

[News story: UK flu levels according to PHE statistics: 2017 to 2018](#)

Updated: Added latest flu data.

Latest update

Seasonal flu levels remain elevated but have now peaked.

The latest Public Health England (PHE) [report published at 2pm today](#), Thursday 22 March 2018, shows that seasonal flu continues to circulate across the UK, although activity has now peaked.

The statistics show over the last week:

- a 8% decrease in the GP consultation rate with flu-like illness
- a 10% decrease in the flu hospitalisation rate
- a 10% reduction in the flu intensive care admission rate

The main strains circulating continue to be flu A (H3N2) and flu B.

Previous updates

Thursday 15 March 2018

Seasonal flu levels remain elevated but have now peaked.

The latest [Public Health England \(PHE\) report published at 2pm today](#), Thursday 15 March 2018, shows that seasonal flu continues to circulate across the UK, with signs that activity has peaked.

The statistics show over the last week:

- a stabilisation in the GP consultation rate with flu-like illness
- a 4% decrease in the flu hospitalisation rate
- a 21% reduction in the flu intensive care admission rate

The main strains circulating continue to be flu A (H3N2) and flu B.

The report also shows that from weeks 50, 2017 to week 5 of 2018, statistically significant excess mortality from all causes was observed in over-65s in England.

This is currently similar to the excess mortality observed last season and lower than seen in the 2014 to 2015 season. These excess deaths cannot with certainty be attributed to specific causes, but flu and the very cold weather that some areas have seen since Christmas are likely to be contributing factors.

Thursday 8 March 2018

The latest Public Health England (PHE) report published at 2pm today, Thursday 8 March 2018, shows that seasonal flu continues to circulate across the UK, with signs that activity has peaked.

The statistics show over the last week:

- a 37% decrease in the GP consultation rate with flu-like illness
- a 31% decrease in the flu hospitalisation rate
- a 26% reduction in the flu intensive care admission rate

The main strains circulating continue to be flu A (H3N2) and flu B.

The report also shows that from weeks 50, 2017 to week 4 of 2018, statistically significant excess mortality from all causes was observed in over-65s in England.

This is currently similar to the excess mortality observed last season and lower than in the 2014 to 2015 season. These excess deaths cannot with certainty be attributed to specific causes, but flu and the very cold weather that some areas have seen since Christmas are likely to be contributing factors.

Thursday 1 March 2018

The latest Public Health England (PHE) report published at 2pm today, Thursday 1 March 2018, shows that seasonal flu continues to circulate across the UK, with signs that activity has peaked.

The statistics show over the last week the GP consultation rate with flu-like illness remains the same, a 4% decrease in the flu hospitalisation rate and a 13% reduction in the flu intensive care admission rate. The main strains circulating continue to be flu A (H3N2) and flu B.

The report also shows that in weeks 50, 2017 to week 7 of 2018, statistically significant excess mortality from all causes continues to be observed in over-65s in England.

This is currently similar to the excess mortality observed last season and lower than in 2014 to 2015. These excess deaths cannot with certainty be attributed to specific causes, but flu and the very cold weather that some areas have seen since Christmas are likely to be contributing factors.

Dr Paul Cosford, Medical Director and Head of Health Protection at PHE, said:

While our latest data shows there are signs that flu rates have peaked, we are continuing to see a lot of flu circulating and this is placing a significant impact on NHS resources. I want to take this opportunity to recognise all of our healthcare staff whose hard work continues to deliver an excellent service.

We are still seeing a mix of flu types, including the A(H3N2) strain that circulated last winter in the UK and then in Australia and flu B.

Rates of vaccination across all those eligible for the vaccine have increased on last season with an additional 1.5 million people vaccinated this season.

In order to prevent the spread of flu, it is important to practice good respiratory and hand hygiene and to avoid close contact with others if you have flu symptoms.

Thursday 22 February 2018

The latest Public Health England (PHE) report published at 2pm today, Thursday 22 February 2018, shows that seasonal flu continues to circulate across the UK, with signs that activity has peaked.

The statistics show over the last week there has been a 17% reduction in the GP consultation rate with flu-like illness, a small increase in the flu hospitalisation rate and a 17% reduction in the flu intensive care admission rate. The main strains circulating continue to be flu A (H3N2) and flu B.

