

Daily News 14 / 06 / 2018

Budget de l'Union: l'UE prépare un budget à la hauteur de son rôle d'acteur mondial de premier plan

La Commission européenne présentera aujourd'hui à 12h15 sa proposition de budget de l'Union européenne pour l'action extérieure pour la période 2021-2027. Le budget consacré à l'action extérieure constituera le principal instrument dont disposera l'UE pour aider ses partenaires dans leurs mutations politiques et économiques sur la voie du développement durable, de la stabilité, de la consolidation de la démocratie, du développement socio-économique et de l'éradication de la pauvreté. Il permettra également à l'UE de continuer à fournir une assistance humanitaire dans le monde entier. En ce qui concerne le voisinage de l'UE, l'instrument servira également à aider ces pays dans leur rapprochement économique vis-à-vis du marché unique européen. Un [communiqué de presse](#), un [mémo Q&A](#) ainsi que les [textes législatifs et les fiches techniques](#) seront disponibles en ligne à 12h15. Une conférence de presse de la haute représentante/vice-présidente Federica **Mogherini**, du commissaire pour la politique européenne de voisinage et les négociations d'élargissement Johannes **Hahn**, du commissaire pour la coopération internationale et le développement Neven **Mimica**, et du commissaire pour l'aide humanitaire et le gestion des crises Christos **Stylianides** aura lieu à 12h15 (retransmission live sur [EbS](#)), et sera suivie par un briefing technique. (For more information: Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Carlos Martin Ruiz De Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322)

Spring 2018 Standard Eurobarometer: One year ahead of the European elections, trust in the Union and optimism about the future is growing

According to the [latest Standard Eurobarometer](#) released today, a majority of Europeans think the situation of the economy is good and are optimistic about the future. For the first time since spring 2007, positive opinions on the situation of the national economy outweigh negative opinions. While perceptions between Member States vary, positive economic sentiment has increased in 18 Member States since autumn 2017. Trust in the Union is also on the rise and at its highest level since autumn 2010. The latest Eurobarometer shows that 40% of Europeans have a positive image of the EU against 37% who are neutral and only 21% with a negative one. Trust in the EU remains higher than trust in national governments or parliaments. "Free movement of people, goods and services within the EU" and "Peace among EU Member States" are perceived as the two most positive results of the EU. Support for the Economic and Monetary Union is at its highest level too and two thirds of Europeans advocate a strong EU when it comes to trade. Finally, 70% of Europeans feel they are citizens of the EU and the proportion of Europeans thinking that their voice counts has reached its highest level since 2004. A majority of Europeans are optimistic about the future of the EU and there is strong support for the priorities that the Commission has set itself. On this background, migration and terrorism are Europeans' top

concerns. A [press release](#) is available online. (For more information: Margaritis Schinas – Tel.: +32 229 60524; Mina Andreeva – Tel.: +32 229 91382)

Europe leads the global clean energy transition: Commission welcomes ambitious agreement on further renewable energy development in the EU

This morning, an ambitious political agreement on increasing renewable energy use in Europe was reached between negotiators from the Commission, the European Parliament and the Council. Today's deal means that two out of the 8 legislative proposals in the Clean Energy for All Europeans package (adopted by the European Commission on 30 November 2016, [IP/16/4009](#)) have been already agreed by the co-legislators. The new regulatory framework includes a binding renewable energy target for the EU for 2030 of 32% with an upwards revision clause by 2023. This will greatly contribute to the Commission's political priority as expressed by President **Juncker** in 2014 for the European Union to become the world number one in renewables. This will allow Europe to keep its leadership role in the fight against climate change, in the clean energy transition and in meeting the goals set by the Paris Agreement. Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy Miguel **Arias Cañete** said: "Renewables are good for Europe, and today, Europe is good at renewables. This deal is a hard-won victory in our efforts to unlock the true potential of Europe's clean energy transition. This new ambition will help us meet our Paris Agreement goals and will translate into more jobs, lower energy bills for consumers and less energy imports. I am particularly pleased with the new European target of 32%. The binding nature of the target will also provide additional certainty to the investors. I now call on the European Parliament and the Council to continue negotiating with the same commitment and complete the rest of the proposals of the Clean Energy for All Europeans Package. This will put us on the right path towards the Long-Term Strategy that the Commission intends to present by the end of this year". Read the full statement [here](#). (For more information: Anna-Kaisa Itkonen – Tel.: +32 229 56186; Nicole Bockstaller – Tel.: +32 229 52589)

