

[Press Release: EU Auditors conduct online survey as part of their on-going passenger rights audit](#)

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[Statement by Commissioner Crețu on the French authorities' request for aid from the European Solidarity Fund](#)

Within the first few hours of the devastating Irma and Maria hurricanes hitting the Caribbean, the European Union expressed its solidarity by mobilising its emergency response instruments and offering aid for reconstruction in the longer term with the support of European funds.

We have now received a request from the French authorities for aid from the EU Solidarity Fund to help with reconstruction on Guadeloupe and Saint Martin in particular; French Overseas Minister Annick Girardin will today meet my colleague, Pierre **Moscovici**, to hand him the request in person.

I welcome this request, since once analysed it will allow us to assist the people of Saint Martin by providing financial aid to help restore infrastructure and public services and to cover emergency and clean-up costs.

Europe's support will soon be put to work on the island. This is the promise I made to Daniel Gibbs, President of the Collectivity of Saint Martin, at the Conference on the Outermost Regions in October, where we presented our new strategy for a stronger partnership with these regions. This promise will be kept, since although these overseas regions may be geographically distant from the European continent, never have they been so close, so integrated, or so European.

However, we also realise that these regions are part of a special neighbourhood and that Saint Martin itself is one of a pair, since it shares its island, and therefore its destiny, with the Dutch territory of Sint Maarten.

Saint Martin and Sint Maarten will recover together. My colleague Commissioner **Mimica**, responsible for development, last week announced an investment package to support the reconstruction and economic revival of the Caribbean countries affected by the disaster, including Sint Maarten.

Furthermore, in December we will announce how our inter-regional cooperation

programmes, known by the name of Interreg, can also make a contribution, in particular the specific programme linking Saint Martin and Sint Maarten.

The European Union stands side-by-side with those who lost everything, including their dreams, in the disaster. They can count on the sincere and unfailing support of the EU for the reconstruction work and for the rebuilding of their lives.

For further information:

[EU Solidarity Fund](#)

[Press release – EU supports recovery and resilience in the Caribbean region with €300 million](#)

[Interreg Saint-Martin / Sint-Maarten Programme](#)

[Interreg Caribbean Programme](#)

[Press release: The outermost regions and the EU: a privileged, renewed and strengthened partnership](#)

[Europe's social dimension: President Juncker and Prime Minister Löfven present way forward after the Social Summit](#)

The [concluding report](#) published today will serve to frame the follow-up of the Summit, which starts with the December European Council. The discussions between Heads of State or Government at the Summit showed a lot of common ground on the need for Europe to be equipped with a strong and tangible social dimension. Going forward, tackling the challenges of labour markets, as well as focusing on both economic and social development will be essential. The Summit was a first milestone in the debate on the future of Europe as laid out in President Juncker's [Roadmap for a more United, Stronger and more Democratic Union](#), as well as the first stop [on the road to the meeting of EU Leaders in Sibiu on 9 May 2019](#).

President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude **Juncker**, said: *"The Social Summit was a landmark moment in the debate on the future of Europe. It sent a clear message that a stronger, more democratic and fairer Union must be built on fair jobs, inclusive growth and equal opportunities. With the proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, all EU institutions and leaders have made it our joint responsibility to stand up for the rights of our citizens*

in a fast-changing world. Now it is time to deliver. This starts with the December European Council. And you can be sure that the European Commission will continue to play a strong role in this endeavour, notably through the country specific recommendations in the European Semester process."

Prime Minister of Sweden, Stefan **Löfven**, added: *"It's time for a social Europe. We need to improve people's working and living conditions and at the same time increase our competitiveness in a global economy."*

At the Summit, participants reaffirmed their joint responsibility to tackle the challenges our labour markets face at all levels. The [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) was proclaimed at the Summit by the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission as an embodiment of this joint commitment. In the spirit of the Pillar, the participants at the Summit agreed that the need to promote convergence of our economies and societies should be met by efforts at all levels, including by the social partners. Further steps should be taken to improve access to labour markets to increase the number of men and women in employment, ensure fair employment and working conditions and support transitions between jobs by investing in people, while taking account of the diversity of social traditions across Europe.

More specifically, the Summit recalled the need to put people first through joint efforts at all levels, and to further develop the social dimension of the Union based on a shared commitment and established competences. As a first next step, the following should be taken forward:

In December, the European Council will follow up the Gothenburg Summit, addressing the social dimension in the discussion on the future of Europe. As co-host of the Social Summit, the European Commission will continue to play its part in these discussions. The European Semester of Policy Coordination should be the main framework for taking the discussions on the social dimension forward.