The report also shows that in weeks 50, 2017 to week 7 of 2018, statistically significant excess mortality from all causes continues to be observed in over-65s in England.

This is currently similar to the excess mortality observed last season and lower than in 2014 to 2015. These excess deaths cannot with certainty be attributed to specific causes, but flu and the very cold weather that some areas have seen since Christmas are likely to be contributing factors.

Dr Richard Pebody, Acting Head of Respiratory Disease Department at PHE, said:

We are continuing to see flu circulate, with signs that flu activity has peaked. Rates of vaccination across all those eligible for the vaccine have increased on last season and we have vaccinated an additional 1.5 million people. We are currently seeing a mix of flu types, including the A(H3N2) strain that circulated last winter in the UK and then in Australia and flu B. It is important to practice good respiratory and hand hygiene and to avoid close contact with others if you have flu symptoms.

Thursday 15 February 2018

Seasonal flu levels remain high but are continuing to stabilise across the UK.

The latest Public Health England (PHE) report published at 2pm today,

Thursday 15 February 2018, shows that seasonal flu continues to circulate across the UK and rates across most indicators remain stable. The statistics show over the last week there has been a 21% reduction in the GP consultation rate with flu-like illness, a 9% reduction in the flu hospitalisation rate and a 7% reduction in the flu intensive care admission rate. The main strains circulating continue to be flu A(H3N2) and flu B.

The report also shows that in weeks 50, 2017 to week 6 of 2018, statistically significant excess mortality from all causes continues to be observed in over-65s in England. This is currently similar to the excess mortality observed last season and lower than in 2014 to 2015. These excess deaths cannot with certainty be attributed to specific causes, but flu and the very cold weather that some areas have seen since Christmas are likely to be contributing factors.

Thursday 8 February 2018

Seasonal flu levels remain high but are continuing to stabilise across the UK.

The latest Public Health England (PHE) report published at 2pm today, Thursday 8 February 2018, shows that seasonal flu continues to circulate across the UK and rates across most indicators remain stable. The statistics show over the last week there has been a 17% reduction in the GP consultation rate with flu-like illness, a 14% reduction in the flu hospitalisation rate, and a 10% reduction in the flu intensive care admission rate. The main strains circulating continue to be flu A(H3N2) and flu B.

The report also shows that in weeks 50, 2017 to week 5 of 2018, statistically significant excess mortality from all causes continues to be observed in over-65s in England, this is currently similar to the excess mortality observed last season and lower than in 2014 to 2015. These excess deaths cannot with certainty be attributed to specific causes, but flu and the very cold weather that some areas have seen since Christmas are likely to be contributing factors.

Richard Pebody, Acting Head of the Respiratory Diseases Department at PHE said:

We are continuing to see flu circulate, with signs that flu activity is stabilising.

Rates of vaccination across all those eligible for the vaccine have increased on last season and we have vaccinated an additional one and a half million people. We are currently seeing a mix of flu types, including the A(H3N2) strain that circulated last winter in the UK and then in Australia and flu B.

It is important to practice good respiratory and hand hygiene and to get the vaccine if you are newly eligible, although we are now coming to the end of the vaccine season.

Thursday 1 February 2018

Seasonal flu levels remain high but are stabilising in the last week across the UK.

The latest Public Health England (PHE) report published at 2pm today, Thursday 1 February 2018, shows that seasonal flu continues to circulate across the UK, with rates across most indicators remaining stable. The statistics show over the last week there has been a stabilisation in the GP consultation rate with flu-like illness, a 7% reduction in the flu hospitalisation rate, and a 26% reduction in the flu intensive care admission rate. The main strains circulating continue to be flu A(H3N2), A(H1N1) and Flu B.

The report also shows that in weeks 50, 2017 to week 4 of 2018, statistically significant excess mortality from all causes continues to be observed in over-65s in England, although this currently remains lower than the excess mortality observed last season and in 2014 to 2015. These excess deaths cannot with certainty be attributed to specific causes, but flu and the very cold weather that some areas have seen since Christmas are likely to be contributing factors.

