

CALENDRIER du 29 janvier au 04 février 2018

(Susceptible de modifications en cours de semaine)

Déplacements et visites

Lundi 29 janvier 2018

President Jean-Claude **Juncker** receives Mr Jeroen Dijsselbloem, former President of the Eurogroup.

President Jean-Claude **Juncker** receives Mr Markus Wallner, *Landeshauptmann* of Vorarlberg.

President Jean-Claude **Juncker** receives Mr Andrej Babiš, Prime Minister of the Czech Republic.

Mr Frans **Timmermans** receives Mr Emiliano García-Page, President of the Castilla-La Mancha region and Mr Guillermo Fernández Vara, President of the Extremadura region.

Mr Frans **Timmermans** attends the opening of the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) 10th Anniversary Conference, in Brussels.

Mr Frans **Timmermans** receives Mr Andrej Babiš, Prime Minister of the Czech Republic.

Mr Andrus **Ansip** receives Mr Marcin Cichy, President of the Office of Electronic Communications (UKE).

Mr Maroš **Šefčovič** receives Ms Monique Goyens, Director-General of the European Consumer Organisation (BEUC).

Mr Maroš **Šefčovič** and Mr Miguel **Arias Cañete** deliver keynote speeches at the [Launch of the EU Energy Poverty Observatory \(EPOV\)](#), in Brussels.

Mr Valdis **Dombrovskis** receives Mr Kevin Cardiff, Member of the European Court of Auditors (ECA).

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** receives Mr Esa Halme, Region Mayor of the Council of Tampere Region, and Ms Liisa Laakso, Rector of Tampere University.

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** receives Mr Wilhelm Molterer, Managing Director of the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI).

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** receives a delegation from the European Retail Round Table.

Mr Karmenu **Vella** receives Mr Evangelos Apostolou, Minister for Rural Development and Food of Greece.

Mr Vytenis **Andriukaitis** receives representatives of the European Retail Round Table (ERRT) on Food chain initiative, Food Waste, and Animal Welfare Labelling Initiative in Germany.

Mr Vytenis **Andriukaitis** receives Mr Gérald Darmanin, Minister for Public Action and Accounts of France.

M. Pierre **Moscovici** à Paris, France (jusqu'à 30/01): rencontre M. Ramon Fernandez, Directeur général délégué d'Orange; Mme. Véronique Cayla, Présidente d'ARTE; M. Edouard Philippe, Premier ministre de la République française; et présente ses vœux 2018 aux forces vives de la République française.

Ms Věra **Jourová** delivers a keynote speech at the high-level Conference on Victim's Rights, in Brussels.

Ms Věra **Jourová** receives Mr Robert Gordon and Mr John Popolizio, Co-founders of Sovy.

Ms Věra **Jourová** receives Mr Andrej Babiš, Prime Minister of the Czech Republic.

Ms Corina **Crețu** in Bucharest, Romania (until 30/01): delivers the closing speech at the "European funds, absorption and stimulus. How we connect Romania in a centenary year?" conference; attends the award ceremony "Gold medal academic merit Virgil Madgearu" at Bucharest University of Economic Studies (ASE); and award ceremony for the "European Reporter and Blogger" contest.

Ms Margrethe **Vestager** in Berlin, Germany: meets Mr Wolfgang Schäuble, President of the Bundestag; participates in a [Citizens' dialogue](#) with pupils on "Your voice in Europe"; and receives an award from the Schwarzkopf Foundation.

Mr Carlos **Moedas** reçoit Mr Frédéric Saint Geours, Président du Conseil de Surveillance de la SNCF.

Mr Julian **King** participates in the official launch of the CrisisTech start-up programme, organised by the European Emergency Number Association (EENA), in Brussels.

Mr Julian **King** participates in a meeting with Member States' experts on victims' rights, in Brussels.

Mr Julian **King** receives Mr Joseph Garcia, Deputy Chief Minister of Gibraltar.

Ms Mariya **Gabriel** attends the trilogue on Audiovisual Media Services Directive.

Mardi 30 janvier 2018

President Jean-Claude **Juncker** receives Mr Radek Vondráček, President of the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Republic.

