

CALENDRIER du 26 février au 04 mars 2018

(Susceptible de modifications en cours de semaine)

Déplacements et visites

Dimanche 25 février 2018

President Jean-Claude **Juncker** in Skopje, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: meets Mr Zoran Zaev, Prime Minister of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; holds a joint press conference with Mr Zoran Zaev; and meets Mr Gjorge Ivanov, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

President Jean-Claude **Juncker** in Tirana, Albania: meets, together with Mr Johannes **Hahn**, Mr Edi Rama, Prime Minister of Albania; holds a joint press conference with Mr Edi Rama; and participates at an official dinner reception hosted by Mr Edi Rama.

Lundi 26 février 2018

Foreign Affairs Council

Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council on energy

EU-Kazakhstan Cooperation Council

President Jean-Claude **Juncker** in Tirana, Albania: meets, together with Mr Johannes **Hahn**, Mr Ilir Meta, President of Albania.

President Jean-Claude **Juncker** in Belgrade, Serbia (until 27/02): meets, together with Mr Johannes **Hahn**, Mr Aleksandar Vučić, President of Serbia; holds a joint press conference with Mr Aleksandar Vučić; and participates in a dinner hosted by Mr Aleksandar Vučić.

Mr Frans **Timmermans** receives Mr Jesper Brodin, President and CEO of IKEA.

Mr Frans **Timmermans** in Leuven, Belgium: participates in a Citizens' Dialogue with Mr Geert Bourgeois, Minister-President of Flanders; attends the EuroCommerce CEO Dinner.

Ms Federica **Mogherini** receives Mr Kairat Abdrakhmanov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan.

Ms Federica **Mogherini** receives Ms Zehava Galon, Member of the Parliament of Israel (Knesset) and Chairperson of Meretz political party.

Mr Andrus **Ansip** in Barcelona, Spain (until 27/02): participates in the [Mobile](#)

[World Congress](#): visits pavilions; participates in the EU CEO lunch roundtable; in a panel discussion on “Delivering 5G for All”; meets Mr Steve Mollenkopf, CEO of Qualcomm; participates in the “Trans-Atlantic Regulation and the Digital Economy” conference and delivers a speech. He also meets Mr Ajit Pai, Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

Mr Valdis **Dombrovskis** hosts a roundtable on cryptocurrencies, in Brussels.

Mr Valdis **Dombrovskis** receives Ms Ivanna Klymush-Tsintsadze, Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration of Ukraine.

Mr Günther H. **Oettinger** in Madrid, Spain: on a tour to gather views on the Future of EU finances and the post-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF).

Ms Cecilia **Malmström** in Sofia, Bulgaria (until 27/02): participates in a [Citizens' Dialogue on 'Global trade – A threat or opportunity for the EU?'](#).

Mr Neven **Mimica** receives Mr Kairat Abdrakhmanov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan.

Mr Karmenu **Vella** receives Mr Jesper Brodin, President and CEO at IKEA Group.

Mr Vytenis **Andriukaitis** receives representatives of European Federation of Nurses Associations.

M. Pierre **Moscovici** à Toulouse, France: rencontre Mme Carole Delga, Présidente de la région Occitanie; participe à la signature du lancement du projet de financement pour des PME géré par les Fonds européen d'investissement (FOSTER Occitanie); participe à un [dialogue citoyen](#) sur “L'Occitanie et l'Europe”; et à une table ronde sur “Comment favoriser le développement de l'économie locale avec l'Europe?”.

Ms Věra **Jourová** receives Mr Jesper Brodin, President and CEO of IKEA.

Ms Věra **Jourová** receives Representatives of intergovernmental organizations and NGOs on the protection of children in migration.

Ms Věra **Jourová** receives a delegation of the European Union of Jewish Students (EUJS).

Mr Tibor **Navracsics** receives representatives from the European Union of Jewish Students (EUJS).

Ms Margrethe **Vestager** receives Ms Mateja Vraničar Erman, Minister for Finance of Slovenia.

Ms Mariya **Gabriel** in Barcelona, Spain (until 27/02): participates in the Mobile World Congress. She also visits the Deutsche Telecom stand where she meets Mr Tim Hötting, Chief Executive Officer of Deutsche Telekom AG; visits the Mobile World Capital, GSMA (GSM Association) Innovation City, Huawei, Ericsson and Nokia stands. Ms Gabriel participates in the CEO lunch roundtable and in the GSMA Trans-Atlantic Dialogue, meets Mr Mats

Granryd, Director General of GSMA, with Mr Johan Dannelind, President and Chief Executive Officer of Telia Company, and Mr Bob Quinn, Senior Executive Vice President of External & Legislative Affairs of AT&T.