The 'Catch It, Bin It, Kill It' campaign continues to run across digital, radio and press advertising platforms to inform the public about the steps they can take to protect themselves and reduce spread of the virus by practising good respiratory hand hygiene.

Richard Pebody, Acting Head of the Respiratory Diseases Department at Public Health England said:

We are continuing to see flu circulate, with signs that flu activity is stabilising.

Rates of vaccination across all those eligible for the vaccine have increased on last season and we have vaccinated an additional one and a half million people. We are currently seeing a mix of flu types, including the A(H3N2) strain that circulated last winter in the UK and then in Australia and flu B.

The best form of protection against flu is to get the vaccine if you are eligible and to practice good respiratory and hand hygiene, although we are now coming to the end of the vaccine season.

Whilst this is the most significant flu season since 2010 to 2011 in terms of GP activity, the ICU indicators taken overall suggest that it is less severe at this stage than 2010 to 2011. And in terms of the impact on excess mortality, we have not reached yet the levels seen in 2014 to 2015 and 2016 to 2017.

The flu virus can live for many hours on hard surfaces and therefore practising good hand hygiene can limit the spread of germs and transmission

of flu. People are advised to catch coughs and sneezes in a tissue, bin it, and then wash their hands afterwards to kill the germs. Practising good hand hygiene and giving eligible people the flu vaccine is the best defence against the virus.

People suffering with flu-like symptoms should catch coughs or sneezes in tissues and bin them immediately, wash their hands regularly with soap and warm water and frequently clean regularly used surfaces to stop the spread of flu. Avoid having unnecessary contact with other people if you or they have symptoms of flu.

Seasonal flu usually circulates for several weeks each year. The intensity of circulation depends upon the underlying population immunity, the circulating viruses and external factors such as the weather. It is an unpredictable virus and it is not possible to anticipate how flu levels will progress.

Amongst other diseases like norovirus that normally increase during winter, seasonal flu puts extra pressure on the NHS every year.

The latest data is available online. Currently 72.4% of adults over 65, 48.7% of adults with a long-term health condition, 47.1% of pregnant women, 44% of 3-year-olds, 42.6% of 2-year-olds and 63.9% of healthcare workers have received the vaccine.

[Letter of congratulations from President Donald Tusk to Peter Pellegrini on his appointment as Prime Minister of Slovakia](#)

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Speech by Vice-President Katainen at the High-Level Conference on Financing Sustainable Growth – ‘Sustainable finance within the Commission’s Agenda promoting sustainability’

Good morning Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am sure you have already been well informed by now on what sustainable finance means to the European Commission. I once more want to thank Mr. Thimann on the excellent job that you have done with the High-Level Expert Group on Sustainable Finance and on creating a basis for what sustainable finance could mean and what kind of actions the European Commission could take in order to pursue the goals for sustainable finance.

Actually, I hope that when we have a similar type of event in say five years’ time, we could drop the first word, sustainable. Because sustainable finance is supposed to be mainstream. Sustainable finance is not just a side effect of the financial market. It is like ten or fifteen years ago when you went to the supermarket and tried to find organic carrots. Today they are mainstream.

Sustainable finance is not “second-best” finance, it’s not something that is just a good dead. That is the reason why I wanted to say that hopefully in five years’ time we can drop the “sustainable” because it will have become already a normal way of looking at things and our financing will be going towards sustainable, long term, sustainable products much more than it is doing at the moment.

Today’s theme is about raising the financial resources for a more sustainable, resource-efficient, circular economy, for sustainable growth, for new and innovative green technologies to achieve our climate and environmental targets.

It is about taking into account environmental, social and governance aspects when making investment and finance decisions in all areas of our economy.

Sustainable finance plays a key role in turning the United Nation’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to which the European Union is fully committed, into reality. The European Commission, among other initiatives, set up a dedicated multi-stakeholder platform on the implementation of the sustainable development goals last year.

Sustainable finance is the crucial element to reach our ambitious European energy, climate and environmental policy goals as enshrined, for instance, in the EU's 2030 climate and energy framework or the Circular Economy Action Plan.

