

EMCDDA Director addresses Lithuanian drug policy conference

EMCDDA Director Alexis Goosdeel will address a conference hosted by the [Lithuanian Drug, Tobacco and Alcohol Control Department \(NTAKD\)](#) in Vilnius today, as the organisation prepares to present a new strategy (2018–2028) to the Lithuanian parliament and government.

Dedicated to Lithuania's drug policy review, with its human rights and health approach, the conference will underline the importance of a balanced and long-term drug policy, geared towards the creation of a healthy and safe society.

Mr Goosdeel will present the EMCDDA's current work – particularly its strategy for contributing to a healthier and more secure Europe – as well as highlights on Europe's drug situation. The Director will place special emphasis on the need for cooperation in gathering information on the drug situation – embodied in the work of the agency's Reitox network – which can contribute to informed policymaking.

A central feature of the conference will be the presentation of the NTAKD's new policy document and guidelines, which are intended to steer Lithuanian policymaking over the next decade.

Other presentations will look at the examples of the drug policies of Portugal and the Czech Republic, outlining the impact of drug decriminalisation on drug use and public health and the importance and benefit of making harm-reduction measures available to drug users.

The conference will also examine the role of the judicial system in tackling serious drug-related crime and will feature a presentation from Europol on the challenges posed by international organised crime.

The EMCDDA works on the principle that sound information is the key to an effective strategy on drugs. Contributing to conferences of this kind underlines this message and helps ensure that the agency continue to play a key role in the development of effective drug policies in Europe.

Daily News 15 / 05 / 2018

Contribution de la Commission au Leaders' Agenda : investir dans la Recherche et l'Innovation, c'est investir dans l'avenir de l'Europe

La Commission présente aujourd'hui sa contribution au débat informel que les

chefs d'État et de gouvernement tiendront sur la recherche et l'innovation, mercredi, à Sofia. Cette [communication](#) identifie les mesures qui permettront d'assurer la compétitivité de l'Europe. La recherche et l'innovation améliorent déjà la vie quotidienne de millions de personnes en Europe et dans le monde entier, en aidant à résoudre certains de nos plus grands défis. Cette communication va plus loin et présente un ensemble d'actions concrètes visant à renforcer la capacité d'innovation européenne et à assurer une prospérité durable. Le vice-président de la Commission, Jyrki **Katainen**, chargé de l'emploi, de la croissance, de l'investissement et de la compétitivité, a déclaré: *"L'Europe dispose d'une recherche de classe mondiale et d'une solide base industrielle, mais il faut transformer cette excellence en succès. Nous devons agir rapidement pour être en mesure de mener la nouvelle vague d'innovation"*. Carlos **Moedas**, commissaire chargé de la recherche, de la science et de l'innovation, a ajouté: *" Nous devons réformer le soutien à l'innovation de rupture par le biais d'un nouveau Conseil européen de l'innovation et renouer avec les citoyens grâce à une approche de la recherche et de l'innovation axée sur des missions, clairement identifiables."* En parallèle, un ensemble des meilleurs pratiques est présenté par la Commission aujourd'hui sur les [marchés publics innovants](#). Notre communiqué de presse se trouve [ici](#), nos fiches d'information [ici](#) et [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Lucía Caudet – Tél.: +32 229 56182; Maud Noyon – Tél.: +32 229 80379; Victoria von Hammerstein – Tél.: +32 229 55040;)

EU Leaders' meeting in Sofia: completing a trusted Digital Single Market for the benefit of all

Ten days ahead of the entry into application of the [General Data Protection rules](#), the European Commission is today presenting a set of concrete actions that European leaders can take to protect citizens' privacy and make the EU's Digital Single Market a reality before the end of 2018. The [Communication](#) presented today is the Commission's contribution to the informal discussions that EU leaders will hold in Sofia tomorrow. The Commission believes that it is in the shared interest of all Member States to manage the digital transformation by following the European approach, which links investment in digital innovation with strong data protection rules. This will allow the EU to effectively deal with the challenges of an increasingly data-based global economy. Three years after adopting the [Digital Single Market strategy](#), the Digital Single Market has progressed, with 12 legislative proposals agreed by the European Parliament and Council out of the 29 tabled by the Commission since May 2015. Major new laws on data protection, cybersecurity, and the end of mobile roaming charges are either already in place or will be in a matter of days or weeks. Member States must now ensure these agreed rules work in practice. The benefits of the Digital Single Market are already being enjoyed by citizens, for instance through a four-fold increase in data use when travelling to other Member States thanks to the abolition of roaming charges. Altogether the Digital Single Market could contribute €415 billion per year to our economy and create hundreds of thousands of new jobs. all other pending Digital Single Market proposals should be agreed by the end of 2018, in line with the call of the [European Council of October 2017](#). These include,

