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EU integration process in CEE countries

2016 road safety statistics: What is behind the figures?

While most Member States have improved their road safety records since 2010, there is still a significant gap in performance across the EU. In 2016, countries with the lowest fatality rate per million inhabitants were Sweden (27), the UK (28), the Netherlands (33), Spain (37), Denmark (37), Germany (39) and Ireland (40). On the other hand, those with the weakest road safety records were Bulgaria (99), Romania (97), Latvia (80) and Poland (79). Among the countries who registered the biggest decrease in the number of road fatalities from 2015 to 2016, we find Lithuania (22%), Latvia (16%) and the Czech Republic (16%).

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-17-675_en.htm

Parliament's continued support for Ukraine

A visa-free regime for Ukrainians travelling to the EU is just the latest step in the European Parliament's continued support of Ukraine. The Parliament has consistently shown solidarity by condemning Russia's military involvement and illegal annexation of Crimea and promoting political and economic reforms.

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/20170324STO68409/timeline-parliament%E2%80%99s-continued-support-for-ukraine>

EU report: Further reform efforts needed from the Republic of Moldova to benefit citizens

The Republic of Moldova has adopted a number of reforms, but needs to undertake further efforts in implementing its commitments under the Association Agreement with the European Union. "*The European Union and the Republic of Moldova have a strong relationship, reinforced through our joint Association Agreement that entered into force nine months ago*", said the High Representative/Vice-President, Federica Mogherini. "*The Agreement has intensified our partnership, increasing our cooperation in some areas and consolidating it in others. The Association Agenda details commitments undertaken by the Moldovan authorities, including fighting against corruption, improving the independence of the judiciary, de-politicising state institutions, and investigating the banking fraud. Progress has been made – this is detailed in today's report. Further work is needed, and on this path Moldova can count on the European Union, on our common work, for the sake of our citizens.*"

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-334_en.htm

Pros, advantages and obligations resulting from EU membership

Mergers: Commission blocks proposed merger between Deutsche Börse and London Stock Exchange

The European Commission has prohibited the proposed merger between

Deutsche Börse AG and London Stock Exchange Group under the EU Merger Regulation because the Commission's investigation concluded the merger would have created a de facto monopoly in the markets for clearing fixed income instruments. Commissioner Margrethe Vestager, said: *"The merger between Deutsche Börse and the London Stock Exchange would have significantly reduced competition by creating a de facto monopoly in the crucial area of clearing of fixed income instruments. As the parties failed to offer the remedies required to address our competition concerns, the Commission has decided to prohibit the merger."*

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-789_en.htm

European Interoperability Framework: Commission presents new guidance for digital public services

The European Commission published a new European Interoperability Framework which will help European public administrations to coordinate their digitisation efforts when delivering public services. Andrus Ansip, Vice-President for the Digital Single Market, said: "The new European Interoperability Framework gives specific guidance for setting up interoperable digital public services. Its application by European public administrations will ensure seamless services and information flows locally, nationally and across the European Union. It will make it easier for people and businesses to communicate with their administration and those of other Member States, to declare a change of address for example."

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-702_en.htm

Enforcement of rules along the agri-food chain in the EU

After successful negotiations between the European Parliament and the Member States in the Council, the new Official Controls Regulation adopted today will enhance and reinforce the EU system as an international reference for integrated rules covering the entire agri-food chain. The new rules overhaul the current system. They will provide a single framework for all official controls along the agri-food chain. Businesses and authorities will benefit from reduced administrative burdens, more efficient processes and strengthened controls. Consumers will benefit from more transparency on how controls are carried out to ensure food safety and high standards for plant health, animal health and welfare and to prevent fraud.

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-17-611_en.htm

General development of the EU

Promoting health in cities to improve the quality of life of EU citizens

In the coming decades 70% of the world's population will be living in urban areas. This phenomenon of urbanisation will increase and intensify the role of cities. In this context, the CoR's Commission for Natural Resources (NAT) adopted on 30 March an opinion on "Health in cities as a common good" in Brussels, with a set of recommendations in priority policy areas such as urban planning, mobility, environment and healthy diet, education, sport and governance.