Mr Frans **Timmermans** meets Mr Winfried Kretschmann, Minister-President of Baden-Württemberg, in Brussels.

Mr Frans **Timmermans** receives Mr Radek Vondráček, President of the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Republic.

Mr Frans **Timmermans** receives Mr Ahmed Marcouch, Mayor of Arnhem (The Netherlands).

Mr Andrus **Ansip** receives receives Mr Radek Vondráček, President of the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Republic.

Mr Andrus **Ansip**, Ms Věra **Jourová** and MsMariya **Gabriel** attend a roundtable with business associations to discuss privacy shield, GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) and ePrivacy.

Mr Maroš **Šefčovič** in Zagreb, Croatia: on Energy Union Tour: meets energy stakeholders; delivers a keynote speech at “The New Croatian Energy Strategy” conference; participates in a [Citizens’ Dialogue](#) on “European Energy Union: what does it mean for you and for Croatia?”; meets Ms Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, President of Croatia; Mr Andrej Plenković, Prime Minister of Croatia; Ms Martina Dalić, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for the Economy, Enterprise and Small Business; and Mr Tomislav Čorić, Minister for Environment and Energy; and exchanges views with Members of the Parliament of Croatia.

Mr Valdis **Dombrovskis** delivers introductory remarks at the [public hearing on simpler withholding tax procedures for Europe](#), organised by the European Commission, in Brussels.

Mr Valdis **Dombrovskis** receives Mr Jānis Reirs, Minister for Welfare of Latvia.

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** receives representatives of AIM – European Brands Association.

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** receives a group of young Italian entrepreneurs.

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** delivers the keynote address at the [Back from Davos Conference](#), in Brussels.

Mr Johannes **Hahn** in Minsk, Belarus: on official visit.

Ms Cecilia **Malmström** and Mr Phil **Hogan** participate in the Mercosur Ministerial meeting, in Brussels.

Mr Miguel **Arias Cañete** receives Mr Jean-Louis Chaussade, CEO of SUEZ.

Mr Miguel **Arias Cañete** receives Mr Marcelino Oreja, CEO of Enagas, Mr Pascal De Buck, CEO and Chairman of the Executive Board of Fluxys, and Mr Carlo

Malacarne, Chairman at Snam.

Mr Karmenu **Vella** receives various Member States' ministers on Air Quality.

Mr Karmenu **Vella** receives Mr Jean-Louis Chaussade, CEO of SUEZ.

Mr Dimitris **Avramopoulos** receives Mr Yuriy Lutsenko, Prosecutor General of Ukraine.

Ms Marianne **Thyssen** attends a meeting with the Forum of Stakeholders of the European Solidarity Corp, in Brussels.

Ms Marianne **Thyssen** receives Mr Jānis Reirs, Minister for Welfare of Latvia.

Ms Marianne **Thyssen** receives representatives of the Norwegian Parliament.

M. Pierre **Moscovici** à Paris, France: rencontre M. Bruno Le Maire, Ministre de l'Economie et des Finances de la France; et M. Philippe Darmayan, Président d'ArcelorMittal France.

Ms Elżbieta **Bieńkowska** receives representatives of Rethink Plastic Alliance.

Ms Elżbieta **Bieńkowska** receives Mr Stefan Oschmann, President of the Board of European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPIA).

Ms Věra **Jourová** receives Mr Radek Vondráček, President of the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Republic.

Ms Věra **Jourová** delivers a keynote speech at the opening of Roma Holocaust Exhibition, at the European Commission, in Brussels.

Mr Tibor **Navracsics** gives an opening speech at the Sport Info Day for Erasmus and stakeholders, in Brussels.

Mr Tibor **Navracsics** delivers a keynote speech at the New Narrative for Europe closing event, in Brussels.

Ms Corina **Crețu** in Bucharest, Romania: meets Ms Viorica Dancilă, Prime Minister-designate of Romania.

Ms Margrethe **Vestager** receives Mr Per Espen Stoknes, Member of the Norwegian Green Party.