for instance, the modernisation of EU copyright rules to protect creators online better and facilitate the access to European works across borders. Further details are available in the [press release](#) as well as a number of factsheets: on the [progress of the Digital Single Market](#), the [Commission actions since 2015](#) as well as [stronger privacy rules for electronic communications](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Inga Höglund – Tel.: +32 229 50698)

Commission advises public buyers on how to capitalise innovation

In the context of the [Renewed Agenda for Research and Innovation](#) presented today as input to the upcoming Leaders' agenda meeting in Sofia, the Commission has published [guidance](#) to encourage public buyers of goods and services in using public procurement as a tool to stimulate innovation. *"Public authorities in the EU spend nearly 14% of GDP purchasing services and products. If spent strategically on innovative solutions, public procurement can contribute to higher quality and sustainable public service and lead to economic and social benefits. It creates demand for new ideas and innovative start-ups to emerge and grow. We are here to assist the Member States that choose to do so."*, said Commissioner for the Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs Elżbieta Bieńkowska. A greater shift to the strategic public procurement is a choice of the Member States but it is at the same time a very strong tool supporting our shared objectives such as research and innovation. [EU public procurement legislation](#) was modernised in 2014 and the Commission put forward in October 2017 an [initiative to carry out procurement more efficiently and in a modern and sustainable manner](#). The guidance complements these efforts. It contains good-practice examples on reducing administrative burden, adjusting selection criteria, mobilising innovation brokers and designing an SME-friendly payment scheme to better attract innovators to public procurement. Alternative public procurement procedures can specifically cater for innovation (for example competitive dialogues, design contests or innovation partnerships) and have been bundled in a flexible toolbox to inspire new approaches. (For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel.: +32 229 56182; Victoria von Hammerstein – Tel.: +32 229 55040; Maud Noyon – Tel. +32 229-80379)

EU prize for Cultural Heritage / Europa Nostra Awards – 29 winners announced

Today, the European Commission and Europa Nostra, the leading European heritage network, have announced the winners of this year's EU Prize for Cultural Heritage / Europa Nostra Awards. The 29 laureates from 17 countries have been recognised for their accomplishments in conservation, research, dedicated service, and education, training and awareness-raising. Cultural heritage is in the spotlight throughout 2018 as the [European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018](#) sees many initiatives and events being organised across the continent to celebrate Europe's rich cultural heritage.

Tibor Navracsics, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport said: *"Cultural heritage in all its different forms is one of Europe's most precious assets. It builds bridges between people and communities, as well as between the past and the future. It is central to our identity as Europeans, and also has a vital role in driving social and economic development. I congratulate the winners of the 2018 EU Prize for Cultural Heritage / Europa*

Nostra Awards and their teams for their exceptional and innovative work. Thanks to their talent and commitment, numerous European cultural heritage treasures have been safeguarded and revitalised. And importantly, their work enables people from all backgrounds to discover, explore and engage with our rich cultural heritage, fully in the spirit of the European Year of Cultural Heritage.” More information on the award winners can be found [here](#). They will be honoured at a high-level [European Heritage Awards Ceremony](#), co-hosted by Commissioner **Navracsics** and the President of Europa Nostra, Maestro [Plácido Domingo](#), [on 22 June](#) in Berlin, during the first ever European Cultural Heritage Summit. *(For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: [+32 229 67083](#); Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: [+32 229 56184](#))*

State aid: Commission approves prolongation of UK Enterprise Management Initiative scheme