Background

European Heads of State or Government met in Gothenburg on 17 November 2017 with EU institutions, social partners, civil society, students and leading experts at the Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth, organised by the Swedish Government and the European Commission.

Eight months on from the 60th anniversary celebrations of the Treaties of Rome, the Summit constituted an extraordinary opportunity for leaders and stakeholders to discuss topics that touch on the everyday lives of citizens. As such, it contributed to the debate on the future of the EU, which was initiated at the [Bratislava Summit](#) and shaped by the European Commission's [White Paper](#) and the five subsequent reflection papers, notably the one on Europe's social dimension, presented earlier this year.

The Summit focused on how to boost inclusive growth, create fair jobs and foster equal opportunities for all men and women, while acknowledging common challenges and the wealth of experiences around Europe. Discussions took place in a unique, open and interactive format which resulted in different

perspectives being heard and different solutions debated, all taking account of common challenges and the specificities of national context and priorities. Live streams allowed citizens all over Europe to follow the discussions in real time. The Summit also witnessed the joint proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights by the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission. This sent a strong message of unity and political commitment.

For More Information

[Concluding report on the Social Summit](#)

[Website on the Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth](#)

[Programme and input notes for the three Summit working sessions on how to promote fair jobs and growth in the future](#)


[Commission factsheets on the Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth](#)

[Website on the European Pillar of Social Rights](#)

EASO Management Board meets to prepare activities for 2018

On 27 and 28 November 2017, the 26th meeting of the Management Board of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) took place in Valletta, Malta and approved the Agency's Work Programme for the upcoming year.

The Management Board meeting, which was Chaired by Mr. Wolfgang Taucher, devoted significant attention to preparations for the Agency's activities and operations in 2018.

 Within this context, the Management Board approved EASO's Single Programming Document for the 2018-2020 period, as well as the Work Programme and Budget for 2018. The Work Programme foresees a scaling-up in the levels of support that the Agency could provide to Member States, also bearing in mind that negotiations on the Regulation which will transform EASO into the European Union Agency for Asylum are at an advanced stage amongst co-legislators. The meeting also approved the 2018 External Communications and Stakeholder Plan, which has also been prepared to take into account the possibility of the transition in the coming year.

The Management Board also ratified a Hosting Arrangement with Italy following the signing of the arrangement on 22 November 2017 by the Director General for the EU at the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Giuseppe Buccino Grimaldi, and the Executive Director of EASO,

José Carreira. The Arrangement, which now needs to be ratified by the Italian Parliament, sets out the legal status of EASO's premises, staff and assets in Italy, therefore specifying the modalities under which the Agency can carry out its operations and facilitating its effectiveness. Talks are also ongoing on a similar arrangement with the Greek Government on EASO's operations in that country.

✘ Additionally, EASO provided the Management Board with the latest updates on asylum trends in the European Union, as well as the latest developments in its operations in Cyprus, Greece and Italy. Finally, delegates also discussed plans for cooperation with the European Union Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX) with regard to returns of migrants whose applications for international protection in EU Member States are rejected. Having a more effective return system is an important element of the EU's comprehensive approach to managing migration, and EASO stands ready to provide FRONTEX with any assistance it can.

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[ECB consults on a new euro unsecured overnight interest rate](#)

PRESS RELEASE

28 November 2017

- ECB calls for input on high level features of a new unsecured overnight interest rate
- Consultation runs until 17:00 CET on 12 January 2018

The European Central Bank (ECB) is today calling on market participants and all other interested parties to provide comments on the high level features of a new unsecured overnight interest rate. Through the consultation, the ECB aims to collect the views of stakeholders regarding the main features of the rate and its publication timing. The consultation document provides an overview of the factors supporting the ECB's decision to publish an unsecured overnight rate as well as the consultation questions that address design features of the rate.

The consultation follows the ECB's decision, announced on 21 September 2017, to develop a euro unsecured overnight interest rate based on data already available to the Eurosystem. The interest rate would complement existing benchmark rates produced by the private sector and serve as a backstop reference rate. This consultation is a first step. A second consultation related to the methodology will follow later in the process.

You are invited to submit responses to this consultation by 17:00 CET on 12 January 2018. Responses should be sent by email to ECB-overnight-rate@ecb.europa.eu. A high level summary of replies will be published.

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