Mardi 27 février 2018

General Affairs Council

General Affairs Council (Art. 50)

Informal meeting of foreign affairs ministers on trade, in Sofia

President Jean-Claude **Juncker** in Serbia, in Belgrade: meets, together with Mr Johannes **Hahn**, Ms Ana Brnabić, Prime Minister of Serbia.

President Jean-Claude **Juncker** in Podgorica, Montenegro: meets Mr Duško Marković, Prime Minister of Montenegro; holds a joint press conference with Mr Duško Marković; and addresses the Parliament of Montenegro.

Mr Frans **Timmermans** receives Ms Helena Dalli, Minister for European Affairs and Equality of Malta.

Mr Frans **Timmermans** receives Mr Dietmar Woidke, Minister-President of the Land of Brandenburg (Germany).

Ms Federica **Mogherini** receives Mr Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator at the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Ms Federica **Mogherini** participates in the EU-ASEAN Young Leaders Forum, in Brussels.

Mr Andrus **Ansip** in Barcelona, Spain: participates in the [Mobile World Congress](#); meets Mr Tim Höttges, CEO of Deutsche Telekom AG; Mr Mats Granryd, Director General of GSMA innovation city; Mr Manoj Sinha, Minister for Communications of India; and visits the Barcelona Supercomputing Centre.

Mr Maroš **Šefčovič** participates in a high-level dialogue on Coal regions in transition, at the European Parliament, in Brussels.

Mr Maroš **Šefčovič** receives Ms Rovana Plumb, Minister for European Funds of Romania.

Mr Valdis **Dombrovskis** receives Mr Merel van Vroonhoven, Chairwoman of the Executive Board of the Dutch Authority for the Financial Markets (AFM).

Mr Valdis **Dombrovskis** delivers the keynote speech at the [Second Annual FinTech Conference](#) on “Regulation at the European level and beyond”.

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** receives Mr Jean-Louis Bancel, President of Cooperatives Europe.

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** receives Mr Antti Vasara, CEO of the VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland Ltd and Vice-President of European Association of Research and Technology Organisations (EARTO).

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** receives Mr Gabriel Bernardino, Chairman of the European Insurance and Occupational Pensions Authority (EIOPA).

Ms Cecilia **Malmström** in Sofia, Bulgaria: participates in the Informal meeting of foreign affairs ministers on trade.

Mr Neven **Mimica** receives Mr Mark Lowcock, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator at the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Mr Karmenu **Vella** receives directors and heads of “Green 10” organisations.

Mr Karmenu **Vella** receives Mr Richard Brabec, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for the Environment of the Czech Republic.

Mr Karmenu **Vella** delivers a speech at the [EURACTIV high-level debate on: “Plastics Strategy: Challenges and Opportunities of Recycling”](#), in Brussels.

Mr Vytenis **Andriukaitis** delivers a speech at the “Digital transformation of health and care for Active and Healthy Ageing in Europe” conference, in Brussels.

Mr Vytenis **Andriukaitis** receives Mr Hassan Ghazizadeh Hashemi, Minister for Health and Medical Education of Iran.

Mr Vytenis **Andriukaitis** receives high-level representatives of the Agriculture Division of DowDuPont.

Ms Marianne **Thyssen** in France: meets Mr François Asselin, President of Confédération des Petites et Moyennes Entreprises (CPME).

Ms Marianne **Thyssen** receives Ms Julia Bogner-Strauß, Federal Minister for Women, Families and Youth of Austria.

Ms Marianne **Thyssen** receives Ms Ramber-Koller, President of the European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (UEAPME).

M. Pierre **Moscovici** à Montpellier, France: visite une opération de rénovation thermique à Colomiers; fait visite à un groupe de projets locaux innovants à Labège; et visite ‘l’Ecole de la 2ème chance’.

Mr Christos **Stylianides** receives Mr Mark Lowcock, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator at the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Mr Phil **Hogan** receives Mr Hassan Ghazizadeh Hashemi, Minister for Health and Medical Education of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr Phil **Hogan** addresses the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), in

Brussels.