The European Commission has approved under EU State aid rules the prolongation of the UK Enterprise Management Initiative scheme, which reduces the taxation of employee share options for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). Under the scheme, employees of SMEs will benefit from reductions from income tax and/or national insurance contributions, when exercising their share options. Furthermore, also the employer (i.e. SMEs that are listed companies and would therefore be subject to national insurance contributions when the share options are exercised) will benefit from reductions from such contributions. The aim of the scheme is to allow SMEs to recruit and retain employees, and thus enable their growth, without unduly distorting competition in the Single Market. The Commission initially [authorised the scheme in 2009](#). In March 2018, the UK authorities notified their plans to prolong the scheme to the Commission. The Commission’s assessment found that the prolongation of the measure is necessary to help UK SMEs attract and retain talented and skilled personnel. It also found that the measure contains a number of safeguards, such as a cap on the value of the share options that can be subject to the tax advantage both at the employee and employer level, ensuring that potential distortions to competition are limited. On this basis, the Commission concluded that the measure is in line with EU State aid rules. Without prejudice to any provisions of the Withdrawal Agreement, which is under negotiation, this Commission decision only applies until the UK ceases to be a Member State. More information will be available on the Commission’s [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the reference SA.47789. *(For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel. [+32 229 56182](#); Yizhou Ren – Tel.: [+32 229 94889](#); Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: [+32 229 13740](#))*

State aid: Commission approves CZK 400 million public support for intermodal transport in the Czech Republic

The European Commission has approved a CZK 400 million (around €16 million) aid scheme to support the shift of freight traffic from road to rail and inland waterways in the Czech Republic. The scheme, which will run until 31 December 2023, will support the purchase of transport units dedicated to combined transport, such as intermodal road trailers and freight containers. The beneficiaries will be operators of intermodal transport. The government will support up to 30% of the eligible costs, with the scheme being partially

funded by the EU Cohesion Fund. The Commission concluded that the measure is necessary to improve the competitiveness of intermodal transport services in the Czech Republic and that it is proportionate in accordance with EU State aid rules. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number SA.49153. (For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

Eurostat: Estimation rapide pour le premier trimestre 2018 – Le PIB en hausse de 0,4% tant dans la zone euro que dans l'UE28 – +2,5% et +2,4% respectivement par rapport au premier trimestre 2017

Au cours du premier trimestre 2018, le PIB corrigé des variations saisonnières a augmenté de 0,4% 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 2017, le PIB avait crû de 0,7% dans la zone euro et de 0,6% dans l'UE28. Un communiqué de presse Eurostat est à votre disposition [en ligne](#). (For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel.: +32 229 56182; Victoria von Hammerstein – Tel.: +32 229 55040; Maud Noyon – Tel. +32 229-80379)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

European Labour Authority on track: Vice-President Dombrovskis and Commissioner Thyssen attend first meeting of the Advisory Group

Tomorrow, 16 May, Vice-President for the Euro and Social Dialogue, Valdis **Dombrovskis**, as well as Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne **Thyssen**, will attend the very first meeting of the Advisory Group for the European Labour Authority (ELA). The Advisory Group aims to facilitate the establishment of the Labour Authority and make sure it is rapidly operational once established by the European Parliament and the Council. The Advisory Group is composed of representatives of Member States' authorities, Union-level social partners, and existing EU agencies in the employment and social area. Member countries of the European Free Trade Area and Europol will have an observer status in the Advisory Group. Ahead of the meeting, Commissioner **Thyssen** said: "Tomorrow's meeting will be an opportunity to discuss the upcoming activities of the Advisory Group. I'm happy to see the European Labour Authority is on track, as it will fulfil a very important role in ensuring fair EU labour mobility." The Commission presented its [proposal to establish a European Labour Authority](#), first announced by President Juncker in his [2017 State of the Union address](#), in March 2018. The European Labour Authority will aim to ensure that EU rules on labour mobility are enforced in a fair, simple and effective way. It will act as a permanent structure to support national authorities, businesses, and mobile citizens and will be established as a new decentralised EU agency. The Commission's aim is to have it up and running in 2019. (For more information: Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Annikky Lamp – Tel.: +32 229 56151; Sara Soumillion – Tel.: + 32 229 67094)

Commissioner Stylianides visits Belgian Federal Parliament to discuss current humanitarian aid challenges and rescEU: the EU's plan to strengthen its emergency response to disasters

Today Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides** meets with members of the International Relations Committee, the Federal Advisory Committee for EU Affairs and the Interior Committee of the Belgian Federal Parliament. **Commissioner Stylianides** will discuss current humanitarian aid challenges. He will also present [rescEU](#) – the Commission's proposal to strengthen Europe's ability to deal with disasters. *(For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz de Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)*

Commissioner Hogan leads business delegation to promote EU food and drink in China