Dual quality of food: European Commission releases common testing methodology

The European Commission has just released a [new common methodology](#) to allow national consumer authorities comparing the quality of food products sold with similar packaging across the EU. Elżbieta **Bieńkowska**, Commissioner for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, said: "All European consumers are entitled to a fair deal on the Single Market. The common methodology we developed together with Member States, consumer organisations and stakeholders from the food supply chain will help shed an evidence-based light on the different compositions of identically branded food products across Europe. Věra **Jourová**, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, added: "The Single Market cannot be a double standard market. All EU citizens must feel that they are treated in the same way and are offered fair and clear information on the products they buy. I encourage all national authorities to use it in the coming months, so that we can put an end to this practice. Tibor **Navracsics**, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sports, responsible for the Joint Research Centre, said: "European consumers

have the right to be protected from misleading marketing about the food they eat. The Joint Research Centre has developed a harmonised procedure to evaluate perceived differences in the quality of products in an objective way. This is an excellent example of how first-class scientific work directly benefits citizens.” The methodology will be presented today by the [Joint Research Centre](#) at a meeting of the [High-Level Forum for a better functioning food supply chain](#). It complements the actions announced recently in the [Commission’s New Deal for Consumers initiative](#). Under the coordination of the Joint Research Centre, laboratories across a number of EU Member States will now apply this methodology in a pan European testing campaign to collect data on the scope of the dual quality issue. First results should be available by the end of 2018. A press release is available [online](#). (For more information: Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Lucia Caudet – Tel.: +32 229 56182; Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083)

Sécurité aérienne: la Commission retire toutes les compagnies aériennes d’Indonésie de la liste des transporteurs aériens faisant l’objet d’une interdiction ou de restrictions d’exploitation dans l’UE

Aujourd’hui, la Commission européenne a aujourd’hui mis à jour la [liste des compagnies aériennes interdites dans l’UE](#), autrement dit la liste des transporteurs aériens faisant l’objet d’une interdiction ou de restrictions d’exploitation car ils ne respectent pas les normes internationales de sécurité. Avec cette mise à jour, toutes les compagnies aériennes certifiées en **Indonésie** ont été retirées de la liste, compte tenu des progrès en matière de sécurité aérienne qui ont été constatés dans ce pays. Par ailleurs, dans le cadre des efforts de l’UE pour rendre son espace aérien européen aussi sûr que possible, [Eurocontrol](#) déploie aujourd’hui un [nouveau système qui interdira l’accès de l’espace aérien européen aux avions dangereux](#). Violeta **Bulc**, commissaire chargée des transports, a déclaré: «La liste des transporteurs aériens faisant l’objet d’une interdiction ou de restrictions d’exploitation dans l’Union est l’un des principaux instruments dont nous disposons pour garantir en permanence aux Européens le niveau de sécurité aérienne le plus élevé. Je me réjouis particulièrement qu’après des années de travail, nous puissions aujourd’hui retirer toutes les compagnies aériennes indonésiennes de cette liste. Cela montre que des efforts incessants et une coopération étroite donnent des résultats. Je me réjouis également que nous ayons maintenant un nouveau système d’alerte qui empêchera les avions dangereux d’entrer dans l’espace aérien européen.» Plus d’information est disponible dans un communiqué de presse en [EN](#), [FR](#) et [DE](#). (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Alexis Perier – Tel.: +32 229 [69143](#))

Artificial intelligence: Commission appoints expert group and launches European AI Alliance

Today, the Commission appointed [52 experts](#) to advise the Commission on artificial intelligence (AI) and set up a collaboration platform to help build a community of stakeholders – the [European AI Alliance](#). The expert group will help the Commission implement the European approach on AI

presented on 25 April ([press release](#), [Q&A](#) and [factsheet](#)). More specifically the experts will draft ethical guidelines by the end of this year and a set of recommendations by mid-2019. They will build on contributions from stakeholders through the European AI Alliance. Everyone interested in AI can join the European AI Alliance and address all aspects of AI in discussions via the platform and via dedicated events. Facilitating multistakeholder dialogue on how to advance AI innovation to increase trust and adoption, and to inform future policy discussions, is a commitment made as part of the recent [G7's Charlevoix Common Vision for the Future of Artificial Intelligence](#). It is also a key element of the [European approach on AI](#) and the [Declaration of Cooperation on AI](#) signed by 28 European countries. AI Alliance platform can be accessed [here](#). Full list of experts is available [here](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Inga Höglund – Tel.: +32 229 50698)

More Member States sign up to digital cooperation initiatives on supercomputers, artificial intelligence and innovation