Mr Carlos **Moedas** attends a working breakfast on digital policy with Portuguese representatives of international telecom companies, in Brussels.

Mr Carlos **Moedas** receives Ms Daria Tataj, Chair of the High-Level Group of Research, Innovation and Science Policy Experts (RISE) and members of the Group.

Mr Carlos **Moedas** delivers a keynote speech at the European Internet Forum event, at the European Parliament, in Brussels.

Mr Julian **King** in The Hague, the Netherlands: meets Ms Kajsa Ollongren,

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for the Interior of the Netherlands, and Mr Ferdinand Grapperhaus, Minister for Justice and Security; and visits the Netherlands Passenger Name Records platform.

Ms Mariya **Gabriel** delivers a speech at the European Parliament hearing “Making Data Flow Free: Saying no to Data Protectionism within the EU”, in Brussels.

Ms Mariya **Gabriel** delivers a speech at a public event showcasing the European Animation Action Plan, at the European Parliament, in Brussels.

Mercredi 31 janvier 2018

College meeting

President Jean-Claude **Juncker** receives Mr Klaus Iohannis, President of Romania for a meeting with the College of Commissioners followed by a working lunch.

President Jean-Claude **Juncker** holds a joint press point with Mr Klaus Iohannis, President of Romania.

President Jean-Claude **Juncker** participates in a panel discussion with Mr Felipe González, former Prime Minister of Spain at the event “40 years of Spain in Europe: A common future” organised by El País.

President Jean-Claude **Juncker**, together with the College of Commissioners, participates at the launching of the European Year of Cultural Heritage in the Grand Place of Brussels.

President Jean-Claude **Juncker** receives Mr António Costa, Prime Minister of Portugal, for a working dinner.

Mr Frans **Timmermans** receives Mr Wim van de Donk, King’s Commissioner, Province of North Brabant (The Netherlands).

Mr Frans **Timmermans** receives Ms Nelleke Vedelaar, Chair of the Dutch Workers’ Party (PvdA).

Mr Frans **Timmermans** delivers a keynote speech at the [“Brussels Binder Launch Event: Improving Diversity in Policy Debates”](#), in Brussels.

Ms Federica **Mogherini** hosts the extraordinary session of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC), in Brussels.

Ms Federica **Mogherini** receives Mr Abdullah bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Arab Emirates.

Mr Valdis **Dombrovskis** in Dublin, Ireland (until 01/02): delivers closing keynote address at the [European Financial Forum](#); and meets Mr Paschal

Donohoe, Minister for Finance and Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform of Ireland.

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** receives Mr John Allan, Vice-President of the Confederation of British Industry and Chairman of Tesco PLC.

Mr Johannes **Hahn** participates in the extraordinary session of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) in Brussels.

Mr Johannes **Hahn** in Schwäbisch Hall, Germany: participates in the *2018 Weltmarktführergipfel*.

Mr Vytenis **Andriukaitis** participates in a meeting of the Scientific Advice Mechanism High-Level Group (SAM) of the European Commission, in Brussels.

Mr Phil **Hogan** delivers a speech at the [Information Day on Promotion of Agricultural Products](#), in Brussels.

Mr Tibor **Navracsics** attends a conference on promoting Christian heritage of Europe, organised by the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community, in Brussels.

Mr Tibor **Navracsics** delivers a keynote speech at the New Narrative for Europe closing event, in Brussels.

Mr Carlos **Moedas** receives members of the High-Level Group of Scientific Advisors of the EC Scientific Advice Mechanism to discuss on pesticides and plant protection products.

Mr Julian **King** delivers a speech at the ALDE seminar on "Child returnees: managing the return of European children from jihadist conflict zones", at the European Parliament, in Brussels.

Mr Mariya **Gabriel** receives Ms Nadia Tjahja, Steering Committee Member of the Youth Coalition on Internet Governance.

Ms Mariya **Gabriel** receives Mr Henrique Mota, President of the Federation of European Publishers.

Ms Mariya **Gabriel** receives Ms Véronique Desbrosses, General Manager of the European grouping of author societies (GESAC).