Making Europe's economy more sustainable and contributing to sustainable development globally means undertaking a huge investment programme, both in the public and private sector, to improve, innovate, and become more efficient and competitive. This is an immense opportunity for us.

The European Union is already in a transition process to a low-carbon, more resource-efficient, circular economy. As mentioned earlier, estimates on investments needed to make our current economy in Europe greener and more sustainable, bringing it in line with a 2° or even 1.5° pathway agreed in the Paris Agreement in December 2015, amount to additional investments of around EUR 180 billion per year over the next 2 or 3 decades.

Most of these investments – in sustainable infrastructure, more energy-efficient buildings and equipment or new environmental technologies – will have to be made by companies and, more generally, the private sector. Finance will, to a large extent, have to come from private investors and capital markets.

This means that we need to create the right framework conditions for private investments and finance, provide guidance to investors and accelerate sustainable investment opportunities. And we need to connect capital willing to invest with sustainable investment projects seeking finance.

The Commission's Action Plan on sustainable finance includes dedicated actions to mobilise sustainable finance. There is also a strong link to the Investment Plan for Europe, with its finance and advisory capacity, to step up investments.

Let me mention two important actions which will help us increase sustainable investments and better connect finance to investments:

1. An EU classification of green and sustainable activities:

One of the key actions in the Commission's Action Plan on sustainable finance is to determine what 'green' and 'sustainable' activities, across the EU, are. Investors need clarity and certainty when investing in green or sustainable projects.

By building up, step-by-step, a harmonised EU classification system of green and sustainable activities, we can increase transparency in the market and guide investors.

Clear understanding on what the EU regards as green or sustainable will also allow, in conjunction with standards, labelling green investment funds or other green or sustainable financial products. This would facilitate raising capital for sustainable investments from institutional and retail investors alike.

2. Making projects investor-ready and leverage private finance through EFSI and EIAH:

Another major challenge to increase low-carbon and green investments is to make economically viable projects investment-ready. This requires capacity to prepare and develop investment projects. We are aware of the investment and project preparation needs in different parts of the European Union and across different sectors.

The European Investment Advisory Hub is already supporting, through project development and support services, green and sustainable investment projects. There will be even stronger focus on sustainability and better local access to advisory under the extended European Fund for Strategic Investments (“EFSI 2.0”) until the end of 2020.

Among concrete, and more targeted examples – we have set up the advisory initiative for urban authorities (URBIS) or established the platform to support circular economy financing. Both with strong stakeholders’ engagement. And in both cases the ultimate goal is the same – promote innovative approaches in financing sustainable investments.

Furthermore, to accelerate investments in low-carbon, green and sustainable projects, pooling of private and public resources, including ways to share risks, will be necessary to accelerate their implementation.

There is an important role for public finance to play, coming from EU and national budgets, to mobilise private capital. This is complementary to setting the right regulatory framework conditions. Smart regulation and effective use of public budgets are complementary tools and must go hand-in-hand.

We already have the European Fund for Strategic Investments which is a highly effective financial instrument to encourage more sustainable investments while attracting private investment. The EFSI now has a target of at least 40% for investments that contribute to climate action, in line with the Paris Climate Agreement goals.

Under EFSI, we can also support the bundling of smaller green or sustainable projects into larger portfolios through Investment Platforms, making them more attractive for private investors.

There are similar good practice examples at national level, for instance promotional banks which support environmental and sustainable investments through targeted equity and loan finance.

We need to learn lessons from our current EU financial instruments and best practice examples at national level for the next generation of public support instruments under the next, post-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework. In this context we are preparing the InvestEU Fund, a single, multi-policy investment support instrument.

This could be an important avenue – in addition to reformed regulatory frameworks – to mobilise the necessary financing for green and sustainable

investments.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Moving to a more sustainable European economy, with its various dimensions, and contributing to the political agenda of a sustainable, resource efficient and circular economy requires making huge investments, mobilising finance and changing the way of decision-making.

We have set clear policy frameworks, at European level and internationally, to make this transition happen. We know what needs to be changed and we have the tools to bring about this change. Now, it is time to accelerate their application.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for participating to this conference. We are eagerly waiting for your views on our sustainable finance approach. This must be a joint venture between public authorities and private sector. The private sector knows how the market is evolving, what is possible and where regulatory help is needed. And the public sector's role is to set the target from the societal point.