Several Member States have signed recent cooperation declarations demonstrating their commitment to work together at EU level in digital policy areas. This morning [Finland and Sweden](#) signed the [EuroHPC Declaration](#), signalling their willingness to join European cooperation on supercomputers. [Austria](#) signed the same declaration yesterday afternoon and [Lithuania](#) last week. Altogether 20 countries have joined this European initiative to build and deploy a world-class computing and data infrastructure in Europe. In addition, [cooperation on artificial intelligence](#) is growing, with Cyprus and Greece being the latest countries to sign up, bringing the number up to 28 European countries. Meanwhile, Croatia is the 20th country to have signed the [Innovation Radar declaration](#), which aims to provide access to innovations supported by EU funding and the innovators behind them. Read more [here](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Inga Höglund – Tel.: +32 229 50698)

State aid: Commission approves €165 million of investments by Croatia for the extension of the Istrian Y motorway

The European Commission has approved under EU State aid rules a Croatian plan to prolong the Istrian Y motorway concession agreement between Croatia and the company Bina-Istra. This will allow €165 million of new investments to go ahead, while limiting distortions of competition. In March 2018, Croatia notified to the Commission a prolongation of the concession agreement until 2032. Under certain conditions relating to the repayment of Bina-Istra's debt, the concession can be prolonged by up to 18 further months. The prolongation of the concession will allow Bina-Istra to finance the construction of a 28 km long second carriageway on the north-eastern side of the motorway. The Commission examined the measure under EU State aid rules on services of general economic interest and EU public procurement rules, according to which companies can be compensated for the extra cost of providing a public service on certain conditions. The Commission concluded that the measure will promote growth and unlock investment, while limiting

the impact on motorway users, in line with EU State aid and public procurement rules. On this basis, the Commission approved the Croatian support granted through the prolongation of the Istrian Y motorway concession. Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *"The prolongation of the Croatian Y motorway concession will promote regional growth and investment, as well as enhancing citizens' safety and reducing congestion. Our decision will ensure that the motorway extension can be built, while limiting any potential distortions of competition."* A press release is available in [EN](#), [FR](#), [DE](#), [HR](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of joint control over Noris Metallrecycling by Thyssen Alfa and Max Aicher Recycling

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over Noris Metallrecycling GmbH by Thyssen Alfa Rohstoffhandel München GmbH ("Thyssen Alfa"), belonging to the Rethmann group, and Max Aicher Recycling GmbH, belonging to the Max Aicher group. All companies are based in Germany. Noris Metallrecycling manages two sites in Fürth and Nürnberg and is active in the collection and trade of non-ferrous scrap. It is currently jointly controlled by Thyssen Alfa and Scholz Recycling GmbH. Thyssen Alfa is active in the collection, processing and trade of ferrous and non-ferrous scrap. Max Aicher Recycling manages five scrapyards in Bavaria and is active in the collection and trade of ferrous and non-ferrous scrap. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns given the limited activities of Noris Metallrecycling within the European Economic Area. The transaction was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.8893](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

STATEMENTS

Statement by Commissioner Gabriel following the cancellation of the first call for applications for WiFi4EU vouchers

Commissioner for the Digital Economy and Society Mariya **Gabriel** announced today that the first call for applications for [WiFi4EU](#) vouchers, for EU financing of free wireless internet hotspots in public spaces, has been cancelled due to a technical issue. The Commissioner said in a statement: *"During the investigation, the Commission identified a flaw in the software supplied by contractors. This issue allowed some municipalities to apply in good faith before the call was opened, while it prevented others from doing so once the call had opened. The Commission is strongly attached to the principles of fairness, transparency and reliability. Therefore, as this technical issue prevented all municipalities from applying on an equal basis, I have asked my services to cancel this first call. The vouchers from this first round of applications will be added to the budget for the next call."*

The Commissioner's full statement is available [here](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Inga Höglund – Tel.: +32 229 50698)

International Blood Donor Day: Statement by Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis

On 2018 World Blood Donor Day, let us remember that blood is the lifeline that connects us and that we all have a pivotal role to play in donating blood to help save lives. In particular, I would like to invite young people to come forward, to ensure that our blood banks do not diminish and are constantly replenished. To encourage blood transfusions and avoid related complications, including the transmission of diseases from donor to recipient the EU has laid out [directives](#) that set out safety standards for blood collection. Moreover, the European Commission is currently carrying out the first formal evaluation of this legislation since its adoption in 2002. The evaluation is taking an in-depth look to see if the legislation has achieved its objectives and if it is still fit for purpose. As there have been many scientific, societal and epidemiological changes since 2002, I believe that our citizens deserve to benefit from the latest developments in health and safety. Given that the aims of the World Blood Donor Day include raising awareness of the importance of regular and safe blood donation and thanking the thousands of unpaid blood donors worldwide, I am proud to say that there are 20 million blood donations in the EU every year, resulting in 26 million blood transfusions to patients. Together, let us do all we can to continue this trend and to ensure universal access to safe and timely blood donations. Read the full statement [here](#). (For more information: Anca Paduraru – Tel.: +32 229 91269; Aikaterini Apostola – Tel.: +32 229 87624)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