Ms Violeta **Bulc** delivers a keynote speech at the conference "[One million electric vehicles just around the corner – What next?](#)", in Brussels.

Ms Elżbieta **Bieńkowska** holds a live Facebook chat on single market.

Ms Elżbieta **Bieńkowska** receives Ms Ulrike Rabmer-Koller, President, and Ms Véronique Willems, Secretary General of European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (UEAPME).

Ms Věra **Jourová** delivers a keynote speech at the [Conference on Radicalization in Prisons](#), in Brussels.

Ms Věra **Jourová** receives Ms Aurelia Frick, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Justice and Culture of Liechtenstein.

Mr Tibor **Navracsics** receives Ms Françoise Nyssen, Minister for Culture of France.

Mr Tibor **Navracsics** receives Ms Juliane Bogner-Strauß, Federal Minister within the Federal Chancellery for Women, Families and Youth of Austria.

Ms Corina **Crețu** receives Mr Piet Jaspert, Vice-President, and Ms Sneška Quaedvlieg-Mihailović, Secretary General, of Europa Nostra.

Ms Corina **Crețu** receives Mr Willy Borsus, Minister-President of Wallonia (Belgium).

Ms Corina **Crețu** receives Mr Dietmar Woidke, Minister-President of the Land of Brandenburg (Germany).

Mr Carlos **Moedas** in Copenhagen, Denmark: delivers an opening speech at the [Big Science Business Forum 2018](#). Mr Moedas meets Mr Kristian Jensen, Minister for Finance, Mr Soren Pind, Minister for Higher Education and Science, and participates at the Citizens' dialogue and round-table debate about future European R&I at the University of Copenhagen.

Mr Julian **King** participates in a panel discussion at the European Cybersecurity Forum, in Brussels.

Mr Julian **King** delivers closing remarks at the Conference on Radicalisation, in Brussels.

Mr Julian **King** receives Mr Emily Haber, State Secretary at the German Federal Ministry of the Interior.

Mr Julian **King** receives Mr John Cunningham, Director of Sales for Europe at CheckRisk.

Ms Mariya **Gabriel** receives Ms Françoise Nyssen, Minister for Culture of France.

Ms Mariya **Gabriel** receives Mr Krzysztof Szubert, Secretary of State, The

Government Plenipotentiary for Digital Single Market of Poland.

Ms Mariya **Gabriel** delivers a speech at the [Colloquium on Fake News and Disinformation Online](#), organised by the European Commission, in Brussels.

Mercredi 28 février 2018

College meeting

Informal meeting of education, youth, culture and sport ministers on culture, in Sofia

President Jean-Claude **Juncker** in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina: meets, together with Ms Federica **Mogherini** and Mr Johannes **Hahn**, Mr Dragan Čović, Mr Bakir Izetbegović and Mr Mladen Ivanić, Members of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina; and addresses the Joint Session of the House of Representatives and House of Peoples of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

President Jean-Claude **Juncker** in Pristina, Kosovo: meets, together with Ms Federica **Mogherini** and Mr Johannes **Hahn**, Mr Hashim Thaçi, President of Kosovo, Mr Kadri Veseli, Chairman of the national Parliament, and Mr Ramush Haradinaj, Prime Minister of Kosovo; and representatives of the civil society.

Mr Maroš **Šefčovič** in Vienna, Austria (until 01/03): on Energy Union tour: participates in a dialogue and discussion with students.

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** receives Mr Alexander Stubb, Vice-President of the European Investment Bank (EIB).

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** receives a delegation from the Federation of Austrian Industries.

Mr Karmenu **Vella** receives Mr Milutin Simović, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Policy and Financial System and Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development of Montenegro.

Mr Vytenis **Andriukaitis** delivers a speech at European Reference Networks Rare Diseases event: "Accelerating and Improving Diagnosis for Rare Diseases Patients", at the European Parliament, Brussels.

Mr Vytenis **Andriukaitis** receives Mr Terkel Andersen, President, Mr Yann Le Cam, CEO, and Ms Valentina Bottarelli, Public Affairs Director and Head of European and International Advocacy, of Eurordis.

Mr Vytenis **Andriukaitis** receives Mr Cees-Jan Adema, Member of the Executive Committee and Chairman of the Consumer Information Expert Group at The Brewers of Europe; Mr Pierre-Olivier Bergeron, Secretary-General; and other high-level representatives of The Brewers of Europe.

