

CALENDRIER du 29 janvier au 04 février 2018

(Susceptible de modifications en cours de semaine)

Déplacements et visites

Lundi 29 janvier 2018

President Jean-Claude **Juncker** receives Mr Jeroen Dijsselbloem, former President of the Eurogroup.

President Jean-Claude **Juncker** receives Mr Markus Wallner, *Landeshauptmann* of Vorarlberg.

President Jean-Claude **Juncker** receives Mr Andrej Babiš, Prime Minister of the Czech Republic.

Mr Frans **Timmermans** receives Mr Emiliano García-Page, President of the Castilla-La Mancha region and Mr Guillermo Fernández Vara, President of the Extremadura region.

Mr Frans **Timmermans** attends the opening of the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) 10th Anniversary Conference, in Brussels.

Mr Frans **Timmermans** receives Mr Andrej Babiš, Prime Minister of the Czech Republic.

Mr Andrus **Ansip** receives Mr Marcin Cichy, President of the Office of Electronic Communications (UKE).

Mr Maroš **Šefčovič** receives Ms Monique Goyens, Director-General of the European Consumer Organisation (BEUC).

Mr Maroš **Šefčovič** and Mr Miguel **Arias Cañete** deliver keynote speeches at the [Launch of the EU Energy Poverty Observatory \(EPOV\)](#), in Brussels.

Mr Valdis **Dombrovskis** receives Mr Kevin Cardiff, Member of the European Court of Auditors (ECA).

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** receives Mr Esa Halme, Region Mayor of the Council of Tampere Region, and Ms Liisa Laakso, Rector of Tampere University.

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** receives Mr Wilhelm Molterer, Managing Director of the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI).

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** receives a delegation from the European Retail Round Table.

Mr Karmenu **Vella** receives Mr Evangelos Apostolou, Minister for Rural Development and Food of Greece.

Mr Vytenis **Andriukaitis** receives representatives of the European Retail Round Table (ERRT) on Food chain initiative, Food Waste, and Animal Welfare Labelling Initiative in Germany.

Mr Vytenis **Andriukaitis** receives Mr Gérald Darmanin, Minister for Public Action and Accounts of France.

M. Pierre **Moscovici** à Paris, France (jusqu'à 30/01): rencontre M. Ramon Fernandez, Directeur général délégué d'Orange; Mme. Véronique Cayla, Présidente d'ARTE; M. Edouard Philippe, Premier ministre de la République française; et présente ses vœux 2018 aux forces vives de la République française.

Ms Věra **Jourová** delivers a keynote speech at the high-level Conference on Victim's Rights, in Brussels.

Ms Věra **Jourová** receives Mr Robert Gordon and Mr John Popolizio, Co-founders of Sovy.

Ms Věra **Jourová** receives Mr Andrej Babiš, Prime Minister of the Czech Republic.

Ms Corina **Crețu** in Bucharest, Romania (until 30/01): delivers the closing speech at the "European funds, absorption and stimulus. How we connect Romania in a centenary year?" conference; attends the award ceremony "Gold medal academic merit Virgil Madgearu" at Bucharest University of Economic Studies (ASE); and award ceremony for the "European Reporter and Blogger" contest.

Ms Margrethe **Vestager** in Berlin, Germany: meets Mr Wolfgang Schäuble, President of the Bundestag; participates in a [Citizens' dialogue](#) with pupils on "Your voice in Europe"; and receives an award from the Schwarzkopf Foundation.

Mr Carlos **Moedas** reçoit Mr Frédéric Saint Geours, Président du Conseil de Surveillance de la SNCF.

Mr Julian **King** participates in the official launch of the CrisisTech start-up programme, organised by the European Emergency Number Association (EENA), in Brussels.

Mr Julian **King** participates in a meeting with Member States' experts on victims' rights, in Brussels.

Mr Julian **King** receives Mr Joseph Garcia, Deputy Chief Minister of Gibraltar.

Ms Mariya **Gabriel** attends the trilogue on Audiovisual Media Services Directive.

Mardi 30 janvier 2018

President Jean-Claude **Juncker** receives Mr Radek Vondráček, President of the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Republic.

Mr Frans **Timmermans** meets Mr Winfried Kretschmann, Minister-President of Baden-Württemberg, in Brussels.

Mr Frans **Timmermans** receives Mr Radek Vondráček, President of the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Republic.

Mr Frans **Timmermans** receives Mr Ahmed Marcouch, Mayor of Arnhem (The Netherlands).