HR/VP Mogherini accueillera la réunion annuelle UE-G5 Sahel à Bruxelles

Le 18 juin prochain, la Haute Représentante/Vice-Présidente Federica **Mogherini** animera la réunion annuelle de l'Union européenne et du G5 Sahel avec les Ministres des Affaires étrangères des pays du G5 Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritanie, Niger, Tchad), ainsi que le Secrétaire Permanent du G5 Sahel. La réunion se tiendra également en présence de Neven **Mimica**, commissaire pour la coopération internationale et le développement. Le suivi de la [Conférence internationale de haut niveau sur le Sahel](#) qui a eu lieu à Bruxelles en février sera à l'agenda des discussions. Lors de la Conférence, l'UE avait mobilisé un support conséquent de la communauté internationale pour la région du Sahel, y compris pour l'opérationnalisation de la Force Conjointe du G5 Sahel. L'UE soutient pleinement le travail du G5 Sahel depuis 2015, qui poursuit l'objectif de coopérer dans les domaines d'intérêt commun que sont le développement, la gouvernance dans les zones fragiles, l'amélioration de la sécurité, ainsi que la lutte contre le terrorisme et le trafic. Une conférence de presse aura lieu le 18 juin à +/- 13h15 CET au

Service européen pour l'action extérieure, à Bruxelles. (For more information: Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)

Le commissaire Vella inaugure la première usine d'énergie marémotrice du monde à Cherbourg, France

Le commissaire à l'environnement, aux affaires maritimes et à la pêche, Karmenu **Vella**, inaugure aujourd'hui à Cherbourg, France, la première grande usine d'assemblage de turbines marémotrices au monde, construite par Naval Energies et financée par l'UE. S'exprimant lors de l'événement, le commissaire **Vella** a dit: "L'UE a besoin de l'énergie des océans pour réussir sa transition vers [une économie sobre en carbone](#). L'énergie renouvelable de la mer est une excellente nouvelle pour l'environnement. Mais c'est aussi une excellente nouvelle pour le développement économique des régions et des communautés côtières européennes. L'UE a tout pour développer son leadership technologique actuel et créer une nouvelle industrie dans la décennie à venir". L'Europe est à la pointe du développement de l'énergie marine, en raison de ses conditions favorables et de la disponibilité d'une main-d'œuvre hautement qualifiée, y compris des ingénieurs de classe mondiale. Le secteur représente actuellement 2,000 emplois hautement qualifiés, principalement dans la recherche et le développement. L'UE accueille 50% des développeurs d'énergie marémotrice dans le monde, 60% des développeurs d'énergie des vagues et 70% de l'infrastructure de recherche et d'essais en énergie marine. Grâce à [Horizon 2020](#), l'UE soutient actuellement 17 projets d'énergie marine, d'une valeur de €124 millions. De nouveaux types de soutien financier, tels que la plateforme d'investissement de l'UE prévue pour l'économie bleue ou [investEU](#), pourraient offrir de nouvelles opportunités pour attirer des investisseurs et réduire les coûts. Lors de sa visite, le commissaire **Vella** rencontrera également Hervé Morin, président des associations des régions françaises pour discuter comment l'Europe peut soutenir l'innovation et la croissance dans l'économie bleue, y compris à travers le nouveau [Fonds européen pour les affaires maritimes et la pêche](#). Plus d'informations [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Enrico Brivio – Tél.: + 32 229 56172, Iris Petsa – Tél.: +32 229 93321)

Commissioner Vestager to hold two Citizens' Dialogues in Denmark

Commissioner for Competition, Margrethe **Vestager** travels to Bornholm, Denmark to hold two Citizens' Dialogues. Today, the Commissioner will participate in a [Citizens' Dialogue](#) on the future of Europe, at 17.15 CEST. Tomorrow, the Commissioner will also participate in a [Citizens' Dialogue](#) on questions related to the competition portfolio as well as on topics currently at the top of the EU's agenda, at 14.00 CEST. Both Citizens' Dialogues can be followed live [here](#) and [here](#), respectively. (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