Phil **Hogan**, Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, is continuing his series of business offensives to promote EU food and drink products with a trip to Shanghai, China, from 14-17 May. Commissioner **Hogan** said: *"China is a key trading partner for the EU agri-food sector. There is strong and growing demand among China's increasing consumer class for our high quality food and drink products, and by meeting directly with our Chinese counterparts, we can build the business and political relationships required to accelerate this growth. The EU is the global leader in free and fair trade, and we will continue to vigorously pursue increased trade with our global partners for our mutual benefit."* The commissioner will be accompanied by a business delegation of 70 representatives from across the European agri-food sector, representing national associations or businesses from 22 different countries, as well as a number of EU-wide associations. As with the Commissioner's recent visits to Canada, Iran, Saudi Arabia, the aim of the visit is to facilitate potential business agreements between European and Chinese agri-food sector companies. China is the second largest importer of EU agricultural and processed agricultural products, accounting for 8.7% of all EU agricultural exports in 2016, and European food and drink products are becoming increasingly popular with China's emerging middle class in particular. To underline this growing importance, the EU has been chosen as the region of honour at the SIAL China in Shanghai, Asia's largest food exhibition. Commissioner **Hogan** will officially open the exhibition on 16 May. A full programme of activities is organised for the business delegation, including seminars on the characteristics of the local market and consumer trends, retail visits, networking opportunities and a visit to SIAL. *(For more information: Daniel Rosario – Tel.: +32 229 56185; Kinga Malinowska – Tel: +32 229 51383)*

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

EU Leaders' meeting in Sofia: Completing a trusted Digital Single Market for the benefit of all

The Communication presented today is the Commission's contribution to the informal discussions that EU leaders will hold in Sofia tomorrow.

The Commission believes that it is in the shared interest of all Member States to manage the digital transformation by following the European approach, which links investment in digital innovation with strong data protection rules. This will allow the EU to effectively deal with the challenges of an increasingly data-based global economy.

Vice-President Andrus **Ansip**, responsible for the Digital Single Market, said: *"Data is at the heart of our economy and society. It needs to flow freely, to be safe and secure. The European Commission has put forward all the proposals for a Digital Single Market; it is now EU leaders who have the keys to unlock digital opportunities. This new regulatory environment should go hand in hand with major investments in areas such as cybersecurity, 5G, artificial intelligence and high-performance computing."*

Věra **Jourová**, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, added: *"The recent Facebook Cambridge Analytica revelations confirm once more that the EU made the right choice to put in place strong data protection rules. Data harvesting with the aim of manipulating public opinion is unacceptable. We are proud to be setting the new global standard for the protection of personal data. This is fundamental for consumer trust in an increasingly digital economy and society."*

Mariya **Gabriel**, Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society, said: *"Having the right regulatory framework in place is crucial to create trust and develop businesses online. Together with the General Data Protection Regulation, the ePrivacy Regulation will secure our citizens' electronic communications. In Sofia, EU leaders will have a unique occasion to give decisive incentives on the remaining key digital proposals still in negotiations."*

Three years after adopting the Digital Single Market Strategy, the [Digital Single Market](#) has progressed, with 12 legislative proposals agreed by the European Parliament and Council out of the 29 tabled by the Commission since May 2015. Major new laws on data protection, cybersecurity, and the end of mobile roaming charges are either already in place or will be in a matter of days or weeks. Member States must now ensure these agreed rules work in practice.

Strengthening the protection of personal data in the EU

General Data Protection Regulation: Two-thirds of Europeans say that they are

worried about having no control over the information they provide online, while half are concerned about falling victim to fraud. The recent Facebook/Cambridge Analytica scandal has raised awareness that data could be misused if not properly protected.

Through the [General Data Protection Regulation](#) citizens will be able to benefit from stronger protection of personal data through:

- better control over how personal data is handled by companies and public administrations alike, including the need for users' clear consent for processing their personal data;
- more clarity about the privacy policies of companies;
- swift notification of harmful data breaches without delay.

Next steps: The Commission is inviting EU leaders to ensure that national authorities urgently put in place all the remaining steps necessary to prepare for the application of the new rules in all Members States.

ePrivacy Regulation: Alongside the General Data Protection Regulation, the [ePrivacy Regulation](#) proposed in January 2017, currently under negotiation in the European Parliament and the Council, is essential so that the confidentiality of Europeans' online communication is not breached. The new rules will apply both to traditional telecoms operators and online services, such as emails, instant messaging or online voice services. This means that without users' consent, no service provider would be able access the devices they use.