<http://cor.europa.eu/ro/news/Pages/Promoting-health-in-cities-to-improve-the-quality-of-life-of-EU-citizens.aspx>

	<p>Rome Declaration of the Leaders of 27 Member States and of the European Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission.</p> <p>The Leaders of 27 Member States and of EU institutions, took pride in the achievements of the European Union. “Sixty years ago, recovering from the tragedy of two world wars, we decided to bond together and rebuild our continent from its ashes. We have built a unique Union with common institutions and strong values, a community of peace, freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law, a major economic power with unparalleled levels of social protection and welfare.”</p> <p>http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STATEMENT-17-767_en.htm</p>
<p>Introduction to EU institutions and their functioning</p>	<p>Article 50: how the future of EU-UK relations will be decided</p> <p>The UK government announced on 29th March it is invoking article 50 of the Treaty of the EU, which serves as formal notification of its intent to withdraw from the Union. Starting 29th March the UK and the EU have two years to negotiate a withdrawal agreement. In addition the two will need to start determining the future trade relations, though this is expected to take significantly longer.</p> <p>http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/20170324STO68408/article-50-how-the-future-of-eu-uk-relations-will-be-decided</p>
<p>Introduction to EU law</p>	<p>On 25 March, EU leaders celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome, which paved the way for a Union of peace, solidarity and democracy.</p> <p>The Treaties of Rome – signed by six founding Member States – paved the way for the European Union that we know today: a reunited continent of peace, founded on the values of solidarity, democracy and the rule of law. Its Single Market ensures freedom of choice and movement, economic growth and prosperity for 500 million citizens. It is the largest trading bloc in the world and the biggest donor of development and humanitarian aid. This anniversary is a moment to look back on the collective achievements and to discuss the future of the EU at 27.</p> <p>https://ec.europa.eu/commission/news/eu-celebrates-60-years-rome-treaties-and-looks-future_en</p> <p>Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union – Q&A. What is Article 50?</p> <p>Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union sets out the procedure for a Member State to withdraw from the European Union, if it should wish to do so. It was first introduced by the Lisbon Treaty in 2007.</p> <p>http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-17-648_en.htm?locale=en</p>

Decentralized management of EU funds

MEPs vote to close loopholes for exploiting EU and third country tax differences

Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee MEPs have voted to close loopholes which allow some of the world's largest corporations to avoid paying tax on profits by exploiting differences in the tax systems of EU and third countries. They backed a resolution recommending changes to the EU's anti-tax avoidance directive by 44 votes to 0 with 2 abstentions. These amendments relate to the different tax rules in third countries which give rise to loopholes — “hybrid mismatches” — and allow firms to escape tax in both jurisdictions.

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/20170327IPR68615/meps-vote-to-close-loopholes-for-exploiting-eu-and-third-country-tax-differences>

Budgets MEPs back flexibility: €6bn more for jobs, growth and tackling migration

Plans to make it easier to move money around within the EU's long-run budget, to help tackle urgent challenges such as the migration crisis, strengthening security, boosting growth and creating jobs, were backed by the Budgets Committee. Parliament has long fought for greater flexibility within the Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF), which would apply for the remainder of the 2014-2020 MFF. “Parliament demanded this revision of the Multiannual Financial Framework because it considered it highly necessary due to a change of circumstances in Europe. And the Parliament was right. Unprecedented crises such as the migration crisis required a verification of policies and an adjustment of the budgetary system. The enhanced flexibility we agreed to means more possibilities of action in European policies. This is the first step towards enabling the EU budgetary system more to adapt faster to needs within the seven-year period, which should be also one of the main mottos of the next financial framework”, said co-rapporteur Jan Olbrycht (EPP, PL).