Commissioner Thyssen gives speech at European Validation Festival

Tomorrow, 15 June, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne **Thyssen**, will give a keynote speech at the second day of the European Validation Festival in Brussels. The aim of the Festival,

organised for the very first time by the European Commission, is to raise awareness about the importance of validating non-formal and informal learning as part of one's curriculum. Examples of non-formal and informal learning are language learning during travels, development of health care competences while taking care of a family member for several years, any kind of on-the-job training, and more. Commissioner Thyssen's speech will be published [here](#). (For more information: Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Sara Soumillion – Tel.: + 32 229 67094)

Commissioner Bieńkowska in Sofia to discuss access to public procurement markets

On Friday 15 June, Elżbieta **Bieńkowska**, Commissioner for Internal Market, Industry, SMEs and Entrepreneurship, will be opening a [high level conference](#) on access to public procurement markets in Sofia, Bulgaria. At the conference, organised with the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU, she will be joined by Tomislav Donchev, Bulgarian Deputy Prime Minister, and Juliane Kokott, Advocate General at the European Court of Justice. Every year public authorities tender out contracts for products and services worth 14% of EU GDP. The conference will discuss how to ensure that economic operators – including Europe's many small and medium sized companies – can seize the opportunities offered by public procurement. It will also explore how to make sure that public procurement processes function efficiently by increasing transparency, preventing collusion, and allowing relevant redress mechanisms striking the right balance between protecting rights of economic operators and contracting authorities and avoiding unnecessary delays. The conference follows the [Commission initiative in October 2017](#) to increase the impact of public investment through efficient and professional procurement. The initiative aims to ensure that procurement is carried out more efficiently and strategically and in a sustainable manner, while making full use of digital technologies to simplify and accelerate procedures. (For more information: Lucia Caudet – Tel.: +32 229 56182; Victoria von Hammerstein-Gesbold – Tel.: +32 229 55040)

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

Europe leads the global clean energy transition: Commission welcomes ambitious agreement on further renewable energy development in the EU

An ambitious political agreement on increasing renewable energy use in Europe was reached today between negotiators from the Commission, the European

Parliament and the Council. Today's deal means that two out of the 8 legislative proposals in the [Clean Energy for All Europeans](#) package (adopted by the European Commission on 30 November 2016) have been already agreed by the co-legislators. On 14 May, the first element of the package, the [Energy Performance in Buildings Directive](#), was adopted. Thus, progress and momentum towards completing the Energy Union is well under way and the work started by the Juncker Commission, under the priority "[a resilient Energy Union and a forward-looking climate change policy](#)" is delivering its promises.

The new regulatory framework includes a binding renewable energy target for the EU for 2030 of 32% with an upwards revision clause by 2023. This will greatly contribute to the Commission's political priority as expressed by President Juncker in 2014 for the European Union to become the world number one in renewables. This will allow Europe to keep its leadership role in the fight against climate change, in the clean energy transition and in meeting the goals set by the Paris Agreement. The rules agreed today serve also to create an enabling environment to accelerate public and private investment in innovation and modernisation in all key sectors. We are making this transition to a modern and clean economy taking into account the differences in the energy mix and economic structures across the EU. Beyond updating and strengthening our energy and climate legislation, the EU aims at developing enabling measures that will stimulate investment, create jobs, improve the skills of people, empower and innovate industries and ensure that no citizen, worker or region is left behind in this process.

Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy Miguel **Arias Cañete** said:
"Renewables are good for Europe, and today, Europe is good at renewables. This deal is a hard-won victory in our efforts to unlock the true potential of Europe's clean energy transition. This new ambition will help us meet our Paris Agreement goals and will translate into more jobs, lower energy bills for consumers and less energy imports. I am particularly pleased with the new European target of 32%. The binding nature of the target will also provide additional certainty to the investors. I now call on the European Parliament and the Council to continue negotiating with the same commitment and complete the rest of the proposals of the Clean Energy for All Europeans Package. This will put us on the right path towards the Long-Term Strategy that the Commission intends to present by the end of this year".

Main achievements:

- Sets a new, binding, renewable energy target for the EU for 2030 of 32%, including a review clause by 2023 for an upward revision of the EU level target.
- Improves the design and stability of support schemes for renewables.
- Delivers real streamlining and reduction of administrative procedures.
- Establishes a clear and stable regulatory framework on self-consumption.
- Increases the level of ambition for the transport and heating/cooling

sectors.

- Improves the sustainability of the use of bioenergy.

