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EU integration process in CEE countries

Ukraine: Council approves €1.8bn in loans

The Council adopted on 25 March 2015 a decision providing a maximum of €1,8 billion in further macro-financial assistance to Ukraine. The aim is to support economic stabilisation of the country and a substantive reform agenda.

<https://eu2015.lv/news/media-releases/1175-ukraine-council-approves-1-8bn-in-loans>

Montenegro and EU open two more negotiating chapters in accession process

EU and Montenegrin negotiators agreed on 30 March 2015 to open two chapters in the process of negotiating Montenegro's accession to the European Union.

<https://eu2015.lv/news/media-releases/1153-montenegro-and-eu-open-two-more-negotiating-chapters-in-accession-process>

Adoption of the 2014 European Neighbourhood Reports

In a set of annual reports adopted today, the European Commission and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy assessed the implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) with the 16 partner countries in the East and the South and made recommendations for the year ahead.

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4677_en.htm?locale=en

ENP Country Progress Report 2014 – Republic of Moldova

The 2015 ENP package "Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2014" consists of a joint Communication and a set of country specific and regional reports. The report on the Republic of Moldova underlines key developments and reform efforts in 2014 and makes recommendations for the year to come.

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-4682_en.htm?locale=en

European Neighbourhood Policy Country Progress Report 2014 – Armenia

The EU and Armenia have recently successfully completed their joint scoping exercise for a future legal agreement compatible with Armenia's new international obligations after the country became a member of the Eurasian Economic Union.

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-4689_en.htm?locale=en

Azerbaijan - Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2014

The EU-Azerbaijan relations developed further in 2014: bilateral agreements entered into force: the Visa Facilitation Agreement and the Readmission Agreement, and the Protocol on Azerbaijan's participation in EU programmes and agencies, which can help further deepening bilateral relations.

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-4688_en.htm?locale=en

Pros, advantages and obligations resulting from EU membership

Council summit: MEPs debate energy union and situation in Greece

The energy union, Greece and how to boost the economy were all hotly debated during a discussion on last week's Council summit during the plenary session on 25

	<p>March. MEPs welcomed plans for closer collaboration on energy issues, but also called attention to the situation in Greece. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20150324STO37304/html/Council-summit-MEPs-debate-energy-union-and-situation-in-Greece</p>
<p>General development of the EU</p>	<p>EU budget management: innovation agency and ITER project fail 2013 discharge test The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and four EU/private new-technology partnerships must do more to show that their EU funds for 2013 were well spent before the European Parliament approves their accounts, said Budgetary Control Committee MEPs on Monday. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20150323IPR36410/html/EU-budget-management-innovation-agency-and-ITER-project-fail-2013-discharge-test</p>
<p>Introduction to EU institutions and their Functioning</p>	<p>EP this week: Ukraine, US trade agreement, EU relations with other countries MEPs vote on financial aid to Ukraine this week and debate the EU-US free trade agreement, also known as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). Meanwhile EP delegations visit Washington to debate data protection with US government representatives and also Yerevan in Armenia to discuss EU relations with countries near its eastern border. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20150316STO34703/html/EP-this-week-Ukraine-US-trade-agreement-EU-relations-with-other-countries</p> <p>Schulz: China-EU relations deserve highest level of support and ambition “China-EU relations are 40 years old and deserve the highest level of support and ambition,” tweeted EP President Martin Schulz after meeting Chinese president Xi Jinping in Beijing. Schulz is in China until Wednesday for a three-day official visit to discuss furthering cooperation between the EU and China, especially at the parliamentary level. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20150317STO35011/html/Schulz-China-EU-relations-deserve-highest-level-of-support-and-ambition</p> <p>Quantitative easing: what is it and what does the ECB want to achieve with it? The European Central Bank (ECB) started at the beginning of the month with its controversial quantitative easing programme, buying government bonds with the goal of lowering interest rates, increasing inflation and kick-starting economic growth. ECB president Mario Draghi meets the EP's economic affairs committee today to discuss the initiative. Read on to find out more about how it works and watch the debate live on our website. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20150320STO36308/html/Quantitative-easing-what-is-it-and-what-does-the-ECB-want-to-achieve-with-it</p> <p>Moscovici debate: MEPs make the case for fairer taxation EU member states must be more transparent about their national tax rulings, because unfair tax competition distorts competition among companies and could lead to a “race to the bottom”, warned many MEPs in Wednesday’s debate with taxation Commissioner Pierre Moscovici. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20150324IPR37336/html/Moscovici-debate-MEPs-make-the-case-for-fairer-taxation</p>