Thank you very much.

[Global Report on Food Crises finds that in 2017 major famines were partly averted but food security remains critical](#)

Neven **Mimica**, Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, who presented the report today in Rome, said: *"In 2017, the Global Report on Food Crises alerted us about the risk of famines in a number of partner countries. Thanks to local and international efforts, including in the most critical hotspots, we were able to avert major famines. But let us be clear: we still have huge challenges ahead of us, and the EU will continue to work relentlessly for food security around the world. When future generations look back on this time in history, I want to say that we were not only able to diagnose the problem, but we were also able to prescribe the right solutions."*

Tibor **Navracsics**, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, responsible for the Joint Research Centre, added: *"Food crises remain one of the most pressing catastrophes worldwide. In Africa alone, over a hundred million people are facing food insecurity with some on the brink of famine. Unfortunately, there is no simple solution. The scientific rigour applied by*

the Joint Research Centre in compiling the annual report on food crises will help us diagnose the problems correctly and propose the best policies.”

Christos **Stylianides**, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management, said: *“World hunger is on the rise again. The EU is one of the world’s leading donors in humanitarian food assistance. We are now strengthening a coordinated response, covering humanitarian and development aspects, to face the increasing complexity of crises. It is only by working together that we can become the architects of a future without hunger”.*

The report shows that, in 2017, almost 124 million people faced levels of acute food insecurity or worse. The report finds that in the future, food crises are likely to become more acute, persistent and complex. Among the main root causes for severe food insecurity, it cites conflict, extreme climatic events and excessive prices of staple foods – these factors are often acting together.

To tackle the root causes of these pressing challenges, the EU is working to implement a long term strategy, taking into account humanitarian aid, development assistance and peace building support in an integrated way – and thereby increasing the [resilience of people and communities in partner countries](#).

To implement this long term strategy, the European Union supports measures to improve food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture in over 60 partner countries, providing approximately €8,5 billion of funding between 2014 and 2020. For the four major food crises in 2017 in particular, the European Union contributed over €750 million to joint humanitarian and development support, and EU Member States additionally provided over €1 billion.

Background

The Global Report on Food Crises provides a comprehensive picture of the severity and magnitude of acute food insecurity and malnutrition in 51 countries and territories, with in-depth analysis of 26 hotspots. The knowledge it provides will steer our work to prevent food crises, as well as to develop appropriate, sustainable and joint responses to food insecurity.

Commissioner **Mimica** presented the report today in Rome, together with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), to an audience of over 50 Country-Representatives.

The new report, led by the Food Security Information Network and compiled in cooperation with EU-Joint Research Centre scientists, the FAO, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the WFP, identifies crucial countries and regions where assistance should be prioritized to bridge the gap between emergency and development operations. Moreover, it allows joint planning for the short-medium-long term with the aim to strengthen resilience.

For More Information

Daily News 22 / 03 / 2018

Energy Union: Synchronisation of the Baltic States' electricity network with the European system will strengthen solidarity and regional security of supply

Today, the Heads of State or Government of the Baltic States and of Poland met with President **Juncker** to reaffirm their strong commitment to synchronising the Baltic States' electricity grid with the continental European System by 2025. The Heads of State or Government called for utmost efforts to maintain the working schedule of the Ministers, of system operators and of experts. They agreed to meet again in summer, to conclude a political agreement on the preferred way of synchronising the Baltic States with the continental European network. At a meeting held in the European Commission premises, the President of the European Commission Jean-Claude **Juncker** together with the President of Lithuania Dalia Grybauskaitė, the Prime Minister of Estonia Jüri Ratas, the Prime Minister of Latvia Māris Kučinskis and the Prime Minister of Poland Mateusz Morawiecki stressed the importance of the synchronisation process as a key element to physically integrate the Baltic States with the Continental European energy system and offering a major contribution to the unity and energy security of the European Union. They stressed that this is one of the most emblematic projects of the Energy Union and a concrete expression of solidarity in energy security. They agreed that 2018 will be a decisive year and expressed their commitment to conclude by June 2018 a political agreement on the preferred way of synchronising the Baltic States with the continental European network. In order to successfully realise the project the support from Connecting Europe Facility funds will be crucial. Read full statement [here](#). (For more information: Anna-Kaisa Itkonen – Tel.: +32 229 56186; Nicole Bockstaller – Tel.: +32 229 52589)

