

Roads to peace: EU supports reconnecting Eritrea and Ethiopia

During his visit, Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven **Mimica** meets with the President of Eritrea Isaias Afwerki to discuss the situation in the region and explore ways for the EU and Eritrea to step up political relations and dialogue on matters of concern to both sides.

On this occasion, Commissioner **Mimica** said: *“The European Union is committed to support Eritrea and Ethiopia in delivering their historic peace agreement, which ended twenty years of conflict. To back this, we are launching a €20 million programme to rebuild the roads connecting both countries. This will boost trade, consolidate stability, and have clear benefits for the citizens of both countries through the creation of sustainable growth and jobs.”*

The new project will be financed through the [EU Trust Fund for Africa](#) and through the United Nation’s Office for Project Services (UNOPS). It will rehabilitate road connections between the Ethiopian border and Eritrean ports to boost trade and create jobs. This is the first phase of a broader support to Eritrea, which is planned to scale up later this year.

This co-operation is part of the EU’s new dual track approach of strengthening political dialogue with Eritrea, notably encouraging political and economic reforms and improvement of human rights, as well as pursuing development cooperation to tackle root causes of poverty, and to reinforce the peace agreement and economic integration.

Background

In July last year, Eritrea and Ethiopia signed an historic peace agreement ending 20 years of conflict. This provides a major opportunity for economic development and stability in the region. The rapprochement has already yielded benefits for the Eritrean population, with re-opened borders, resumed communication and the reduction in the price of basic commodities.

One of the commitments of the peace agreement is that ‘transport, trade and communications links between the two countries will resume’. To achieve this requires rehabilitating the main arterial roads between the Ethiopian border and the Eritrean port of Massawa, which is the focus of this road project.

For more information

[Africa-Europe Alliance for sustainable investment and jobs](#)

[Progress factsheet – Africa-Europe Alliance for sustainable investment and jobs](#)

[Delegation of the European Union to Eritrea](#)

Daily News 08 / 02 / 2019

Juncker Plan now set to trigger around €380 billion in investments across Europe

The Juncker Plan is now expected to trigger around €380 billion in investments across Europe. Following this week's meeting of the European Investment Bank's (EIB) Board of Directors, operations approved under the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the heart of the Juncker Plan, represent a total financing volume of €71.4 billion. The EIB has now approved €53.6 billion in financing for projects under the EFSI's Infrastructure and Innovation Window. €17.8 billion in EFSI financing has been approved by the European Investment Fund (EIF) to support around 842,000 small and medium-sized businesses across Europe gain access to finance they need to innovate, expand and create new jobs. Today, the Juncker Plan is providing its backing to a €30 million investment by the European Investment Fund (EIF) in the INVL Baltic Sea Growth Fund. The investment will help to boost equity investments in small and medium-sized businesses with high growth potential operating in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Commenting on the transaction, Valdis **Dombrovskis**, Vice-President for the Euro and Social Dialogue, also in charge of Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union said: *"The INVL Baltic Sea Growth Fund will help Baltic businesses expand beyond their regional market, create value and ultimately, jobs. I congratulate the three Baltic States on being in the top ten of countries benefiting the most from the Juncker Plan, with almost €4 billion of EFSI-induced additional investments in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania."* The updated Juncker Plan figures are available [here](#). More information on the today's transaction is available [here](#). (For more information: Annika Breidhardt – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Enda McNamara – Tel.: +32 229 64976)