Mr Andrus **Ansip** receives receives Mr Radek Vondráček, President of the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Republic.

Mr Andrus **Ansip**, Ms Věra **Jourová** and MsMariya **Gabriel** attend a roundtable with business associations to discuss privacy shield, GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) and ePrivacy.

Mr Maroš **Šefčovič** in Zagreb, Croatia: on Energy Union Tour: meets energy stakeholders; delivers a keynote speech at “The New Croatian Energy Strategy” conference; participates in a [Citizens’ Dialogue](#) on “European Energy Union: what does it mean for you and for Croatia?”; meets Ms Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, President of Croatia; Mr Andrej Plenković, Prime Minister of Croatia; Ms Martina Dalić, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for the Economy, Enterprise and Small Business; and Mr Tomislav Čorić, Minister for Environment and Energy; and exchanges views with Members of the Parliament of Croatia.

Mr Valdis **Dombrovskis** delivers introductory remarks at the [public hearing on simpler withholding tax procedures for Europe](#), organised by the European Commission, in Brussels.

Mr Valdis **Dombrovskis** receives Mr Jānis Reirs, Minister for Welfare of Latvia.

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** receives representatives of AIM – European Brands Association.

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** receives a group of young Italian entrepreneurs.

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** delivers the keynote address at the [Back from Davos Conference](#), in Brussels.

Mr Johannes **Hahn** in Minsk, Belarus: on official visit.

Ms Cecilia **Malmström** and Mr Phil **Hogan** participate in the Mercosur Ministerial meeting, in Brussels.

Mr Miguel **Arias Cañete** receives Mr Jean-Louis Chaussade, CEO of SUEZ.

Mr Miguel **Arias Cañete** receives Mr Marcelino Oreja, CEO of Enagas, Mr Pascal De Buck, CEO and Chairman of the Executive Board of Fluxys, and Mr Carlo

Malacarne, Chairman at Snam.

Mr Karmenu **Vella** receives various Member States' ministers on Air Quality.

Mr Karmenu **Vella** receives Mr Jean-Louis Chaussade, CEO of SUEZ.

Mr Dimitris **Avramopoulos** receives Mr Yuriy Lutsenko, Prosecutor General of Ukraine.

Ms Marianne **Thyssen** attends a meeting with the Forum of Stakeholders of the European Solidarity Corp, in Brussels.

Ms Marianne **Thyssen** receives Mr Jānis Reirs, Minister for Welfare of Latvia.

Ms Marianne **Thyssen** receives representatives of the Norwegian Parliament.

M. Pierre **Moscovici** à Paris, France: rencontre M. Bruno Le Maire, Ministre de l'Economie et des Finances de la France; et M. Philippe Darmayan, Président d'ArcelorMittal France.

Ms Elżbieta **Bieńkowska** receives representatives of Rethink Plastic Alliance.

Ms Elżbieta **Bieńkowska** receives Mr Stefan Oschmann, President of the Board of European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPIA).

Ms Věra **Jourová** receives Mr Radek Vondráček, President of the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Republic.

Ms Věra **Jourová** delivers a keynote speech at the opening of Roma Holocaust Exhibition, at the European Commission, in Brussels.

Mr Tibor **Navracsics** gives an opening speech at the Sport Info Day for Erasmus and stakeholders, in Brussels.

Mr Tibor **Navracsics** delivers a keynote speech at the New Narrative for Europe closing event, in Brussels.

Ms Corina **Crețu** in Bucharest, Romania: meets Ms Viorica Dancilă, Prime Minister-designate of Romania.

Ms Margrethe **Vestager** receives Mr Per Espen Stoknes, Member of the Norwegian Green Party.

Mr Carlos **Moedas** attends a working breakfast on digital policy with Portuguese representatives of international telecom companies, in Brussels.

Mr Carlos **Moedas** receives Ms Daria Tataj, Chair of the High-Level Group of Research, Innovation and Science Policy Experts (RISE) and members of the Group.

Mr Carlos **Moedas** delivers a keynote speech at the European Internet Forum event, at the European Parliament, in Brussels.

Mr Julian **King** in The Hague, the Netherlands: meets Ms Kajsa Ollongren,

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for the Interior of the Netherlands, and Mr Ferdinand Grapperhaus, Minister for Justice and Security; and visits the Netherlands Passenger Name Records platform.

Ms Mariya **Gabriel** delivers a speech at the European Parliament hearing “Making Data Flow Free: Saying no to Data Protectionism within the EU”, in Brussels.

Ms Mariya **Gabriel** delivers a speech at a public event showcasing the European Animation Action Plan, at the European Parliament, in Brussels.