Jeudi 01 février 2018

01-02/02 Informal meeting of competitiveness ministers, in Sofia

President Jean-Claude **Juncker** receives Mr Hans Niessl, *Landeshauptmann* of Burgenland.

Mr Frans **Timmermans** meets Mr George Soros, Founder and Chairman of the Open Society Foundations, in Brussels.

Mr Frans **Timmermans** receives Mr Raymond Knops, State Secretary of the Netherlands for the Interior and Kingdom Relations.

Mr Frans **Timmermans** attends the [Annual Event 2018 of the Liberation Route Europe](#), in Brussels.

Mr Andrus **Ansip** receives State Secretary of the Netherlands for the Interior and Kingdom Relations.

Mr Maroš **Šefčovič** in Riga, Latvia (until 02/02): on Energy Union Tour: meets Mr Māris Kučinskis, Prime Minister of Latvia; Mr Arvils Ašeradens, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Economics; and Ms Dana Reizniece-Ozola, Minister for Finance.

Mr Valdis **Dombrovskis** in Dublin, Ireland: delivers an address to the Oireachtas' "Joint Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform, and Taoiseach"; participates in a roundtable meeting with social partners and stakeholders on the European Semester; and meets Ms Regina Doherty, Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection of Ireland.

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** in Mexico City, Mexico: meets Mr Ernesto Cordero, President of the Mexican Senate and Chairs of the Senate's International Relations, Economy and Europe Committees; Mr Luis Videgaray Caso, Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Mexico; Mr Ildefonso Guajardo, Secretary for Economy; and attends a working lunch with EU and Mexican business representatives.

Mr Neven **Mimica** in Dakar, Senegal (until 03/02): participates in the financing conference of the Global Partnership for Education; meets Ms Henrietta Fore, Executive Director of the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF); and Mr Macky Sall, President of Senegal.

Mr Vytenis **Andriukaitis** in Norway (until 02/02): meets Mr Bent Høie, Minister for Health and Care Services; Mr Jon Georg Dale, Minister for Agriculture and Food; and Mr Per Sandberg, Minister for Fisheries.

M. Pierre **Moscovici** prononce un discours lors de la 16ième Conférence annuel sur les services financières organisé par BNP Paribas, à Bruxelles.

M. Pierre **Moscovici** reçoit des élèves du lycée Angellier à Dunkerque Nord.

M. Pierre **Moscovici** reçoit M. Jay Carnay, Vice-président des Affaires Corporatives Mondiales chez Amazon Directeur général adjoint d'Amazon.

M. Pierre **Moscovici** rencontre des représentants d'*Informal EU Network of Independent Fiscal Institutions (EUNIFI)*.

M. Pierre **Moscovici** à Paris, France: prononce un discours sur "Comment l'Europe peut-elle protéger les citoyens" à une conférence organisé par l'Institut des hautes études de Défense nationale.

Mr Phil **Hogan** in Ireland (until 02/02): attends an event organised by Dublin Port; and speaks to the Association of European Journalists.

Ms Elżbieta **Bieńkowska** in Sofia, Bulgaria: attends the Informal meeting of competitiveness ministers.

Ms Věra **Jourová** in Prague, Czech Republic (until 02/02): delivers a keynote speech at the conference “Implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation in the daily practice of public administration”, organised by the Government office; attends roundtable of the Chamber of Commerce on Artificial Intelligence; meets representatives of the Committee for European Affairs of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament; and representatives of Prague Business Club.

Mr Tibor **Navracsics** receives Mr Andrea Agnelli, Chairman at the Executive Board of the European Club Association (ECA).

Mr Tibor **Navracsics** receives Mr Jay Carney, Senior Vice-President of Worldwide Corporate Affairs at Amazon.

Ms Margrethe **Vestager** receives Mr George Soros, Founder and Chairman of the Open Society Foundations.

Mr Carlos **Moedas** receives members of the High-Level Group of Scientific Advisors of the EC Scientific Advice Mechanism to discuss on pesticides and plant protection products.

Mr Julian **King** receives Mr Jes Staley, CEO of Barclays.