€12 million loan goes from the EU to Estonian fuel cell company

Today in Tallinn, the European Commission and the European Investment Bank (EIB) signed a €12 million loan with the Estonian company [Elcogen](#). This is the first loan in the Baltic countries under the [InnovFin programme](#). InnovFin is an EU-finance scheme for innovative companies, backed by the EU's research and innovation programme Horizon 2020. The financing will enable Elcogen to bring its highly efficient fuel cell technology to the market. Carlos **Moedas**, Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, said: *"This deal with Elcogen is a good example that the future of innovation is science-based. We are now making headway in the transition to a resource-efficient and climate-resilient future and we need to bring more ideas like these to market with the help of EU funding."* Fuel cells are a new generation of clean energy technology, which produce clean electricity more efficiently and safely. Fuel cells can produce "green" hydrogen, which will play an important role in the

future of energy storage. Fuel cell technology is therefore at the heart of a European and global energy strategy aimed to reduce the use of fossil fuels and limit CO2 emissions by 40% in 2030. A fully integrated Energy Union with a forward-looking climate change policy, guaranteeing security of supply of affordable and sustainable energy for all Europeans is one of the top priorities of the Juncker Commission. [Negotiations on the Clean energy for All Europeans package concluded last year](#), they are an essential element of completing the Energy Union. The loan agreed today will enable the company to invest in the research and development of fuel cells, to increase production volumes and to start its mass-manufacturing processes. This provides Elcogen with the opportunity to bring competitive fuel cell-based electricity and hydrogen solutions to the mass market and meet the growing demand from customers, including leading industrial companies in both Europe and Asia. At completion, the Elcogen plans to manufacture approximately 2 million cells per year, accounting for an electrical capacity of 50MW. More information is available [online](#). (For more information: Lucia Caudet – Tel.: + 32 229 56182; Victoria von Hammerstein – Tel.: +32 229 55040)

Médicaments falsifiés: une nouvelle réglementation pour une meilleure sécurité des patients

La falsification des médicaments constitue une menace sérieuse pour la santé publique dans l'Union européenne depuis trop longtemps. À partir de demain, une nouvelle réglementation s'appliquera aux dispositifs de sécurité pour les médicaments soumis à prescription vendus dans l'UE. Désormais, le fabricant devra apposer un code-barres en deux dimensions et un dispositif antieffraction sur l'emballage des médicaments soumis à prescription. Les pharmacies, y compris les pharmacies en ligne, et les hôpitaux devront vérifier l'authenticité des médicaments avant de dispenser ceux-ci aux patients. La mise en œuvre de la [directive sur les médicaments falsifiés](#), adoptée en 2011, qui a pour objet de garantir la sécurité et la qualité des médicaments vendus dans l'UE, est ainsi parachevée. *«Le 9 février 2019, un nouveau jalon sera franchi en faveur de la sécurité des patients dans l'ensemble de l'UE. Près de sept ans après son adoption, la directive sur les médicaments falsifiés sera complètement mise en œuvre grâce à l'instauration de la vérification de bout en bout et de l'apposition de dispositifs de sécurité sur les médicaments soumis à prescription. En d'autres termes, chaque pharmacie ou hôpital de l'UE devra disposer d'un système qui rendra la détection des médicaments falsifiés plus facile et plus efficace. Si certains travaux supplémentaires devront encore être réalisés après le lancement de ce nouveau système pour garantir son bon fonctionnement dans l'ensemble de l'UE, j'ose affirmer que nous apportons un nouveau filet de sécurité aux citoyens afin de les protéger contre les dangers de médicaments non autorisés, inefficaces ou dangereux»*, a déclaré M. **Andriukaitis**, le commissaire en charge de la santé et la sécurité alimentaire. Le [communiqué de presse](#) et [MEMO](#) sont à votre disposition en ligne. (Pour plus d'informations: Anca Paduraru – Tél.: +32 229 91269; Aikaterini Apostola – Tél.: +32 229 87624)

Single Market: Commission welcomes agreement on its proposal to strengthen controls of products

