola outbreak in the Northeast of the Democratic Republic of Congo: *"The EU is fully committed to provide all support necessary. The national authorities, with the support of the World Health Organisation (WHO), and the European Commission's experts in the country as well as international medical NGOs, have set in motion initial measures to respond to the situation. The European Commission's Emergency response Coordination Centre (ERCC) is taking necessary preparedness measures for a potential EU intervention in case the European Medical Corps and logistical capacities would be needed. In these early days of the outbreak our priority must be to maintain close and efficient coordination with the national authorities, the WHO, EU Member States, international partners and NGOs on the ground. (...) In this regard we are in close contact with our Member States. This new outbreak is a stark reminder that we can never let our guard down. (...)"* The full statement is online [here](#). (For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz de Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322, Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Le Commissaire Moedas à l'inauguration de SESAME, "un projet phare de la diplomatie scientifique"

Le commissaire en charge de la recherche, de la science et de l'innovation Carlos **Moedas** a participé aujourd'hui à la cérémonie d'inauguration de l'accélérateur de particules SESAME ("Synchrotron Light for Experimental Science and Applications in the Middle East"), à Allan, en Jordanie, en présence de sa Majesté le Roi de Jordanie et des représentants de 17 pays partenaires, ainsi que de l'UNESCO, de l'AIEA et du CERN. Le Commissaire a souligné le fort engagement de l'Union européenne dans ce projet, centre de recherche le plus avancé du Proche-Orient et symbole de la collaboration pacifique entre les pays de la région. *"SESAME est la preuve la plus incontestable que la diplomatie scientifique est synonyme d'excellence et représente un outil incomparable pour améliorer les relations entre les pays, les régions et les cultures en promouvant la paix et la stabilité dans la région. La science est un langage universel qui permet d'ouvrir des canaux de communication et de construire des relations de confiance. Je suis fier que l'Union européenne apporte son soutien à ce projet phare de la diplomatie scientifique"*, a déclaré le Commissaire. Demain, mercredi, le commissaire **Moedas** continuera sa visite au Proche-Orient et rencontrera à Jérusalem le Premier ministre israélien Benyamin Netanyahu et le ministre de l'Economie Eli Cohen. Après une rencontre avec des étudiants à l'université Ben Gourion de Beer-Sheva, il visitera le Cyber Teck Park de la ville. Il participera le soir à une réception en l'honneur des 10 ans du Conseil européen de la recherche (ERC). Plus d'informations sur SESAME et l'engagement de l'UE [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Lucia Caudet – Tel.: + 32 229 56182; Mirna Talko – Tel.: +32 229 87278; Maud Noyon – Tel.: +32 229 80379)

[Upcoming events](#) of the European Commission (ex-Top News)