Mr Vytenis **Andriukaitis** receives Mr Milutin Simović, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Policy and Financial System and Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development of Montenegro.

Ms Marianne **Thyssen** attends a trilogue on Posting of Workers, at the European Council, in Brussels.

M. Pierre **Moscovici** reçoit M. Pierre Gattaz, Président du Mouvement des entreprises de France (MEDEF), à Bruxelles.

Mr Christos **Stylianides** participates in the launch of the Ukraine Humanitarian Plan with the United Nations, in Brussels.

Mr Christos **Stylianides** meets Mr Roland Wöllner, Minister for the Interior of the Land of Saxony, Germany.

Mr Phil **Hogan** receives Mr Milutin Simović, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Policy and Financial System and Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development of Montenegro.

Ms Elżbieta **Bieńkowska** receives Mr Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

Ms Elżbieta **Bieńkowska** delivers an opening speech at the Commission High Level Expert Group on Energy Intensive Industries.

Mr Tibor **Navracsics** in Sofia, Bulgaria: participates in the Informal Culture Council.

Ms Corina **Crețu** receives Ms Rovana Plumb, Minister for European Funds of Romania.

Ms Corina **Crețu** receives Mr Jānis Reirs, Minister for Welfare of Latvia.

Mr Carlos Moedas receives the Presidents of the Rectors' conference of the Spanish Universities (CRUE) and of the Council of Rectors of the Portuguese Universities (CRUP).

Mr Julian **King** receives Mr Roland Wöllner, Minister for the Interior of the Land of Saxony, Germany.

Mr Julian **King** delivers the keynote address at the "Cyber Wales Trade Mission to Brussels" conference, in Brussels.

Ms Mariya **Gabriel** receives Mr Christophe Deloire, Secretary General of Reporters Without Borders.

Jeudi 01 mars 2018

President Jean-Claude Juncker in Sofia, Bulgaria: meets, together with Ms Federica **Mogherini** and Mr Johannes **Hahn**, Mr Boyko Borissov, Prime Minister of Bulgaria; holds a joint press conference with Mr Boyko Borissov;

and participates in an official lunch hosted by Mr Boyko Borissov, with the Leaders of the Western Balkan countries.

Mr Frans **Timmermans** in Bucharest, Romania: meets Mr Liviu Dragnea, President of the Chamber of Deputies; meets Mr Călin Popescu-Tăriceanu, President of the Senate; meets Members of the Joint Special Committee of Chamber of Deputies and Senate; meets Mr Klaus Iohannis, President of Romania; meets Ms Viorica Dăncilă, Prime Minister of Romania.

Mr Andrus **Ansip** and Ms Věra **Jourová** receive privacy and consumers' associations on the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) implementation, Privacy Shield and e-Privacy.

Mr Maroš **Šefčovič** in Vienna, Austria (until 01/03): on Energy Union tour: delivers a keynote speech at the [Urban Future Conference 2018](#); meets members from all parliamentary groups in the National Council; Ms Elisabeth Köstinger, Minister for Sustainability and Tourism of Austria; Mr Wolfgang Sobotka, President of the National Council of Austria; representatives of social partners; visits the on-site project "Aspern Smart City Research"; and meets Ms Ulli Sima, Executive City Councillor for the Environment and Vienna Public Utilities.

Mr Valdis **Dombrovskis** in Portugal (until 02/03): meets Ms Elisa Maria da Costa Guimarães Ferreira, Vice-Governor of the Bank of Portugal; Mr José Vieira da Silva, Minister for Labour, Solidarity and Social Security of Portugal; Mr Mário Centeno, Minister for Finance; and participates in a [Citizens' dialogue](#) on strengthening Europe's Economic and Monetary Union.

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** receives Mr Jukka Juusti, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Defence of Finland.

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** receives Mr John MacFarlane, Chairman of Barclays PLC and Chairman of TheCityUK.

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** delivers a keynote speech at the [Business Europe Day 2018](#)

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** receives Mr Vincenzo Boccia, President of Confindustria.

Mr Neven **Mimica** in Madrid, Spain (until 02/03): meets together Mr Ildefonso Castro López, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Spain, Mr Jorge Toledo Albiñana, Secretary of State for the EU, and Mr Fernando Casas, Secretary of State for International Cooperation for Ibero-America and the Caribbean. Mr Mimica also meets Mr Cristóbal Montoro, Minister for Finance and Public Function, and Mr Alberto Nadal Belda, Secretary of State for the Budget and Expenditure; and Mr Alfonso Dastis, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain.