Sustainable Finance: High-Level Conference kicks EU's strategy for greener and cleaner economy into high gear

The European Commission is today hosting a high-level conference on its strategy to reform the financial system in support of the EU's climate and sustainable development agenda. This event is an opportunity to maintain the momentum established at the [One Planet Summit](#), cementing the support and commitment of EU leaders and key private players for the changes needed in the financial system and the economy. The event is jointly hosted in Brussels

by Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker and Vice-President Valdis **Dombrovskis**. Jean-Claude **Juncker**, President of the European Commission said: *“Europe is open for sustainable business. But climate change knows no boundaries and will affect us all. We cannot work alone. This is why we want to lead international efforts and will work with our G7, G20 and United Nations partners to set global sustainable finance standards [...] Two decades ago, sustainability was a specialist topic for experts and scientists. Today, it is a daily reality and a priority for governments, for financial institutions, for business and for citizens [...]. At its heart it is about making sure that our money works for our planet as well as our bottom line. There is no greater return on investment.”* The full speech is available [here](#). High-level keynote speakers include French President Emmanuel Macron and Michael Bloomberg, the United Nations Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for Climate Action. European Commission Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy Miguel **Arias Cañete** and Commissioner for Environment Karmenu **Vella** will also address hundreds of participants discussing how best to put the Commission’s [Action Plan on Sustainable Finance](#) into practice. The Action Plan, launched on March 8, is part of the [Capital Markets Union’s \(CMU\)](#) efforts to connect finance with the specific needs of the European economy to the benefit of the planet and our society. It is also one of the key steps towards implementing the historic [Paris Agreement](#) and the [EU implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#). Link to the live webcast [here](#). A full press release is available [here](#). Speeches are published [here](#). (For more information: Vanessa Mock – Tel.: +32 229 56194; Letizia Lupini – Tel.: +32 229 51958)

Global Report on Food Crises: major famines were partly averted in 2017 but food security remains critical

The [Global Report on Food Crises](#) indicates that major risks of famine were averted in 2017 in the four countries that were declared at risk in early 2017: Yemen, Somalia, South Sudan and North Nigeria. However, it also highlights the severity and the complexity of food crises around the world. Neven **Mimica**, Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, who presented the report today in Rome together with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation and the World Food Programme, said: *“In 2017, the Global Report on Food Crises alerted us about the risk of famines in a number of partner countries. Thanks to local and international efforts, including in the most critical hotspots, we were able to avert major famines. But let us be clear: we still have huge challenges ahead of us, and the EU will continue to work relentlessly for food security around the world. When future generations look back on this time in history, I want to say that we were not only able to diagnose the problem, but we were also able to prescribe the right solutions.”* The [Global Report on Food Crises](#) provides a comprehensive picture of the severity and magnitude of acute food insecurity and malnutrition in 51 countries and territories, with in-depth analysis of 26 hotspots. Read the full press release [here](#). (for more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz De Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Christina Wunder – Tel.: +32 229 92256)

Single Market: Commission welcomes agreement on professional services

The Commission welcomes the preliminary political agreement between the European Parliament and the Council on a “proportionality test” to guide Member States in regulating professional services. The Commission tabled the proposal in January 2017 among other [measures to give the EU services economy a fresh boost](#), and the agreement comes shortly after the [joint statement](#) by the European Parliament, Commission and Council presidency on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Single Market. Around 50 million people – 22% of the European labour force – work in professions to which access is conditional upon the possession of specific qualifications or for which the use of a specific title is protected, e.g. engineers, lawyers or architects. Regulation can be warranted for a number of professions, for example those linked with health and safety. But there are many cases where unnecessarily burdensome and outdated rules make it unreasonably difficult for qualified candidates to access these jobs. This is also to the detriment of consumers. Under EU law, a Member State needs to establish whether new national professional requirements are necessary and balanced. The Commission proposal does not change existing law but aims to ensure a coherent and consistent approach by streamlining and clarifying how Member States should ensure that national rules on professional services are necessary and balanced. The tentative agreement reached in so-called trilogue negotiations is still subject to formal adoption. *(For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel.: +32 229 56182; Victoria von Hammerstein – Tel.: +32 229 55040; Maud Noyon – Tel. +32 229 80379)*