Next steps

Following this political agreement, the text of the Directive will have to be formally approved by the European Parliament and the Council. Once endorsed by both co-legislators in the coming months, the updated Renewable energy Directive will be published in the Official Journal of the Union and will enter into force 20 days after publication. Member States will have to transpose the new elements of the Directive into national law 18 months after its entry into force.

Background

The Renewable Energy Directive is part and parcel of the implementation of the Juncker Commission priorities to build “a resilient Energy Union and a forward-looking climate change policy”. The Commission wants the EU to lead the clean energy transition. For this reason the EU has committed to cut CO₂ emissions by at least 40% by 2030, while modernising the EU’s economy and delivering on jobs and growth for all European citizens. In doing so, the Commission is guided by three main goals: putting energy efficiency first, achieving global leadership in renewable energies and providing a fair deal for consumers. By boosting renewable energy, which can be produced from a wide variety of sources including wind, solar, hydro, tidal, geothermal, and biomass, the EU lowers its dependence on imported fossil fuels and makes its energy production more sustainable. The renewable energy industry also drives technological innovation and employment across Europe.

The EU has already adopted a number of measures to foster renewable energy in Europe. They include:

- The EU’s [Renewable energy directive](#) from 2009 set a binding target of 20% final energy consumption from renewable sources by 2020. To achieve this, EU countries have committed to reaching their own national renewables targets. They are also each required to have at least 10% of their transport fuels come from renewable sources by 2020.
- All EU countries have adopted [national renewable energy action plans](#) showing what actions they intend to take to meet their renewables targets.

As renewables will continue to play a key role in helping the EU meet its energy needs beyond 2020, Commission presented on 30 November 2016, as part of the Clean Energy for All Europeans, package, its proposal for a [revised Renewable Energy Directive](#).

More information

[Renewable energy](#)

Vice-President Dombrovskis' opening speech at the Economist's 22nd Roundtable with the Government of Greece

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for inviting me to set the scene at today's conference.

This year's Economist's roundtable comes at a crucial moment both for Greece and for Europe.

Two events are on my mind:

First, Greece is on the last mile towards a successful completion of its stability support programme. Great efforts and an incredible amount of work are on-going, ahead of the next Eurogroup to reach an overarching deal.

Greece is nearing the end of a very long journey – an 'Odyssey', you might call it. Greece has gone through trials and tribulations, faced adversity and difficult tasks and, not least of all: resisted temptation.

In this story, the victory belongs to the people of Greece who, I know, have endured hardship, but have also shown perseverance and resourcefulness.

Second, later in June, the Heads of State and Governments are expected to take decisions on the completion of our Economic and Monetary Union.

We have had three years of intensive discussions on completing Europe's Economic and Monetary Union. It is time to decide and live up to our commitments.

* * *

Ladies and gentlemen,

The economic context is good:

Last year Europe grew at its fastest pace in a decade, faster than the US. The growth is set to continue at a robust but slightly slower pace this year and next. Employment is at a record high, investment recovering, public finances improving.

However, we see new risks looming at the horizon, related to trade protectionism and volatility in global financial markets. Seeing the events of the G7 Summit unfold last weekend, we realise that the European Union needs to be united, stand up for a rules-based multilateral system but also be prepared for turbulences ahead.

No more excuses for inaction. These risks make it even more urgent to use the current good times to strengthen our growth fundamentals and enhance resilience, to be able to master challenges ahead.

The Commission has made several concrete proposals for that.

The Leaders' Agenda of the Heads of State and Governments recognised finalising the Banking Union and the reform of the European Stability Mechanism as priorities.

Progress is only viable if risk-reduction and risk-sharing go hand in hand.

We have made great strides in risk-reduction over the last years, combining new regulations, supervisory actions and reforms at the national level. The impact is visible.

For instance, the share of the Non-Performing Loans has been reduced on average by one third over the last three years. There are still large differences among countries, but good progress was made also by those with initially very high rates of NPLs, including Greece. Nevertheless Greece still has the highest level of non-performing loans in the European Union.

In March, we tabled further measures to improve conditions for Member States and banks to speed up the reduction of NPLs and to prevent their build-up in the future.

Two weeks ago the EU Member States reached a deal on our 2016 Banking Package, which introduces important internationally agreed prudential standards into EU rules.

On this basis, further progress on the risk-sharing side should also be possible.

In particular, we hope Member States will agree on a workable backstop for the Single Resolution Fund, to act as lender of last resort in case of a serious bank crisis. Merely by existing, the backstop would reinforce confidence in the banking system, thereby making itself less likely to be called on.