Next steps: The Commission is urging the Council to swiftly agree on its negotiation position on the ePrivacy Regulation, so that negotiations with the European Parliament can start by June 2018, with a view to the adoption by the end of 2018.

Necessary steps to complete a functional Digital Single Market

Since the launch of the [Digital Single Market strategy](#) in May 2015, the Commission has delivered proposals for all 29 initiatives identified as essential for a functional Digital Single Market. The benefits are already being enjoyed by citizens, for instance through a four-fold increase in data use when travelling to other Member States thanks to the abolition of roaming charges. Altogether the Digital Single Market could contribute €415 billion per year to our economy and create hundreds of thousands of new jobs.

In particular, the Commission is inviting EU leaders to discuss and give their strategic orientation with a view to:

- Mobilising the necessary public and private investments to deploy artificial intelligence, 5G connectivity networks, high-performance computing.
- Ensuring that the Regulation on free flow of non-personal data, designed to further develop the European data economy, is agreed by co-legislators by June 2018.
- Similarly, the Electronic Communications Code, aiming at boosting

investment in high-speed and high-quality networks across the EU, should also be finalised by June 2018.

- Helping Member States equip Europeans with the digital skills they will need in today's and tomorrow's digital economy and society.

More generally, all other pending Digital Single Market proposals should be agreed by the end of 2018, in line with the call of the [European Council of October 2017](#). These include, for instance, the modernisation of EU copyright rules to protect creators online better and facilitate the access to European works across borders.

Background

The EU has already put an end to mobile roaming charges in the EU and allowed Europeans to travel across the EU with their online subscriptions for films, TV series, video games, music, sport programmes or ebooks.

Since 9 May 2018, Member States have to apply the first EU-wide legislation on cybersecurity – the Directive on Security of Network and Information Systems (NIS Directive) – which will be completed by a wide-ranging set of measures for stronger cybersecurity in the EU. This includes a proposal for an **EU Cybersecurity Agency** to assist Member States in dealing with cyber-attacks, as well as a new **European certification scheme** that will ensure that products and services in the digital world are safe to use. As of December 2018, thanks to new rules against unjustified geoblocking, consumers will no longer face barriers when buying products or services online within the EU. For businesses, this means more legal certainty to operate cross-border.

In April 2018, the Commission delivered all the remaining Digital Single Market actions and notably presented a European approach for the future of artificial intelligence, measures to tackle disinformation online, including an EU-wide Code of Practice on disinformation, as well as conditions for fairness and transparency in the online platforms economy designed to lead to an innovation-friendly environment for EU businesses.

In parallel, the General Data Protection Regulation was adopted in December 2015 with a two-year transition period to allow Member States and their authorities to be fully ready when it enters into application on 25 May 2018. In January 2018, the Commission also published guidelines to facilitate the application of the new data protection rules across the EU.

For More Information

[Factsheet: Digital Single Market for all Europeans](#)

[Factsheet: Timeline – Digital Single Market, European Commission actions since 2015](#)

[Factsheet: Stronger privacy rules for electronic communications](#)

[Communication on Completing a trusted Digital Single Market for all](#)

A renewed agenda for Research and Innovation: Europe's chance to shape the future

Investing in research and innovation is investing in Europe's future. It helps us to compete globally and preserve our unique social model. It improves the daily lives of millions of people here in Europe and around the world, helping to solve some of our biggest societal and generational challenges. The [Renewed European Agenda for Research and Innovation](#) presents a set of concrete actions to deepen Europe's innovation capability and provide lasting prosperity.

Commission Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, said: *"Europe has world-class research and a strong industrial base. But we must do better – much better – at turning that excellence into success. New megatrends, such as artificial intelligence and the circular economy, are going to bring profound changes to society and the economy. We need to act fast to be able to lead the new wave of innovation and set the standard for global competition."*

Carlos **Moedas**, Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, added: *"With growing international competition, Europe needs to act urgently on research and innovation. The proposed €100 billion for the next EU research and innovation programme would be a huge boost. But Europe also needs to reform the support for breakthrough innovation through a new European Innovation Council, and reconnect with citizens through a mission driven approach to research and innovation. We need to future-proof regulations and attract more private investment, in particular in venture capital."*