Mr Miguel **Arias Cañete** gives a keynote speech at the Energy Storage and Sectoral Integration Roundtable, in Brussels.

Mr Karmenu **Vella** attends the [Centre for European Reform \(CER\) and Kreab breakfast meeting on "Why the Arctic matters for Europe"](#), in Brussels.

Mr Karmenu **Vella** receives Mr Ostap Semerak, Minister for Ecology and Natural Resources of Ukraine.

Mr Dimitris **Avramopoulos** in Delphi, Greece: delivers a keynote speech at the Delphi Economic Forum event entitled 'Outlook for Greece and the Region: A Vision 2020-2030'.

M. Pierre **Moscovici** reçoit M. Niels Thygesen, Président du Comité budgétaire européen.

M. Pierre **Moscovici** prononce un discours devant la Représentation Permanente de la France, à Bruxelles.

Mr Christos **Stylianides** in Bucharest, Romania: meets Ms Carmen Dan, Minister of Interior of Romania.

Mr Christos **Stylianides** in Delphi, Greece: holds a keynote speech during the opening ceremony of the 3rd annual Conference of the Delphi Economic Forum.

Mr Phil **Hogan** in Dublin, Ireland: addresses the Seanad Éireann (Senate of Ireland); and attends the launch of AgriChemWhey.

Ms Violeta **Bulc** in Frankfurt, Germany: meets Mr Günther Bräunig, CEO of KfW Bankengruppe, and executive board members; and staff of the European Central Bank (ECB).

Ms Elżbieta **Bieńkowska** in Krakow, Poland: delivers an opening speech at 1st Biennial International Conference: Historical Cities 3.0 "Residents and visitors – in search of quality and comfort".

Ms Věra **Jourová** delivers a keynote speech at the meeting of the High-Level Group on Non-Discrimination, Equality and Diversity, in Brussels.

Ms Věra **Jourová** receives Mr Jiří Šesták, Vice-President of the Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic.

Mr Tibor **Navracsics** in Sofia, Bulgaria: participates in and speaks at the 8th Asia-Europe Culture Ministers' Meeting.

Ms Corina **Crețu** in Paris, France (until 02/03): meets Mr Jacques Mézard, Minister for Territorial Cohesion; Mr Philippe Étienne, Diplomatic Advisor to the President.

Ms Margrethe **Vestager** in Copenhagen, Denmark (until 02/03): delivers a speech at a conference for CEOs on "The role of the EU in ensuring trust and coherence".

Mr Carlos **Moedas** receives Mr Michael Peters, CEO of Euronews SA.

Mr Carlos **Moedas** receives Mr Roman Escolano, Vice President at European Investment Bank.

Vendredi 02 mars 2018

President Jean-Claude **Juncker** in Hamburg, Germany: meets Mr Olaf Scholz, Mayor of Hamburg and Mr Joschka Fischer, former Vice-Chancellor and former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Germany; and participates in the *Matthiae-Mahlzeit*.

Mr Valdis **Dombrovskis** in Portugal: meets Mr António Costa, Prime Minister of Portugal; Ms Gabriela Figueiredo Dias, President of the Securities Market Commission (CMVM); and participates in a hearing at the Portuguese Parliament with members of the European Affairs Commission.

Mr Günther H. **Oettinger** in Valletta, Malta: on a tour to gather views on the Future of EU finances and the post-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF); together with Mr Karmenu **Vella**, meets Mr Joseph Muscat, Prime Minister of Malta.

Ms Cecilia **Malmström** in Singapore: participates in the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Economic Ministerial meeting.

Mr Neven **Mimica** in Madrid, Spain: participates in the opening of an event on the European Investment Plan and the role of the private sector organised by the *Confederación Española de Organizaciones Empresariales*; meets representatives of the Parliamentary Commission for International Development Cooperation of the Parliament of Spain; Ms Eva Valle Maestro, Director of the Government Economic Office of Spain; and civil society representatives.

Mr Karmenu **Vella** in Malta: delivers an inaugural speech for the EU Maritime Law and Policy Programme at the International Maritime Law Institute (IMLI); attends the White Flag award ceremony at which Malta will become a member of the Ocean Alliance Conservation Member (OACM); and delivers a speech at the [5th Mediterranean Tourism Forum](#).