The outlines of the backstop are starting to take shape:

- it should have a sufficient size – about €60 billion – to be provided by

the European Stability Mechanism.

- It should be permanent.
- And it should be able to provide significant funds with certainty at a short notice, so resolution can be completed over a weekend – or sometimes overnight – before markets open.

In addition, we should start political discussions on a European Deposit Insurance Scheme, which was part of the agreed 2016 roadmap to complete the Banking Union.

The Commission has also proposed to transform the European Stability Mechanism into a European Monetary Fund within the EU legal framework. This would further strengthen its institutional anchoring and create synergies in terms of transparency, democratic accountability and efficiency. Member States have however preferred to keep the discussion in an intergovernmental setting so far.

We would also like to see more progress on the Capital Markets Union. This is crucial for diversifying the sources of financing for our companies and greater private risk-sharing across borders.

The paradox is that all parties seem to share this priority, especially in the light of the EU's largest financial centre – London – leaving the Single Market. But at the same time progress on the legislative proposals is insufficient.

The importance of taking even small steps forward should not be underestimated. As Homer said: 'A little rock holds back a great wave'.

* * *

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Having well-performing and resilient economies is a matter of a common concern in the euro area. What happens in one country can affect another.

So we want to better support the Member States with the implementation of the reforms to make our economies more competitive, resilient and inclusive.

For this reason, the proposal for the next European Multi-annual Financial Framework reinforces the link between the EU budget and national policies.

We have proposed a new Reform Support Programme and a European Investment Stabilisation Function.

The two measures are complementary. By incentivising reforms at the national level and stabilising public investment during large asymmetric shocks, both instruments will reinforce the resilience of individual economies and the euro area as a whole. Responsibility and solidarity go hand in hand.

With €25 billion, the Reform Support Programme will offer financial incentives to Member States to carry out reforms. It will also offer technical support for the design and implementation of reforms in Member

States, on their request.

The Reform Support Programme will also offer financial and technical support for those Member States that have committed to joining the euro and taking demonstrable steps towards euro area membership.

Now, on the European Investment Stabilisation Function. As we know, public investment is often first to be cut in the event of a crisis. This new instrument is designed to help Member States maintain their level of investment in the event of a significant downturn. We would offer back-to-back loans to maintain the on-going investments. These loans would be guaranteed by the EU budget of up to €30 billion and there would be grants to cover the related interest costs.

This instrument will be available to euro area and Exchange Rate Mechanism II countries. To be eligible Member States will have to comply with the fiscal rules under the Stability and Growth Pact and under the Macroeconomic Imbalances Procedure in the two years prior to the request.

We also want to continue support the Member States in their investment also 'in normal times'. Our priority is investment in sustainable infrastructure; research, innovation and digitisation; small and medium-sized businesses as well as social investment and investment in skills. We wish to build on the successful model of the Investment Plan for Europe by setting up a new InvestEU Programme.

The InvestEU would get €15.2 billion so that the EU budget can provide a €38 billion guarantee and thereby trigger more than €650 billion in additional investment over the years 2021 – 2027.

More broadly, our proposal for the next multiannual EU budget was a complicated balancing exercise given the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU. It addresses the new challenges such as security, migration and climate change, which are best tackled at European level. Greece will continue to benefit strongly from the EU budget, for example, through a substantially increased cohesion allocation. Also, in relation to migration and security, areas of particular importance for Greece, we propose to substantially increase the funding.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A number of European leaders and finance chiefs – not least President Macron and Chancellor Merkel – have set out their ideas on new instruments, ranging from a euro area budget to an investment budget, from stronger precautionary instruments to unemployment reinsurance.

And they are right to push this debate.

It shows a growing consensus that Europe needs new instruments to foster convergence, promote reforms, and support euro area Member States which are hit by asymmetric shocks leading to high unemployment.

But the debate also shows how challenging a proper design of such instruments

is. This is a bit like squaring the circle. You want an effective convergence and stabilisation, but resources are scarce. You want to show solidarity without undermining sound policy incentives for Member States.

The Commission's proposals which I just outlined can show a pragmatic way forward on this. I am very much looking forward to discussions in the coming weeks.

* * *

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the last years, under the three successive programmes, Greece has undertaken unprecedented reform efforts to meet its challenges.

These efforts have been supported by unparalleled solidarity from the European partners.

The Greek economy, society and state underwent profound changes to regain macroeconomic stability, enhance competitiveness and growth and to modernise the state and its administration.

We stood and will stand by Greece.

Beyond the financial stability support, the Commission introduced in 2015 'The New Start for Jobs and Growth'. This mobilises up to €35 billion of EU funds until 2020. To date Greece has received almost €16 billion.