It is time to take our ambition to the next level. We must act now to help Europe become the global innovation powerhouse that it has the potential to be. The Commission welcomes the President of the European Council's decision to schedule a debate among Leaders on Research and Innovation, and invites them to discuss and give strategic orientation to its suggested actions, including by:

- **Ensuring that regulation and financing are innovation-friendly:** Proposed measures include giving priority to the transposition of the [Directive on preventing restructuring frameworks](#), second chances and measures to increase the efficiency of restructuring, insolvency and discharge procedures; Increasing the procurement of innovative products and services by public authorities by applying the [guidelines](#) published by the Commission today; Swiftly adopting [the next EU 2021-2027 budget](#) with the proposed allocation of €100 billion to Horizon Europe and the Euratom research and training programme, as well as other major funding

programmes that will provide a significant stimulus to innovation; Rolling out the [VentureEU](#) initiative to boost private investment and venture capital; Further simplifying EU State aid rules to facilitate public funding of innovative projects including blending of EU and national funds.

- **Becoming a frontrunner in market-creating innovation:** The Commission proposes to establish a full-scale European Innovation Council to offer a one-stop shop for high potential and breakthrough technologies, as well as for innovative companies with potential for scaling up. The European Innovation Council will build on the €2.7 billion pilot phase for the period 2018-2020, with the objective to help identify and scale up fast-moving, high-risk innovations with strong potential to create entirely new markets.
- **Launching EU-wide research and innovation missions** with bold, ambitious goals and strong European added value in areas to be defined with Member States, stakeholders and citizens. These could range from the fight against cancer, to clean transport or plastic-free oceans. The missions will encourage investment and participation across sectors and scientific disciplines to jointly crack a challenge. They should create synergies with research and innovation strategies at Member State, regional and local level.

Background

With only 7% of the world's population, Europe accounts for 20% of global R&D investment, produces one third of all high-quality scientific publications, and holds a world leading position in industrial sectors such as pharmaceuticals, chemicals, mechanical engineering and fashion.

Europe is relatively strong in adding or sustaining value for existing products, services and processes, known as incremental innovation. We have seen this in sectors as varied as space, aeronautics, pharmaceuticals, electronics, renewable energy, bio-based industries and advanced manufacturing. We have also taken strides forward in supporting innovation through Key Enabling Technologies, such as robotics, photonics, and biotechnology. These technologies can be used and applied across many industries and are crucial for addressing key societal challenges

But Europe is also lagging behind in many areas. EU companies spend less on innovation than their competitors (1.3% of GDP compared to 1.6% in China, 2% in the United States, 2.6% in Japan, or 3.3% in South Korea). Venture capital remains underdeveloped in Europe. In 2016, venture capitalists invested about €6.5 billion in the EU compared to €39.4 billion in the US, and VC funds in Europe are too small – €56 million on average compared to €156 million in the US. As a result, these companies move to ecosystems where they have better chances to grow fast. The EU is home to only 26 “Unicorn start-ups” (start-ups valued at over \$1 billion) compared to 109 in the US and 59 in China. Public investment across the EU falls short of 3% GDP target, and R&D intensity is still uneven among EU regions, with investment and research heavily concentrated in Western Europe. And 40% of the workforce in Europe lacks the necessary digital skills.

Technology-driven innovation, digitisation and global megatrends such as artificial intelligence and the circular economy offer huge opportunities but also create new challenges. Global competition is intensifying and threatens Europe's leading competitive position in key industrial sectors. Europe needs to deepen its innovation capability to maintain and improve the European way of life.

For More Information

[Communication: A renewed European agenda for Research and Innovation: Europe's chance to shape the future](#)

[Factsheet: A renewed agenda for Research and Innovation: the Commission's contribution to the Leaders' Agenda](#)

[Factsheet: EU research and innovation success stories](#)

Flash estimate for the first quarter of 2018 -GDP up by 0.4% in both euro area and EU28 – +2.5% and +2.4% respectively compared with the first quarter of 2017

Seasonally adjusted GDP rose by 0.4% in both the **euro area** (EA19) and the **EU28** during the first quarter of 2018, compared with the previous quarter, according to a flash estimate published by **Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union**. In the fourth quarter of 2017, GDP had grown by 0.7% in the **euro area** and by 0.6% in the **EU28**.

[Full text available on EUROSTAT website](#)