Ms Marianne **Thyssen** in Brugge, Belgium: delivers a speech at the European Youth Parliament of Belgium (EYP).

M. Pierre **Moscovici** visite le [Salon de l'Agriculture](#) à Paris.

Mr Phil **Hogan** in Dublin, Ireland: [participates in a Citizens' dialogue on 'Women Entrepreneurs in Rural Ireland'](#); and meets Mr Michael Tennyson, member of the Agricultural Consultants Association (ACA).

Ms Corina **Crețu** in Paris, France: visits an EU-funded project in Ile-de-France; meets Ms Nathalie Loiseau, Minister for European Affairs, attached to the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs.

Ms Margrethe **Vestager** in Copenhagen, Denmark: meets Mr Søren Pape Poulsen, Minister for Justice of Denmark.

Ms Margrethe **Vestager** in Boston, the United States: delivers a keynote speech at the Harvard Kennedy School conference "Europe alive and kicking. Exploring the renewed promise of the European way".

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Culture and education, tools to strengthen European identity and social cohesion

The aim of the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 is to encourage more people to discover and engage with Europe's cultural heritage and to reinforce a sense of belonging to a common European space. At the meeting of the CoR's SEDEC commission on 21 February, members discussed two opinions focusing on the role of education and culture for strengthening European identity and social cohesion.

Rapporteurs **Tanya Hristova** (BG/EPP) and **Babette Winter** (DE/PES) pointed out that education and culture have a broad impact on all areas of life and contribute to social inclusion and cohesion. Therefore the 2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage should provide a framework for supporting regional cultural development, opening up new opportunities for sustainable cultural tourism and improving opportunities for cultural mobility.

Ms Hristova's opinion on **"Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture"** was adopted by SEDEC members in Wednesday's meeting. It welcomes the European Commission's aim to establish a European Education Area by 2025. While education remains a national competence, it recommends Member States to promote language learning from an early age and familiarise learners with a common European cultural heritage, European history and the processes of European integration. SEDEC members strongly support boosting the Erasmus+ programme with the aim of doubling the number of participants.

The opinion underlines the critical importance of looking into the regional disparities and economic and social consequences that arise from skills gaps and mismatches in the EU. Against the backdrop of digitalisation of European education, the rapporteur – Mayor of Gabrovo – pointed out that many rural and sparsely populated areas still lack high-speed connectivity and regions facing demographic and social challenges may struggle to provide teachers with adequate digital skills, competences and equipment.

Following a request from the Bulgarian presidency, Ms Winter is preparing an opinion which focuses on cultural heritage as a strategic resource for more

cohesive and sustainable regions in the EU. The rapporteur, State Secretary for Europe and Culture in the Thuringia State Chancellery, highlighted that European cultural heritage can contribute to bringing communities together, promoting regional development and creating long-term local employment. Both opinions are scheduled for adoption at the CoR plenary on 16–17 May.

In the second semester of 2018, cultural heritage will also be the priority area of the [Knowledge Exchange Platform](#) (KEP) set up between the European Committee of the Regions and the European Commission to present new R&I solutions, innovations and best practises. Regeneration of city centres and rural landscapes and innovative re-uses of heritage buildings will be some of the themes to be discussed in various workshops. During the first half of 2018, the KEP will focus on innovating cities with nature and nature-based solutions. More information: [KEP action plan 2018](#)

Following two opinions were also adopted by the SEDEC members:

The next meeting of CoR's SEDEC commission – standing for Social Policy, Education, Employment, Research and Culture – will take place on 23 April.

[European Week of Regions and Cities 2018: Still looking for counterparts?](#)

□Some regions and cities have expressed their needs to find or join a regional partnership.

Have a look at the final [partner search overview](#) and get in touch. Application to become a partner of the European Week of Regions and Cities 2018 is open until 30th March.

Get also inspired by the sessions organised in the framework of the [#EURegionsWeek 2017](#).

[Statement by President Juncker ahead of the Italian parliamentary elections](#)

Elections are a moment of democracy, and this applies to Italy – a country that is very close to my heart.

On 4 March the Italians will go to the polls and cast their votes. Whatever the outcome, I am confident that we will have a government that makes sure that Italy remains a central player in Europe and in shaping its future.

Background – EP Press Kit for the informal EU summit on 23 February 2018

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