The Commission welcomes the provisional agreement on the [Regulation on Market Surveillance and Compliance](#) reached yesterday by the European Parliament and Council. This Regulation will strengthen controls by national authorities and customs officers to improve checks on products on the EU market and remove unsafe and illegal products. Commissioner Elżbieta **Bieńkowska**, responsible for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs said: *“Whether it is toys, electronics, cars or breast implants – faulty products have no place in the EU. The Single Market is built on trust. With these new EU rules we are protecting consumers and honest businesses against rogue traders that try to sell unsafe products in Europe.”* Actions against unsafe or illegal products can only be effective when authorities work together and share information. The new Regulation will therefore intensify sharing of information about illegal products and ongoing investigations so that authorities can take effective and rapid action against illegal products. It will also help national authorities to improve checks on products entering the EU market and strengthen controls at the external borders. The Regulation is part of a package of measures on safe products in the Single Market proposed by the Commission in [December 2017](#), and follows the November 2018 Communication [“The Single Market: Europe’s best asset in a changing world”](#) which called on Member States to renew their political commitment to the Single Market. Once formally approved by the European Parliament and Council, the Regulation will start to apply in 2021. *(For more information: Lucia Caudet – Tel.: + 32 229 56182; Mirna Talko – Tel.: +32 229 87278; Victoria von Hammerstein – Tel.: +32 229 55040)*

Brexit preparedness: provisional agreement on realigning the North Sea–Mediterranean Corridor and investing in the adaptation of transport infrastructure for security and border checks

The European Parliament and the Council yesterday reached a provisional agreement on the European Commission’s proposal to adjust alignment of the [North Sea – Mediterranean Corridor](#) – one of the nine core corridors of the [Trans-European Transport \(TEN-T\) Network](#). On the one hand, the Regulation adds to the core network new maritime links between the Irish core ports of Dublin, Cork and Shannon Foynes and core network ports in France (Le Havre, Calais, Dunkirk), Belgium (Zeebrugge, Antwerp, Gent) and the Netherlands (Terneuzen, Rotterdam, Amsterdam), taking into account the withdrawal of the United Kingdom. On the other hand, the Regulation adds a new funding priority to the [Connecting Europe Facility \(CEF\)](#): adapting transport infrastructure for security and external border check purposes. This priority will be taken into account by the Commission when proposing the next CEF work programme. The Commission will carry out an assessment of the consequences of Brexit on transport connections and traffic flows. These measures will only apply in case the United Kingdom withdraws from the EU without an agreement. *(For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Stephan Meder – Tel.: +32 229 13917)*

Maritime transport: Commission welcomes provisional agreement on the European Maritime Single Window environment

The Commission welcomes yesterday's provisional agreement by the co-legislators on its [proposal to establish a European Maritime Single Window environment](#), which replaces and improves the current Reporting Formalities Directive. The new, fully harmonised reporting environment for ships will significantly reduce the administrative burden on the maritime sector, improving its competitiveness. The Regulation will improve interoperability between economic operators and authorities, facilitating the exchange of data and avoiding duplications and requesting the same information twice. The provisional agreement will have to be formally approved by the European Parliament and the Council, before it can enter into force. *(For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Stephan Meder – Tel.: +32 229 13917)*

Roads to peace: EU supports reconnecting Eritrea and Ethiopia

Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development Neven **Mimica** is visiting Eritrea today, where he launches an initial €20 million project to rebuild the road connection between the Ethiopian border and Eritrean ports. During his visit, Commissioner **Mimica** meets with the President of Eritrea Isaias Afwerki to discuss the situation in the region and explore ways for the EU and Eritrea to step up political relations and dialogue on matters of concern to both sides. On this occasion, Commissioner **Mimica** said: *"The European Union is committed to support Eritrea and Ethiopia in delivering their historic peace agreement, which ended twenty years of conflict. To back this, we are launching a €20 million programme to rebuild the roads connecting both countries. This will boost trade, consolidate stability, and have clear benefits for the citizens of both countries through the creation of sustainable growth and jobs."* The new project will be financed through the [EU Trust Fund for Africa](#) and through the United Nations' Office for Project Services (UNOPS). It will rehabilitate road connections between the Ethiopian border and Eritrean ports to boost trade and create jobs. This is the first phase of a broader support to Eritrea, which is planned to scale up later this year. Read the full press release [here](#). *(For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz De Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Christina Wunder – Tel.: +32 229 92256)*