Mr Julian **King** receives Mr Jay Carney, Senior Vice-President of Worldwide Corporate Affairs at Amazon.

Mr Julian **King** in Scotland, the United Kingdom (until 02/02): meets Ms Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister of Scotland, and Mr Michael Matheson, Cabinet Secretary for Justice; and delivers a lecture at Stirling University.

Ms Mariya **Gabriel** receives Mr Phillip Malloch, Chairman of European Telecommunications Network Operators' Association (ETNO), and Ms Lise Fuhr, Director General of ETNO.

Ms Mariya **Gabriel** delivers a speech at a meeting reviewing the strategy for electronics value chains in Europe, in Brussels.

Ms Mariya **Gabriel** delivers a speech at the [2018 Open PM2 Conference](#)., in Brussels.

Ms Mariya **Gabriel** attends the opening concert of the Bulgarian presidency, in Brussels.

Vendredi 02 février 2018

Informal meeting of competitiveness ministers, in Sofia

President Jean-Claude **Juncker** receives Mr Dragan Čović, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr Maroš **Šefčovič** in Riga, Latvia: on Energy Union Tour: meets members of the European Affairs Committee of Saeima (Parliament of Latvia); participates in a [Citizens' dialogue](#); and visits the construction site of Kurzeme Ring

Project.

Mr Johannes **Hahn** in Washington D.C., the United States: on official visit.

Mr Miguel **Arias Cañete** in Madrid, Spain: delivers a keynote speech at KREAB; attends a working lunch with the Association of European Journalists; and meets Mr Borja Gumuzio, Director at Enertika Bilbao.

Mr Karmenu **Vella** delivers a speech at the conference on "[EU aquaculture – farmed in the EU regions](#)", in Brussels.

Mr Vytenis **Andriukaitis** in Norway: meets Mr Jon Georg Dale, Minister of Agriculture and Food; Norwegian participants of the European Reference Networks (ERN); attends a presentation on Norwegian priorities in the area of eHealth; and a presentation on Norway's contribution to Emergency Medical Teams.

M. Pierre **Moscovici** en Bretagne, France: visite les entreprises Technicolor et Excelcar; et participe à un [dialogue citoyens](#) et à un débat sur le sujet "Quel avenir pour la social-démocratie en Europe".

Mr Phil **Hogan** in Kilkenny, Ireland: delivers a keynote address at the opening of the [PAC Conference: "Smart Farming – Contractors and Farmers Working Together"](#); and meets representatives of the Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association (ICMSA).

Ms Věra **Jourová** in Prague, Czech Republic: meets Ms Marta Nováková, President of the Czech Confederation of Commerce and Tourism.

Ms Margrethe **Vestager** in Copenhagen, Denmark (until 03/02): meets Mr Brian Mikkelsen, Minister for Industry, Business and Financial Affairs of Denmark; delivers a speech at the international "Democratic debate in a complex world"; meets Mr Thomas Friberg and Mr Ludvig Wier, researchers at the Department of Economics of the University of Copenhagen; and Mr Gabriel Zucman, Assistant Professor of Economics at Berkeley, University of California.

Mr Carlos **Moedas** in Sofia, Bulgaria: attends the Informal meeting of competitiveness ministers.

Mr Julian **King** in Scotland, the United Kingdom: meets with Mr Iain Livingstone, Acting Chief Constable for the Scottish Police College; participates in a roundtable hosted by Mr James Wolffe, Lord Advocate; and in a cybersecurity roundtable at the Heriot Watt University; and visits the Scottish Crime Campus agencies.

Samedi 03 février 2018

Ms Margrethe **Vestager** in Copenhagen, Denmark: delivers a speech at the European Movement Denmark "Taskforce" seminar.