Greece also ranks first in the European Union in terms of total expected investment under the European Fund for Strategic Investments, compared to its GDP – €2.6 billion under EFSI is set to trigger €10 billion in additional investments.

Greece benefitted also from technical support for the design and implementation of reforms. The Commission's Structural Reform Support Service coordinated over 100 projects covering almost all reform areas under the stability support programme. The support was instrumental, for example, in setting up the new Independent Authority for Public Revenue or putting in place the first system of basic protection against extreme poverty – the Social Solidarity Income.

Yesterday, the Commission has decided on the implementation of a further 32 projects and we are very much looking forward to our continuous good cooperation with our Greek counterparts.

The reforms in Greece are bearing fruit.

The Greek economy expands – real GDP growth in 2017 was 1.4% and it is projected to be about 2% this year. Employment is set to grow and the unemployment rate to fall gradually. Investment has started to recover, in particular in sectors that have been reformed recently.

Greece is also one of the eight euro area Member States that are projected to

have a budget surplus in 2018. We see some fiscal space emerging over time. Of course, details regarding the use of this fiscal space will need to be discussed, but this is a positive development.

Two months from now, Greece will complete its programme. It will be a delicate, yet perfectly doable exercise, provided that all parties show commitment and act responsibly. Actually, we are working to reaching an overall agreement in Eurogroup in one week from today.

There are three crucial elements.

First, we need a successful completion of the fourth review. As we speak, the Greek Parliament is debating the prior actions, which will be put to vote later today.

Second, there needs to be an agreement on the debt measures. Upfront debt measures would be important for ensuring Greece's gradual return to the markets.

Third, there needs to be an agreement on the post-programme framework. To ensure sustained growth, Greece needs to stay the course of reforms.

This includes adherence to the agreed post-programme fiscal trajectory with 3.5% of GDP primary surplus targets until 2022. Afterwards, these are expected to decline to a steady state of at least 2% of GDP. Given the high level of public debt, the room for manouever is limited.

Looking forward, the issue is how to ensure robust and sustainable economic growth and ever higher standards of living and social protection for the Greek citizens.

There are three elements that I consider of particular importance in that respect:

- The first one is financial and macroeconomic stability.

This means responsible fiscal, economic and financial policies that minimise the vulnerability to external or domestically-generated shocks.

This also means strong financial institutions to finance the real economy.

- The second element is economic resilience and investment.

This requires an efficient state and strong institutions, including justice system, to ensure a favourable and predictable business environment. Innovation, education and skills must be a priority.

- The third element is fairness.

The benefits of growth need to reach all our citizens, and all our citizens need to be empowered to harness the opportunities over the course of their entire career span. Intergenerational fairness must also be preserved. Access to modern and sustainable social protection system should be ensured.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let us learn the lessons from the efforts and experience of the past decade. Let us show through our decisions in coming weeks that we are not only 'older', but also 'wiser'.

Let us build a strong Greece at the heart of a strong Europe.

[EU Agencies against Trafficking in Human Beings](#)

On 13 June, the Head of eu-LISA as well as his counterparts in EASO, Europol, EMCDDA, Eurojust, EIGE, Frontex, FRA, CEPOL and Eurofound signed a Joint Statement to strengthen their commitment to a coordinated, coherent and comprehensive response to trafficking in human beings.

In line with Commission policy priorities, and as a key deliverable of the Commission Communication of 4 December 2017 on trafficking in human beings, the ten EU Agencies commit in the Joint Statement to continue assisting EU Member States in implementing the EU Anti-trafficking Directive, stepping up the focus on prevention in addressing the whole trafficking chain and countering the culture of impunity for perpetrators, abusers and exploiters; improve victims' access to their rights, adopting a gender specific and child sensitive approach, and to intensify coordination efforts, information sharing and training. This strengthened commitment, which is built on the work conducted since the signing of the first Joint Statement in 2011; will deepen the multidisciplinary approach to trafficking in human beings.



The signing event took place in the context of the EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator's mandate and in the presence of the EU Network of National Rapporteurs and Equivalent Mechanisms on trafficking in human beings.

Building on the synergies created since back in [2011](#), the Joint Statement is a key concrete action set forth by the December 2017 [Commission Communication stepping up action to address trafficking in human beings](#), under Priority C – Intensify a coordinated and consolidated response, both within and outside the EU.

The full press release as well as the Joint Statement are available here:

https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/eu-policy/heads-ten-eu-agencies-commit-working-together-against-trafficking-human-beings_en

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