Commissioner Gabriel in Berlin to participate in the Berlinale International Film Festival supported by €1.7 million in EU funds

This year's [Berlinale film festival](#) and its parallel competitions, Panorama, Generation and Berlinale Special, will feature 24 films co-financed by MEDIA, the EU's support programme for the European audiovisual industry, with more than €1.7 million. The five MEDIA-supported films competing this year to win the Golden Bear are [Gospod postoi, imeto i' e Petrunija \(God exists, her name is Petrunija\)](#) by Teona Strugar Mitevska (Macedonia/Belgium/Slovenia/Croatia/France); [Elisa y Marcela](#) by Isabel Coixet (Spain); [Gareth Jones \(Mr. Jones\)](#) by Agnieszka Holland (Poland/United Kingdom/Ukraine); [Ut og stjæle hester \(Out Stealing Horses\)](#) by Hans Petter

Moland (Norway/ Sweden/Denmark) and [The kindness of strangers](#) by Lone Scherfig (Denmark / Canada/Sweden/France/Germany). A new edition of the [European Film Forum](#) will take place at the same time, focusing on subtitling and dubbing as essential components for the circulation of European works. Ahead of her opening speech [on Monday 11 February](#), Mariya **Gabriel**, the Commissioner for the Digital Economy and Society, said: *“I am very proud that Media-supported movies are again very well represented in the Berlinale International Film Festival. The programme MEDIA has consistently supported cultural and linguistic diversity and has helped develop a ‘European film’ genre that never existed before. It has also contributed to accomplish our policy objectives towards a Digital Single Market. MEDIA is a jewel and we will continue to ensure the programme is fit for the challenges we face ahead”*. The Commissioner will also organise a roundtable on gender in the future MEDIA programme, where she will discuss with key stakeholders the necessary actions to improve gender balance in the European films production sector. In the margins of the festival, and on the initiative of the German Safer Internet Centre, the Commissioner will visit a German school with the award-winning filmmaker Wim Wenders, to discuss online safety issues with the pupils. More information is available online [here](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: +32 229 56184)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini to visit Horn of Africa

High Representative/Vice-President Federica **Mogherini** is travelling tomorrow on a landmark visit to countries in the Horn of Africa region from 9 to 13 February. Federica **Mogherini** will begin her visit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia where the African Union Summit is taking place and she will meet several Heads of State or Government in the margins. In Ethiopia she is due to meet President Shale Work Zwede and Prime Minister Dr Abiy Ahmed, among other members of the Government, to discuss further strengthening the EU-Ethiopia partnership. The High Representative/Vice-President will also visit EU funded projects supporting the International Organisation for Migration together with Director General Antonio Vitorino. Continuing her visit in the Horn of Africa, Federica **Mogherini** will visit Kenya, where she is due to meet President Kenyatta and members of the Kenyan Government. In Kenya, she will also launch the cross border programme, meet with representatives from the UN Habitat and UNEP, youth and civil society groups as well as inaugurating the new EU Delegation offices in Nairobi. She will conclude her visit by travelling to Djibouti to meet President Ismail Omar Guelleh and other members of the Government, as well as visiting Member States’ military bases operating the [EU’s ATALANTA maritime security mission](#). Press points during the mission will be made available on [EBS](#). The EU is working actively to strengthen its partnership with the region which shares many common interests with the European Union, from tackling climate change to boosting investment, to better managing migration and creating opportunities for youth. The EU is a key partner for the region in many areas, in particular security with the three Common Security and Defence Policy missions: [EUNAVFOR Atalanta](#), [EUTM Somalia](#) and [EUCAP Somalia](#). The EU is also a key supporter of

Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the regional body in the Horn of Africa. *(For more information: Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)*

Commissioner Crețu visits Cohesion projects in Italy and opens tram line in Florence