Prévisions du mois de février:

05/02 EU-Georgia Association Council

09/02 EU-Azerbaijan Cooperation Council

15/02 Education, Youth, Culture and Sports Council on education

15-16/02 Informal meeting of foreign affairs ministers, in Sofia

19/02 Agriculture and Fisheries Council

19/02 Eurogroup

20/02 Economic and Financial Affairs Council

23/02 European Council – Informal meeting of heads of state or government

26/02 Foreign Affairs Council

26/02 Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council on energy

26/02 EU-Kazakhstan Cooperation Council

27/02 General Affairs Council (Art. 50)

27/02 General Affairs Council

27/02 Informal meeting of foreign affairs ministers on trade, in Sofia

28/02 Informal meeting of education, youth, culture and sport ministers on culture, in Sofia

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[State aid: Commission opens in-depth investigation on Slovenia's new proposed commitments for Nova](#)

Ljubljanska Banka

The partial sale of Slovenia's shares in NLB is a key commitment to ensure NLB's long-term viability, on the basis of which the Commission was able to approve significant State aid of up to €2.32 billion to NLB [in December 2013](#). In [May 2017](#), Slovenia requested a gradual sale of its shares in NLB in two tranches, which the Commission approved. However, after putting the sale of NLB on hold [in June 2017](#), Slovenia did not complete the sale of a first tranche of its shares in NLB before the end of 2017, nor did Slovenia nominate a trustee to comply with the alternative commitment of divesting its Balkan subsidiaries. Since Slovenia failed to comply with its commitments, the aid granted to NLB in 2013 has not been lawfully implemented. Furthermore, the Commission has doubts that Slovenia's proposed alternative measures of December 2017 can be considered equivalent to Slovenia's original commitment.

For these reasons, the Commission has today opened an in-depth investigation. This gives Slovenian authorities and other interested third parties the opportunity to submit comments on the Commission's preliminary views, without prejudging its outcome.

Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *"Slovenia has proposed changes to its commitment to sell 75% of its shares in NLB and has missed a deadline under its existing commitment. It is the responsibility of Member States to comply with their commitments. At this stage, we have doubts that Slovenia's new proposal is equivalent to its original commitment, which is why we have opened an in-depth investigation. We have to make sure that NLB, which has received significant State aid, is viable in the long-run, also for Slovenian taxpayers. And we have to ensure equal treatment of all EU countries. We will continue to work constructively with the Slovenian authorities over the course of this investigation."*

The new proposed commitments

On 21 December 2017, the Slovenian authorities formally notified the Commission of a new commitment package to replace its existing commitment on the sale of 75% of its shares in NLB. This proposal foresees a significant extension of the sales deadline. It also proposes the appointment of an independent trustee that would exercise the State's shareholder rights until the sale has been completed. Finally, Slovenia proposes that all other existing commitments cease to apply as of 31 December 2017.

The Commission can only accept modifications to existing commitments by Member States and aided banks that were given to obtain approval for restructuring aid (such as the one leading to the 2013 Commission decision), if the new commitments can be considered equivalent to those originally provided. In particular, the new measures have to ensure the viability of NLB to the same extent as the original commitments and address potential additional competition distortions.

At this stage, the Commission has doubts whether the new Slovenian proposal can be considered equivalent to Slovenia's original commitment, for the following reasons:

- The Commission has doubts whether the appointment of an independent trustee can ensure NLB's viability to the same extent as a change in ownership. A change in ownership would allow the bank – at all its levels – to operate solely for commercial objectives, without there being competing short-term or long-term political objectives. In this context, it is important to recall that corporate governance issues were a main factor leading to NLB's past financial difficulty and the need for State aid in the first place. In this context, previous corporate governance measures proved to be rather ineffective. Furthermore, Slovenia was not able to appoint a trustee on 1 January 2018, notably because the selection process is time consuming and will inevitably require regulatory approvals. This means that there will be a time gap during which the bank will neither be partially sold on time as Slovenia had committed to, nor controlled by a trustee.
- The Commission's preliminary assessment indicates that a further delay of the sale unduly prolongs NLB's restructuring period. To ensure compliance with EU State aid rules and equal treatment of all EU countries, the restructuring period to ensure a bank's viability should not be longer than necessary.
- The Commission also considers at this stage that, since the sale of NLB is delayed further, certain other commitments – and in particular those linked to the restructuring period – should be prolonged as well. One example is a commitment to only grant loans if the bank can expect a minimum return on equity on those loans. This would help ensure viability and address potential additional competition distortions as a result of the delay.
- Finally, the Commission also has doubts whether the new proposal for State aid commitments sufficiently compensates for this delay in the restructuring process and will investigate further whether more behavioural and structural measures are required, to ensure the new commitments can be considered equivalent to those originally provided.