<p>Introduction to EU law</p>	<p>Factsheet on EU security measures in civil airliners On 27 March 2015, EASA (the European Air Safety Agency) has issued a recommendation for airlines to observe the “four-eye-rule” in the cockpit; stipulating that in the case of the Captain or First Officer leaving the cockpit, a member of the crew should be present in the cockpit with the remaining pilot. For more information: EASA Safety Information Bulletin SIB No. 2015-04 issued 27 March 2015 on authorised persons in the flight crew compartment. http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release MEMO-15-4724_en.htm?locale=en</p> <p>Countries should harmonise methods of investigation in fight against cybercrime In March the European Police College (CEPOL) conference „Cybercrime – Strategic level" took place in Jūrmala. The aim of the conference was to improve cooperation and harmonize the investigative methods among law enforcement authorities of the EU Member States, as well as to improve public and private partnership and cooperation with the Eastern Partnership countries and EU candidate countries for combat against cybercrime. https://eu2015.lv/news/media-releases/1139-countries-should-harmonise-methods-of-investigation-in-fight-against-cybercrime</p> <p>EU considering plan to outsource Mediterranean migrant patrols to Africa The EU is considering plans to outsource its patrols of the Mediterranean to countries such as Egypt and Tunisia in order to try to reduce the high numbers of desperate illegal migrants risking their lives to reach European shores. Once rescued, the migrants would be taken to the ports of the country saving them or sent back to their countries of origin. http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/20/eu-italian-proposals-outsource-mediterranean-migrant-patrol-africa</p>
<p>Decentralised management of EU funds</p>	<p>State aid: Commission orders Romania to recover incompatible state aid granted in compensation for abolished investment aid scheme Following an in-depth investigation, the European Commission has concluded that compensation paid by Romania to two Swedish investors for an abolished investment aid scheme breaches EU state aid rules. The beneficiaries have to pay back all amounts already received, which are equivalent to those granted by the abolished aid scheme. http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release IP-15-4725_en.htm?locale=en</p> <p>Council approves €1.8bn in loans to Ukraine The Council adopted on 25 March 2015 a decision providing a maximum of €1,8 billion in further macro-financial assistance to Ukraine. The aim is to support economic stabilisation of the country and a substantive reform agenda, contributing to its balance-of-payments needs as identified by the IMF. https://eu2015.lv/news/media-releases/1175-ukraine-council-approves-1-8bn-in-loans</p> <p>Auditors want more control over EU investment fund The European Court of Auditors has called on the European Commission to give it a greater supervisory role over the €315 billion investment fund launched in December, in order to protect taxpayers from excessive risk. http://www.europeanvoice.com/article/auditors-want-more-control-over-eu-investment-fund/</p>
<p>Multi-level governance</p>	<p>Cities and regions involvement key to support "smart homecare" & respond to</p>