Today and Monday, Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina **Crețu** will be in Florence and surroundings to visit Cohesion projects in Italy. This Friday the Commissioner meets Enrico Rossi, President of Tuscany region, for an exchange on the benefits of EU-funded programmes. She will visit projects in Lucca and surroundings, amongst them the enterprise Futura, which received EU support to upgrade its paper manufacturing technologies. Next Monday, Commissioner **Crețu** and the President of Italy, Sergio Mattarella, will inaugurate Florence's second tram line "T2 Vespucci" which is going to connect the central station and the airport, supported by the European Regional Development Fund with €26 million. This considerably improves the public transport network for the benefits of citizens and visitors. *(For more information: Christian Spahr – Tel.: +32 2 295 00 55; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)*

[CALENDAR](#) – Commissioner's weekly activities

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

ESAs publish recommendations on changes to the PRIIPs Key Information Document

□The European Supervisory Authorities (ESAs) today published their final [recommendations](#) following a [consultation](#) on targeted amendments to the Delegated Regulation covering the rules for the Key Information Document (KID) for Packaged Retail and Insurance-based Investment Products (PRIIPs).

Having taken into account the feedback received and considering in particular the implications of a possible decision by the European Co-legislators to defer the application of the KID by certain types of investment funds beyond 2020, the ESAs decided the following:

- To not propose targeted amendments at this stage
- To initiate a more comprehensive revision of the PRIIPs Delegated Regulation to be undertaken in the course of 2019, including to launch a consultation on the draft Regulatory Technical Standards

Furthermore, the ESAs issued a [Supervisory Statement](#) regarding the performance scenarios to promote consistent approaches and improve the protection of retail investors prior to the conclusion of the review. The ESAs consider that there is a risk that retail investors are provided with inappropriate expectations about the possible returns they may receive. Therefore, the ESAs recommend PRIIP manufacturers to include a warning in the KID to ensure that retail investors are fully aware of the limitations of the figures provided in the performance scenarios.

Background

The Key Information Document (KID) for Packaged Retail and Insurance-based Investment Products (PRIIPs) is a mandatory, three-page A4 information document to be provided to consumers before purchasing a PRIIP. PRIIPs include for example funds, structured products, unit-linked and with-profits life insurance contracts, and structured deposits.

On 1 October 2018, the **ESAs wrote a [letter to the European Commission](#)** expressing their concerns regarding the possibility of duplicating information requirements for investment funds from 1 January 2020 and the importance of legislative changes to avoid such a situation, including a targeted review of the PRIIPs Delegated Regulation.

Subsequently, on 8 November 2018 the **ESAs published a [consultation paper proposing targeted amendments](#)** that would allow the KID to be applied to all types of investment funds and to address key issues that have arisen since the implementation of the KID, in particular concerning the performance scenarios.

In parallel with the ESAs' work, the **European co-legislators** also initiated discussions on legislative changes relating to the application of the KID by certain investment funds and the timing of a review of PRIIPs. When publishing the consultation paper, ESAs stated that they would take into account the latest information regarding these political discussions when deciding upon their final proposals.

The **Supervisory Statement** is issued under Article 29(2) of the ESAs' Regulations as a convergence tool to promote common supervisory approaches and practices.

The PRIIPs Regulation (No 1286/2014) defines the **main rules and principles** for KIDs. It is supplemented by a Delegated Regulation (2017/653) specifying the presentation and contents of the KID, which is based on Regulatory Technical Standards that the ESAs were mandated to develop.

Performance scenarios are included in the Section of the KID titled "What are the risks and what could I get in return?" They indicate how the investment could perform under various different scenarios.