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/20170327IPR68663/budgets-meps-back-flexibility-%E2%82%AC6bn-more-for-jobs-growth-and-tackling-migration>

Multi-level governance

Looking for the most entrepreneurial regions and cities in Europe

Your region is ready to win the European Entrepreneurial Region (EER) award for an ambitious and outstanding SMEs and entrepreneurs strategy? Better be quick, application ends on 7 April 2017. The European Committee of the Regions (CoR) yearly identifies and rewards three EU regions which show an outstanding and innovative entrepreneurial policy strategy, irrespective of their size, wealth and competences. The three most forward-thinking and promising visions with a credible implementation plan are granted the label "European Entrepreneurial Region" (EER) for the specific year.

http://cor.europa.eu/en/news/Pages/EER_award_2017.aspx

Smart specialisation strategies: Stronger focus on synergies and interregional cooperation

The regulatory framework around smart specialisation strategies (RIS3) needs to be reformed to increase synergies between the European Structural and Investment Funds and regional innovation and development policies, as well as to encourage interregional cooperation and the creation of value chains across European regions, the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) argues in an opinion adopted on 22th March.

<http://cor.europa.eu/en/news/Pages/smart-specialisation-strategies.aspx>

OECD study affirms that rural areas make an important contribution to growth and productivity in the EU

Northern and sparsely populated areas (NSPA) make an important contribution to national growth and productivity and investment in these regions is to the benefit of the EU as a whole. This strong message from the OECD was presented at the launch of the territorial review of 14 NSPA regions at the European Committee of the Regions on 13 March.

The sparsely populated areas of Finland, Norway and Sweden are becoming increasingly important to the geopolitical and economic interests of these countries and the European Union. These regions in northern Europe are linked by a set of common characteristics, which are absent in other European regions, and are recognized in key national and EU policy frameworks. EU funding targeted to these regions has promoted development and structural adjustment of regions with extremely low population densities.

<http://cor.europa.eu/en/news/Pages/oecd-study-affirms-that-rural-areas-make-an-important-contribution-to-growth-and-productivity-in-the-eu.aspx>

Introduction to different negotiation chapters

EESC calls upon Commissioner Crețu to recognise unique challenges of EU islands

There is no doubt that EU islands and island Member States face very particular circumstances and the European Union must recognise this. This is not only about money but also about policy flexibility. A one-size-fits-all approach is clearly not delivering the right results", stated Stefano Mallia, EESC rapporteur on Inclusive Islands. "We call on the Commission to consider the condition of insularity when designing new policies and ensure a greater degree of flexibility when it comes to these economies. We also believe that the current definition of an Island Region needs to be

	<p><i>revisited and new criteria should be set to allow for higher levels of state aid".</i></p> <p>http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.press-releases.41943</p>
<p>Specific issues relating to the</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European arrest warrant • Stockholm programme • Third pillar <p>Recognition of professional qualifications</p>	<p>Commission registers 'Minority Safepack' European Citizens' Initiative</p> <p>The European Commission has decided to register a European Citizens' Initiative inviting the Commission "to improve the protection of persons belonging to national and linguistic minorities and strengthen cultural and linguistic diversity in the Union".</p> <p>The Commission's decision to register the Initiative concerns only the legal admissibility of the proposal. The Commission has not analysed the substance at this stage. Should the Initiative receive one million statements of support within one year, from at least seven different Member States, the Commission will have to react within three months. The Commission can decide either to follow the request or not, and in both instances would be required to explain its reasoning.</p> <p>http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-776_en.htm</p> <p>EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey: steady progress and new projects for education and health launched</p> <p>The European Commission reported at the Steering Committee meeting on implementation progress made to date. The sixth Steering Committee meeting of the EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey took place in Brussels to report on the progress made to date. They discussed the latest projects to support refugees, in particular the recently launched €34 million Conditional Cash Transfer for Education project with UNICEF and a €5 million contract with the NGO Spark which will increase participation and equal access to higher education of vulnerable Syrian youth. Furthermore, seven new humanitarian projects worth €41.6 million have also been launched focusing on protection and access to health. So far out of the overall €3 billion allocated to the Facility, more than half has already been contracted in less than a year. Contracts have been signed for 46 projects in total worth over €1.5 billion, out of which €777 million has been disbursed so far to support refugees.</p> <p>http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-795_en.htm?locale=en</p>
<p>Introduction to different sector policies (regional policy, trade policy, agricultural policy, social policy)</p>	<p>10-year pledge to save Mediterranean fish stocks</p> <p>The Malta MedFish4Ever Declaration sets out a work programme to save Mediterranean fish stocks and protect the region's ecological and economic wealth. Following months of negotiations, the European Commission has secured today a 10-year pledge to save Mediterranean fish stocks and protect the region's ecological and economic wealth. The Malta MedFish4Ever Declaration, a practical example of the EU's successful neighbourhood policy, sets out a detailed work programme for the next 10 years, based on ambitious but realistic targets. The Declaration was signed by Mediterranean ministerial representatives from both northern and southern coastlines, a signature that gives political ownership to an issue that was up to now managed at technical level. It is the result of a European Commission-led process that started in Catania,</p>