	<p>demographic challenges CoR president Markku Markkula has emphasised in Paris the role of local and regional authorities in addressing Europe's demographic challenges and ageing population. The conference was organised by the CARER+ project which aims to professionalise domiciliary care workers and caregivers through the use of ICTs ("Smart Homecare"). The event brought together 250 experts and researchers in the field of homecare and social services, representatives of care workers and policy makers from all over Europe to picture how the use of new technologies in homecare can improve the well-being of the elderly people. http://cor.europa.eu/en/news/Pages/Smart-Homecare-conference-Paris.aspx</p> <p>Economic crisis - final report Final report of ECR2 - economic crisis: resilience of regions. The focus of this report is on the recent economic crisis of 2007-09. This acted as a major shock across the economies of the ESPON area, with severe, and often longlasting, consequences. http://www.espon.eu/main/menu_press/</p> <p>Scenarios – final report Final report of ET2050 - territorial scenarios and visions for Europe. Policymakers in the field of territorial development and cohesion are in need of a future oriented and integrated vision on the development of the European territory. Therefore the ESPON Programme started a territorial vision-building process following a participatory process and involving relevant stakeholders at European, national and regional level. http://www.espon.eu/main/menu_projects/menu_appliedresearch/et2050.htm !</p>
<p>Introduction to different negotiation chapters Chapter 1: Free movement of goods Chapter 2: Freedom of movement for workers Chapter 3: Right of establishment and freedom to provide services Chapter 4: Free movement of capital Chapter 5: Public procurement Chapter 6: Company Law Chapter 7: Intellectual property law Chapter 8: Competition Chapter 9: Financial services Chapter 10: Information society and media Chapter 11: Agriculture and rural development Chapter 12: Food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary policy Chapter 13: Fisheries Chapter 14: Transport policy Chapter 15: Energy Chapter 16: Taxation Chapter 17: Economic and monetary policy Chapter 18: Statistics Chapter 19: Social policy and employment</p>	<p>Internal market MEPs green light life-saving emergency call system for cars All new car models sold in the EU are to be equipped with eCall technology from 31 March 2018 under draft EU rules endorsed by Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee MEPs on Tuesday. This technology uses the 112 emergency number to call rescue services automatically, enabling them to reach crash scenes faster and thus save lives and reduce the severity of injuries. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20150316IPR34756/html/Internal-market-MEPs-green-light-life-saving-emergency-call-system-for-cars</p> <p>What's in the TTIP for Europeans? Hearing and debate with Commissioner Malmström International Trade Committee MEPs will focus on Investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) and investment protection rules under the proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) in a debate with trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström on Wednesday, starting at 15:00. They will then hold a public hearing on the TTIP's potential benefits. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20150317IPR35107/html/What's-in-the-TTIP-for-Europeans-Hearing-and-debate-with-Commissioner-Malmstr%C3%B6m</p> <p>European Parliament approves €1.8 billion EU loan to Ukraine EU plans to lend Ukraine €1.8 billion to help plug its short-term balance of payments gap were approved by MEPs on Wednesday. The EU will borrow the money externally and lend it on to Ukraine with the same interest rate. The disbursement will be tied to Ukraine pledging structural reforms to tackle problems that contributed to the current crisis. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20150324IPR37363/html/European-Parliament-approves-</p>