Vienna, Igoumenitsa and Turda receive European sustainable urban mobility awards

The European Commission yesterday announced the winners of the 2017 European sustainable urban mobility awards at a ceremony held in Brussels. **Vienna** (Austria) received [the EUROPEANMOBILITYWEEK Award](#) for large municipalities, while **Igoumenitsa** (Greece) won the inaugural prize in the ‘less than 50,000 inhabitants’ category. **Turda** (Romania) received the [Award for Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning](#). With 75% of Europeans living in cities, sustainable urban mobility is essential to the EU’s ambitious climate objectives and to tackle issues such as congestion, noise, and air pollution. The three cities were selected by an independent jury for their innovative solutions to promote sustainability. Commissioner for Transport Violeta **Bulc** said: *“My congratulations to each of the award winners. Through their actions, Vienna, Igoumenitsa and Turda are creating a more sustainable Europe. They also help their residents to move around in a cleaner, healthier and more enjoyable way. It is my hope that these cities will inspire others to embrace the core message of EUROPEANMOBILITYWEEK – sustainable mobility is the right choice for everyone.”* Commissioner for the Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Karmenu **Vella** said: *“Mobility Week gets bigger every year! More proof, year after year, that green is everyone’s favourite colour. Green means clean, it means convenient, and it means a city where people find it easy to go about their business. And best of all, it’s better for your health. My congratulations to these winners – they’ve understood what*

citizens really need.” 2017 was the most successful edition of EUROPEANMOBILITYWEEK to date, with over 2,500 towns and cities participating. More information on the three winners is available [here](#). (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Alexis Perier – Tel.: +32 229 69143)

EUROSTAT: L’emploi a augmenté dans 8 régions de l’UE sur 10

En 2016, 231 des régions de l’UE (84%) ont vu augmenter leur taux d’emploi. Le nombre de personnes occupées a diminué dans 32 autres régions et est resté stable dans encore 12 autres régions. La croissance de l’emploi a fortement varié d’une région à l’autre de l’UE et au sein d’un même pays. Les taux de croissance de l’emploi les plus élevés ont été enregistrés dans les régions polonaises de Podkarpacie (+7,9%) et d’Opolskie (+5,9%), dans la région espagnole de la Ciudad Autónoma de Melilla (+4,8%) et dans les régions polonaises de Pomorskie et de Warmińsko-Mazurskie (+4,7% chacune). À l’inverse, les plus forts taux de diminution de l’emploi ont été enregistrés dans les régions roumaines de Nord-Est (-3,8%) et de Sud-Vest Oltenia (-3,0%), dans la région polonaise de Wielkopolskie (-2,5%), dans la région bulgare de Severoiztochen (-2,3%) et dans la région polonaise de Śląskie (-2,2%). Dans l’ensemble de l’UE, l’emploi a augmenté de 1,2% en 2016. Un communiqué de presse est disponible [ici](#). (Pour plus d’informations: Christian Wigand– Tel.: +32 229 62253; Mélanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659)

STATEMENTS

Joint statement on the ratification of the Border Demarcation Agreement between Kosovo and Montenegro

Following yesterday’s ratification of the Border Demarcation Agreement between Kosovo and Montenegro, High Representative/Vice-President Federica **Mogherini**, Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris **Avramopoulos** and Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes **Hahn** have issued this statement: “*The ratification of the Border Demarcation Agreement with Montenegro, by the Assembly of Kosovo, represents a real achievement, a welcome and concrete progress, very much in the spirit of good neighbourly relations as well as the new Commission [Strategy](#) for the Western Balkans. The ratification is also the fulfilment of one of the key criteria for Kosovo’s visa liberalisation. As President Juncker said during his recent visit to Kosovo, it is a crucial step towards visa liberalisation which will first and foremost benefit the people. [...] The European Union expects all sides in Kosovo to continue the hard work and successful efforts to achieve visa-free travel for the people of Kosovo and in the interest of the region.*” The full statement is available [online](#). (For more information: Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456; Maja Kocijančič – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Tove Ernst – Tel.: +32 229 86764)