Transparent and predictable working conditions: Commission welcomes the provisional agreement reached today

Today, the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council have reached a provisional agreement on the European Commission's proposal for a new Directive to create more transparent and predictable working conditions, in particular for workers in non-standard forms of employment. Marianne **Thyssen**, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility welcomed the agreement with the following statement:

"Today we have reached an agreement that will provide 200 million workers in Europe with more transparent and predictable working conditions. We are modernising European labour law and adjusting it to the new world of work. This is a major milestone to make the European Pillar of Social Rights a reality for our citizens. Today's economy needs flexible labour contracts, but flexibility must be combined with minimum protection. With the agreement that is on the table today, we will offer those who are in flexible employment relations more transparency and predictability, especially the most vulnerable ones. Up to three million workers active in new forms of work, like workers on zero-hour contracts and domestic workers, will be covered which was not the case until now. Workers will benefit from more transparency by receiving key information on their working conditions from the start, and they will benefit from new rights leading to more predictable working conditions.

I would like to thank rapporteur Enrique Calvet Chambon and the shadow rapporteurs who negotiated on behalf of the European Parliament, and the Romanian Presidency on behalf of the Council. This agreement should now be confirmed quickly so that it can have a concrete, tangible, and positive effect on workers across the EU. This is what social Europe is all about."

Next steps

This provisional agreement now has to be formally adopted by both the European Parliament and the Council.

Background

The Commission's proposal for a Directive on transparent and predictable working conditions is an update of the so-called "Written Statement Directive". This Directive dates from 1991, but since then, the world of work has evolved significantly. Demographic change has resulted in a greater diversity of the working population, digitalisation has facilitated the creation of new forms of employment and new and more flexible employment relationships have emerged. In recent years, 1 in 4 employment contracts

concerned atypical forms of employment, meaning all jobs which are not full time and open-ended, ranging from 'classical' part-time work to on-demand work without guaranteed working hours.

In an effort to reinforce Europe's social dimension, and as part of the roll-out of the European Pillar of Social Rights, the Commission proposed the initiative on transparent and predictable working conditions in December 2017. Its aim is to broaden and modernise existing obligations to inform each worker of his or her working conditions. It also intends to create new minimum standards to ensure that all workers, including those on atypical contracts, benefit from more transparency and predictability as regards their working conditions.

For more information

[Factsheet: Towards transparent and predictable working conditions](#)

Press release: [Commission proposes to improve transparency and predictability of working conditions](#)

[Factsheet: Social Priorities under the Juncker Commission](#)

Age heavily impacting quality of life for older people in Eastern Europe

Age plays an important role in life: whether it's starting school, taking that first alcoholic drink, voting in elections or drawing the pension. Such milestones are grounded in policy that is developed and operationalised through the prism of age. However, quality of life across age groups in Europe is showing both an east-west and north-south divide, with social exclusion reaching worrying levels in the Balkan countries.

This Policy Brief looks at age-related inequalities in the quality of life, examining differences across six age groups, seven EU country clusters and in five dimensions of quality of life namely difficulties making ends meet, political participation in society, perceived social exclusion, mental well-being and life satisfaction. Based on data from Eurofound's European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS), the Brief examines change between 2011 – 2016 thereby capturing the impact of the recession, effects on different age groups and the way labour markets and the welfare state have mitigated the effects of the crisis.

In general, the older generations enjoy better quality of life than younger age groups in western Europe, while the younger generations are better off in eastern Europe. Looking more closely, however, it becomes apparent that the differences between the Member States run deep and wide.

Many older people in eastern Europe, who spent most of their lives under communist rule, are not doing well and the situation of the oldest old, especially in Bulgaria and Romania, seems particularly disadvantaged in terms of social exclusion and mental health. Equally, the cost of housing in many Member States is proving especially hard on young people who are struggling to even get a foot on the property ladder.

The EU has sought to address inequalities through such initiatives as the European Pillar of Social Rights and, more recently, by highlighting the need for intergenerational fairness in its annual report on Employment and Social Development in Europe. The renewal of a generational contract together with welfare systems that focus on both traditional life stages as well as new social risks could help to put the EU back on a path towards greater social solidarity.

© Monkey Business Images/Shutterstock