<p>Chapter 20: Enterprise and industrial policy</p> <p>Chapter 21: Trans-European networks</p> <p>Chapter 22: Regional policy and coordination of structural instruments</p> <p>Chapter 23: Judiciary and fundamental rights</p> <p>Chapter 24: Justice, freedom and security</p> <p>Chapter 25: Research and development</p> <p>Chapter 26: Education and culture</p> <p>Chapter 27: Environment</p> <p>Chapter 28: Consumer and health protection</p> <p>Chapter 29: Customs union</p> <p>Chapter 30: External relations</p> <p>Chapter 31: Foreign, security and defence policy</p> <p>Chapter 32: Financial control</p> <p>Chapter 33: Financial and budgetary provisions</p>	<p>%E2%82%AC1.8-billion-EU-loan-to-Ukraine</p> <p>Opening: minute’s silence for victims of Germanwings air crash and Tunis attacks The session opened with a minute’s silence for victims of the Germanwings air crash in the French Alps on 24 March and the terrorist attack on Tunisia’s Bardo museum on 18 March. President Schulz conveyed Parliament’s deepest sympathy to their families and friends. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20150324IPR37302/html/Opening-minute%E2%80%99s-silence-for-victims-of-Germanwings-air-crash-and-Tunis-attacks</p> <p>Inter-religious dialogue: the way to defeat extremism “We will defeat radicalism only if we stay united” said Parliament’s First Vice-President Antonio Tajani, opening Tuesday’s high-level conference of MEPs and religious community leaders on the rise of religious radicalism and fundamentalism. EP President Martin Schulz, who closed the debate, said “We have to have the courage to take people on board and encourage dialogue between religions”. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20150324IPR37224/html/Inter-religious-dialogue-the-way-to-defeat-extremism</p> <p>EU budget management: Commission and Parliament spending for 2013 approved The European Commission managed its 2013 EU budget funds according to the rules, so Parliament should grant it a “discharge” (approval) for that year, said the Budgetary Control Committee on Tuesday. MEPs nonetheless criticised high administrative error rates in agriculture, regional and employment policy spending, which is managed mainly by EU member states. Parliament’s own management of EU funds in 2013 was also approved, in a separate vote. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20150323IPR36415/html/EU-budget-management-Commission-and-Parliament-spending-for-2013-approved</p> <p>Setting up a European Roma Institute For more than four decades Europe’s Roma community have wanted to establish an institution that would give their music, art and unique traditions their own stage. Across the continent, such bodies exist to celebrate an array of cultures, nationalities and identities. http://www.europeanvoice.com/other-voices/why-we-are-setting-up-a-european-roma-institute/</p>
<p>Specific issues relating to the European arrest warrant, Stockholm programme:</p> <p>Europe of rights,</p> <p>Europe of justice,</p> <p>Europe that protects, Access to Europe,</p> <p>Europe of solidarity, Europe in a globalised world</p> <p>Third pillar: the pillar devoted to police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters, which came under Title VI of the Treaty on European Union</p> <p>Recognition of professional qualifications</p>	<p>Roma: MEPs debate discrimination affecting Europe's largest ethnic minority Roma are often subject to discrimination and social exclusion. Today MEPs discuss how to tackle discrimination affecting Europe's largest ethnic minority and debate whether the EU should recognise the Roma genocide in WWII. An estimated 10 million Roma live in Europe, of which six million live within the EU. Follow the debate live online from 20.45 CET. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20150324STO37305/html/Roma-MEPs-debate-discrimination-affecting-Europe-s-largest-ethnic-minority</p> <p>EU counter-terrorism coordinator: “Jail is a major incubator of radicalisation” With the threat of terrorism growing every day, the task of Gilles de Kerchove, the EU’s counter-terrorism coordinator, becomes increasingly more important. It’s his job to coordinate the Council's work in combating terrorism, keep an eye on all the instruments available to the EU and make policy recommendations. We talked to him about how terrorism should be fought and the role the European Parliament could play.</p>

	<p>http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20150316STO34842/html/EU-counter-terrorism-coordinator-%E2%80%9CJail-is-a-major-incubator-of-radicalisation%E2%80%9D</p>
<p>Introduction to different sector policies (regional policy, trade policy, agricultural policy, social policy).</p>	<p>INTERVENTION OF COMMISSIONER THYSSEN AT THE INTEGRATION SEGMENT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL</p> <p>The number one priority of the new European Commission is to pursue a new start for Europe, based on jobs and growth. Economic growth and confidence are now returning in Europe and employment has also started to recover. However, there is strong divergence in the employment and social situation among Member States. As the demand rebounds, it is clear that the biggest challenge that lies ahead is to restore the economy's capacity to create jobs. The Commission has a threefold mutually reinforcing strategy for jobs and growth: boosting investment, promoting reforms and growth-friendly fiscal consolidation. This approach aims at job rich, inclusive and sustainable growth. Let me elaborate on that.</p> <p>http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-15-4726_en.htm?locale=en</p> <p>Benchmarks: restoring confidence in the financial markets</p> <p>Benchmarks are widely used to track market developments, however financial scandals involving benchmarks such as Libor and Eurobiber have shown that they are susceptible to manipulation. The EP's economic committee votes on 31 March on new rules to ensure the full transparency of all benchmarks used in the EU. Dutch Alde member Cora van Nieuwenhuizen, who wrote the report with recommendations, said: "It is a major step forward in ensuring the future robustness and accuracy of benchmarks."</p> <p>http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20150328STO38902/html/Benchmarks-restoring-confidence-in-the-financial-markets</p> <p>TACKLING YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT: A TOP PRIORITY</p> <p>Speech by Marianne Thyssen, European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, at Conference on the Youth Guarantee organised by the Lazio Region</p> <p>http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-15-4716_en.htm?locale=en</p> <p>YOUTH POLICY EXPERTS FOCUSING ON DIGITAL LITERACY AND SAFETY ON THE INTERNET</p> <p>The Latvian Presidency on 26 - 27 March chaired the meeting of Directors General for Youth in Riga, where issues of cyber bullying, youth cybercrimes and recruitment on the internet were debated. A need for a cross-sectorial policy cooperation concerning safety on the internet, digital literacy and other emerging challenges that young people are currently facing were emphasised during the meeting.</p> <p>https://eu2015.lv/news/media-releases/1133-youth-policy-experts-focusing-on-digital-literacy-and-safety-on-the-internet</p> <p>Making Democracy work at the local level: Ensuring sustainable growth and social progress in Latvia</p> <p>Speaking on the same day which commemorates the mass deportations of Latvian citizens by the Soviets in 1949, Mr Andris Piebalgs, former EU Commissioner and Advisor to the Latvian President, recalled that today, "<i>solidarity, freedom, tolerance and democracy</i>" are the values of the EU which continue to drive the European project. However, the former Commissioner warned that it is imperative for Europe to capture the essence of what citizens care about and to take action on what affects their daily lives.</p> <p>http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.press-releases.35227</p> <p>DIGITAL SINGLE MARKET STRATEGY: EUROPEAN COMMISSION AGREES AREAS</p>