The opening of an in-depth investigation gives Slovenian authorities and other interested third parties the opportunity to submit comments on the Commission's preliminary views. This opening of an investigation does not prejudice its outcome. The Commission will carefully review the responses received before taking a final decision.

Background

NLB is the largest Slovenian banking group and had a balance sheet of €12 billion at the end of September 2017. It has received three State recapitalisations, one of €250 million [in March 2011](#), one of €383 million [in July 2012](#). Furthermore, NLB benefitted from a transfer of impaired assets to a State-owned bad bank with an implied aid element of €130 million. In [December 2013](#), the Commission approved under EU State aid rules €2.32 billion in State aid to NLB – equivalent to 20% of the bank's risk weighted assets as on December 2012.

The Commission took its 2013 decision on the basis of the bank's restructuring plan and associated commitments. As a crucial part of this restructuring plan, Slovenia committed to sell a 75%-1 share of NLB by the end of 2017, in order to ensure that the State would no longer influence NLB's day-to-day business. In [May 2017](#), the Commission accepted a request from Slovenia for a more gradual sale, whereby Slovenia committed to sell (at least) 50% of its shares by the end of 2017, and to sell the remainder of (at most) 25%-1 by the end of 2018.

More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the [public case register](#) under the case number [SA.33229](#).

[Euro banknote counterfeiting remains low in second half of 2017](#)

PRESS RELEASE

26 January 2018

- 363,000 counterfeit euro banknotes were withdrawn from circulation in the second half of 2017
- Around 85% of the counterfeits were €20 and €50 banknotes
- All euro banknotes can be verified using the "feel, look and tilt" method
- Euro banknotes continue to be a trusted and safe means of payment

Some 363,000 counterfeit euro banknotes were withdrawn from circulation in the second half of 2017, an increase of 9.7% when compared with the first half of 2017 and 2.8% more than in the second half of 2016. The likelihood of receiving a counterfeit is very slight. The number of counterfeits remains very low compared with the number of genuine banknotes in circulation, which has risen steadily, at rates above GDP growth, since they were introduced. In 2017, for instance, the number and value of [euro banknotes in circulation](#) grew by around 5.9% and 4.0% respectively. There are now well over 21 billion euro banknotes in circulation, with a total value of more than €1.1 trillion.

The half-yearly trend is shown below:

Period	2014/2	2015/1	2015/2	2016/1	2016/2	2017/1	2017/2
Number of counterfeits	507,000	454,000	445,000	331,000	353,000	331,000	363,000

Breakdown by denomination:

Denomination	€5	€10	€20	€50	€100	€200	€500
Percentage breakdown	1.0%	1.8%	35.2%	52.5%	6.5%	0.8%	2.2%

During the second half of 2017:

- the €20 and €50 notes continued to be the most counterfeited banknotes. Together, they accounted for around 85% of the counterfeits;
- most of the counterfeits (97.8%) were found in euro area countries. Around 1.7% were found in EU Member States outside the euro area and 0.5% were found in other parts of the world.

Check your banknotes!

Ever since the first series of euro banknotes was issued, the Eurosystem – i.e. the ECB and the 19 national central banks of the euro area – has encouraged people to be vigilant when receiving banknotes. You can check your notes by using the simple “feel, look and tilt” method described in “The Euro” section of the ECB’s website and on the websites of the national central banks. If you receive a suspect banknote, compare it directly with one you know is genuine. If your suspicions are confirmed, please contact the police or – depending on national practice – your national central bank or your own bank. The Eurosystem supports the law enforcement agencies in their fight against currency counterfeiting.

The Eurosystem communicates in various ways to help people distinguish between genuine and counterfeit notes, as well as to help professional cash handlers ensure that banknote-handling and processing machines can reliably identify and withdraw counterfeits from circulation.