Sicily in February 2016.

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/news/10-year-pledge-save-mediterranean-fish-stocks_en

Keeping EU consumers safe – online marketplaces join efforts to remove dangerous products from EU market

On 16th March, the European Commission presented its latest report on the Rapid Alert System for dangerous products. Věra Jourová, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality said: *"Consumers need to be protected from dangerous products. And this protection must apply both online and offline. Therefore I am pleased that we could agree with Amazon, Ebay and Alibaba to join efforts to remove products notified through the Rapid Alert System from their websites, and I call on others to follow suit. I am also satisfied that we have made some progress related to China, with the numbers of dangerous goods imported on the decrease this year. This shows that our cooperation with China and our persistence to demand high standards is paying off."*

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-602_en.htm

New report highlights how EU Cohesion Policy improves the investment environment in Europe

One of the key elements of the Cohesion Policy reform for 2014-20 was the introduction of preconditions for Member States to receive money from the European Structural and Investment Funds.

The preconditions for successful investments (or "ex-ante conditionalities") cover a wide variety of sectors, including compliance with energy efficiency, innovation, digital plans, and education reforms. They were included in the reformed Cohesion Policy to ensure sound and effective spending. Regional Policy Commissioner Corina Crețu said: *"This report shows that the preconditions have improved the framework within which the EU budget operates. By linking the reception of EU funds to the implementation of key structural changes, we have not only contributed to guaranteeing sound public investments. We are also helping to improve quality of life across the EU, while setting the right conditions for growth and job creation, in line with the objectives of President Juncker's Investment Plan."*

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-781_en.htm

Promotion of EU upcoming events and news

Interpretation - building capacities for a changing world 21st universities conference

06-07/04/2017/ Brussels, Belgium

Just like every year since 1996, the event will bring together relevant stakeholders in the interpreting world, creating the ideal context for networking and debate. Various speakers from partner universities worldwide and EU institutions, as well as external experts, will tackle relevant topics related to interpretation and how to build capacities for a changing world.

Commissioner Günther H. Oettinger will deliver the opening address on the first day of the event and will also present the "Young Interpreters Award" diplomas to the three winning students of this year's essay

contest.

https://ec.europa.eu/info/events/interpretation-building-capacities-changing-world_en

Public hearing on the capital markets union mid-term review

11/04/2017/ Brussels, Belgium

The hearing will be opened by Vice-President Valdis Dombrovskis. Proceedings will commence with a high level panel of senior policy makers and executives to take stock of the implementation of the capital market union action plan so far and discuss challenges and priorities for the CMU mid-term review.

This discussion will be followed by the following 3 thematic panels:

- Promoting access to finance for SMEs
- Better investment opportunities for retail and institutional investors
- Improving the functioning of the single market by removing barriers to cross-border flow of capital

https://ec.europa.eu/info/finance-events-170411-cmu-mid-term-review_en

Citizens' Dialogue with Commissioner Pierre Moscovici

26/04/2017/ Brussels, Belgium

In the aftermath of the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, Commissioner Moscovici will discuss with the audience the state of the European economy, EU priorities in the fight against tax evasion and the revival of growth. He will also address the European Commission's proposals to improve the governance of the euro area. The event is organised by Stand Up for Europe, the Students for Europe Saint-Louis circle, with the participation of the IEE (Institute for European Studies) and the European Commission.

https://ec.europa.eu/info/events/citizens-dialogues/citizens-dialogue-brussels-commissioner-pierre-moscovici_en

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