FOR ACTION

Digital technology is part of everyday life. From studying to watching films, buying or selling online to connecting with friends or your doctor – the internet is a goldmine of digital opportunities. But every day in the EU people and companies run into many barriers – from geo-blocking or cross-border parcel delivery inefficiencies to unconnected e-services. Digital services too often remain confined to national borders. The Juncker Commission has made it a priority to remove these obstacles and create a Digital Single Market: making the EU's single market freedoms "go digital", and boosting growth and jobs on our continent. The College of Commissioners today had a first discussion on the Digital Single Market Strategy due in May – and set out the main areas the Commission will focus its work on to trigger real changes for consumers and businesses alike.

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4653_en.htm?locale=en

Towards an effective development policy

Economic and social actors and other civil society organisations can contribute, through their expertise and involvement, to the current and future challenges of development cooperation policy and be active partners for the European Institutions in creating a more coordinated, inclusive and efficient development policy.

<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.press-releases.35219>

IMPROVING HOW EU MEMBER STATES AND REGIONS INVEST AND MANAGE EU COHESION POLICY FUNDS

In 2014-2020 over 351 billion euro will be available to EU Member States, regions and cities under the Cohesion Policy. For many of these countries it is the main source of public funding. It is imperative this money is well invested and managed as weaknesses in national, regional and local administrations can put the success of these programmes at risk.

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-4654_en.htm?locale=en

UN OFFICIAL DECRIES TOXIC BACKDROP AS EU DEBATES NEW MIGRATION POLICIES

Describing migration as "one of the great issues of our time," UN special representative Peter Sutherland warns that negative portrayals of migrants, often by politicians fearful of antagonising voters, are coalescing with rising nationalism and anti-Europeanism to create a toxic backdrop that has favoured the growth of anti-immigrant political forces.

<http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/mar/31/un-official-eu-debates-migration-policies-peter-sutherland>

Promotion of EU upcoming events and news

Euro-Mediterranean days at Universal Expo Milan: 6 -7 May 2015

The next edition of the Universal Expo will take place in Milan from the 1st of May until the 31st of October 2015 and the central theme of this very large event will be "Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life". It will attract over 140 countries and 20 million visitors coming from all over the world.

<http://cor.europa.eu/en/news/Pages/euro-med-expo-milano.aspx>

EuroPCom 2015: 6th European Conference for Public CommunicationThe 6th edition of EuroPCom, the European Conference on Public Communication, will take place on 21 and 22 October 2015 in Brussels.

http://europa.eu/newsroom/calendar/events/2015/10/21_europcom_en.htm

ITS Conference 2015 "A Digital Strategy for Mobility: from capacity to connectivity, Charlemagne building, Brussels, Belgium, 24.04.2015

The objective of this high-level event, organised by the European Commission, is to provide an overview of the state of play with regard to a number of key actions and

major initiatives in the context of the Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) Action Plan and Directive.

http://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/its/events/2015-04-24-its-conference_en.htm

GROW your REGION: Delivering Smart Specialisation and Economic Transformation through Clusters

27/04/2015- 28/04/2015, SQUARE Brussels Meeting Centre, Brussels, Belgium

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/index.cfm/en/conferences/grow_region/