The Eurosystem has a duty to safeguard the integrity of the euro banknotes and continue improving banknote technology. The second series of banknotes – the Europa series – is even more secure and is helping to maintain public confidence in the currency.

In the first half of 2019, the Eurosystem plans to issue simultaneously the new €100 and €200 banknotes, the last two denominations of the Europa series. The Eurosystem will conduct a campaign to inform the public and professional cash handlers about the introduction of these new banknotes, which both carry some new security features. Banknote equipment manufacturers and other suppliers will continue to receive support from the Eurosystem in adapting their machines and authentication devices to the new banknotes.

For media queries, please contact Eszter Miltényi-Torstensson, tel.: +49 69 1344 8034.

[Media contacts](#)

EESC hosts the launch of a Commission toolkit advising Member States on EU funding for migrant integration

On 24 January, the **European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)** and the **European Commission** jointly organised the launch of the Commission's new toolkit to help Member States to strengthen the integration of people with a migrant background by making more efficient and coordinated use of available EU funding instruments.

The Commission's [toolkit](#), or handbook, contains guidelines and practical recommendations for national and regional funding authorities, which should implement integration strategies and projects by tapping into various EU funds accessible under the current 2014-2020 budget period and combining them in a way that avoids overlaps and double financing and ensures synergies between multiple instruments.

In his opening remarks at the launch event, the **EESC President, Georges Dassis**, said: "A true democracy must allow civil society to express itself. The resources of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and of the European Social Fund (ESF) should be increased, especially in Member States where the number of refugees has exceeded the planned quota. This should be done to ensure better joint funding of integration measures intended for refugees."

The improved and enhanced use of funds should in turn foster the inclusion of over 20 million third-country nationals who legally reside in the European Union and account for 4.1% of the entire EU population, but who continue to face a plethora of challenges and discrimination when looking for a job or housing, or when trying to access education and basic services, such as healthcare or legal advice.

As many as 40% of third-country nationals are at risk of poverty, while 18% are unemployed and 19% leave school early, which is almost double the EU average, it was revealed at the launch event.

"The EU has to show humanism and solidarity. Citizens must be aware that the EU is working for their prosperity and liberty. Migrants aren't to be seen as a burden. If they are properly integrated, they will be a great boon, not only to our economies but to our society as a whole," said **Mr Dassis**.

The **Commissioner for Regional Policy, Corina Crețu**, said that Europe, which is facing unprecedented demographic challenges because of its rapidly ageing population, should recognise the potential of migrants and view their successful integration as an opportunity for its future.

"Migration is part of our history. Europe is built on migration and European societies will need migrants to address demographic decline and labour market

shortages,” warned **Ms Crețu**.

“Integration can only happen if it takes place on the ground, and local needs must be recognised. This is why the role of civil society is so important in this area,” she maintained.

In a video message shown at the launch, **Marianne Thyssen, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility**, said the current situation must change urgently: “Optimal use of funds plays an important role in supporting the integration of people with a migrant background.”

The Commission’s toolkit suggests action in five priority areas – or scenarios – for the sake of efficient long-term integration strategies tailored to meet the individual needs of beneficiaries, in line with national strategic policy frameworks. These areas are reception, education, employment, housing and access to public services.

Each scenario describes typical challenges facing migrants, identifies the objective of EU funds, and proposes specific measures that may be taken, matching them with one or more suitable EU funds.

There is currently a wide range of EU funds which Member States and regions may use to finance projects relating to the integration of migrants; so far, however, this has only been done to a limited extent and with inadequate coordination.

These funds, among others, include the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD), the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), and the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EASI), etc.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON EESC ACTIVITIES

The Committee, which has a Permanent Study Group on Immigration and Integration, has issued opinions and reports on the issue of migration.

In early 2016, the EESC was the first institution that launched fact-finding missions in 11 countries dealing with the refugee crisis.

On 6 and 7 March 2018 it will hold its fourth annual [European Migration Forum](#), jointly organized with the European Commission, which gathers over 200 non-governmental organisations and other groups working with migrants. The topic of this year’s forum is the inclusion of migrants into EU’s labour markets.

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