Joint Statement by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini, EU Commissioner for Trade Cecilia Malmström and EU Commissioner for Development and International Cooperation Neven Mimica on the launch of the African Continental Free Trade Area

“The historic decision to launch the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) taken on 21 March by the African Union at its Assembly in Kigali, represents a significant step towards deepening continental integration. The adoption and signing of the AfCFTA legal instruments and the signing of the Protocol on free movement of persons are concrete commitments to liberalisation and to building on what has already been achieved at the regional level. The EU is ready to support the implementation of this impressive achievement in the spirit of the [African Union-European Union partnership](#) and our [joint political declaration](#) of the Summit in Abidjan in November 2017. The meeting between the African Union and the European Commission in Brussels on 23 May will be an important opportunity to discuss this further. We will be focussing on delivering on our joint commitments as agreed in Abidjan, to advance the strategic priorities for our cooperation for the coming years.” The statement is available [here](#). (for more information: Catherine Ray – Tel.: +32 229 69921; Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Carlos Martin Ruiz De Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Gabriel in Croatia to discuss Digital Single Market and audiovisual sector

Commissioner **Gabriel** visits Zagreb, Croatia tomorrow to discuss the latest developments in the [MEDIA](#) sub-programme of Creative Europe and in the [Digital Single Market](#). In the morning, the Commissioner will give a keynote speech and preside a panel discussion at the event “[10th Anniversary of the Creative Europe in Croatia – Strong Women of European Audiovisual Industry in Zagreb for the First Time!](#)”. The Commissioner will address the contributions of the MEDIA programme to the Croatian film industry. As well, Commissioner Gabriel will discuss the question of gender balance in the European audiovisual sector; underlining the initiatives she launched two weeks ago to increase the participation of [women in the digital and audiovisual sectors](#). Following this panel, Commissioner Gabriel will join the 9th Plenary meeting of European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services (ERGA) to discuss the ongoing negotiations on the Commission’s proposals to modernise the EU copyright rules, the Audiovisual Media Services Directive, the situation of the European audiovisual industry, and the opportunities for the sector during the [European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018](#). At 15:00 CET, the Commissioner will hold a Citizens’ Dialogue at the University of Zagreb together with Croatian MEP Dubravka Šuica, to exchange with all the participants on the latest initiatives launched by the Commission for the completion of the Digital Single Market. The Commissioner can be followed on her Twitter account [@GabrielMariya](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Inga Höglund Tel.: +32 229 55040)

Commissioner Navracsics in Sofia to open the EU Sport Forum

Today, Commissioner Tibor **Navracsics**, in charge of Education, Culture, Youth and Sports, is in Sofia to open the [EU Sport Forum](#) taking place [on 22-23 March](#) under the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Under the banner 'Sport in Europe, investing for future generations,' this year's edition will have a special focus on the role of sport in international relations. The Commissioner will also present the results of the latest Eurobarometer on physical activity showing that the number of EU citizens who never exercise or play sport has slightly increased from 42% to 46% since 2009. Ahead of the event, Commissioner **Navracsics** said: *"The new figures show how vitally important it is to continue our efforts to promote physical activity and healthy lifestyles. I strongly encourage all actors, from public authorities to sports organisations, to intensify their efforts and work together."* The European Commission is working to boost physical activity, for example through the [European Week of Sport](#), as well as through projects funded by the [Erasmus+ programme](#). In September last year, Commissioners Tibor **Navracsics**, Phil **Hogan**, responsible for Agriculture and Rural development, and Vytenis **Andriukaitis**, in charge of Health and Food safety, launched an initiative which sets out a roadmap for promoting healthy lifestyles in Europe, particular amongst children. The Commissioner's opening speech is available [online](#). Detailed results of the Eurobarometer are published [here](#) and [here](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: +32 229 56184)

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