Mercredi 31 janvier 2018

College meeting

President Jean-Claude **Juncker** receives Mr Klaus Iohannis, President of Romania for a meeting with the College of Commissioners followed by a working lunch.

President Jean-Claude **Juncker** holds a joint press point with Mr Klaus Iohannis, President of Romania.

President Jean-Claude **Juncker** participates in a panel discussion with Mr Felipe González, former Prime Minister of Spain at the event “40 years of Spain in Europe: A common future” organised by El País.

President Jean-Claude **Juncker**, together with the College of Commissioners, participates at the launching of the European Year of Cultural Heritage in the Grand Place of Brussels.

President Jean-Claude **Juncker** receives Mr António Costa, Prime Minister of Portugal, for a working dinner.

Mr Frans **Timmermans** receives Mr Wim van de Donk, King’s Commissioner, Province of North Brabant (The Netherlands).

Mr Frans **Timmermans** receives Ms Nelleke Vedelaar, Chair of the Dutch Workers’ Party (PvdA).

Mr Frans **Timmermans** delivers a keynote speech at the [“Brussels Binder Launch Event: Improving Diversity in Policy Debates”](#), in Brussels.

Ms Federica **Mogherini** hosts the extraordinary session of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC), in Brussels.

Ms Federica **Mogherini** receives Mr Abdullah bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Arab Emirates.

Mr Valdis **Dombrovskis** in Dublin, Ireland (until 01/02): delivers closing keynote address at the [European Financial Forum](#); and meets Mr Paschal

Donohoe, Minister for Finance and Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform of Ireland.

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** receives Mr John Allan, Vice-President of the Confederation of British Industry and Chairman of Tesco PLC.

Mr Johannes **Hahn** participates in the extraordinary session of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) in Brussels.

Mr Johannes **Hahn** in Schwäbisch Hall, Germany: participates in the *2018 Weltmarktführergipfel*.

Mr Vytenis **Andriukaitis** participates in a meeting of the Scientific Advice Mechanism High-Level Group (SAM) of the European Commission, in Brussels.

Mr Phil **Hogan** delivers a speech at the [Information Day on Promotion of Agricultural Products](#), in Brussels.

Mr Tibor **Navracsics** attends a conference on promoting Christian heritage of Europe, organised by the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community, in Brussels.

Mr Tibor **Navracsics** delivers a keynote speech at the New Narrative for Europe closing event, in Brussels.

Mr Carlos **Moedas** receives members of the High-Level Group of Scientific Advisors of the EC Scientific Advice Mechanism to discuss on pesticides and plant protection products.

Mr Julian **King** delivers a speech at the ALDE seminar on "Child returnees: managing the return of European children from jihadist conflict zones", at the European Parliament, in Brussels.

Mr Mariya **Gabriel** receives Ms Nadia Tjahja, Steering Committee Member of the Youth Coalition on Internet Governance.

Ms Mariya **Gabriel** receives Mr Henrique Mota, President of the Federation of European Publishers.

Ms Mariya **Gabriel** receives Ms Véronique Desbrosses, General Manager of the European grouping of author societies (GESAC).

Jeudi 01 février 2018

01-02/02 Informal meeting of competitiveness ministers, in Sofia

President Jean-Claude **Juncker** receives Mr Hans Niessl, *Landeshauptmann* of Burgenland.

Mr Frans **Timmermans** meets Mr George Soros, Founder and Chairman of the Open Society Foundations, in Brussels.

Mr Frans **Timmermans** receives Mr Raymond Knops, State Secretary of the Netherlands for the Interior and Kingdom Relations.

Mr Frans **Timmermans** attends the [Annual Event 2018 of the Liberation Route Europe](#), in Brussels.

Mr Andrus **Ansip** receives State Secretary of the Netherlands for the Interior and Kingdom Relations.

Mr Maroš **Šefčovič** in Riga, Latvia (until 02/02): on Energy Union Tour: meets Mr Māris Kučinskis, Prime Minister of Latvia; Mr Arvils Ašeradens, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Economics; and Ms Dana Reizniece-Ozola, Minister for Finance.

Mr Valdis **Dombrovskis** in Dublin, Ireland: delivers an address to the Oireachtas' "Joint Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform, and Taoiseach"; participates in a roundtable meeting with social partners and stakeholders on the European Semester; and meets Ms Regina Doherty, Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection of Ireland.

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** in Mexico City, Mexico: meets Mr Ernesto Cordero, President of the Mexican Senate and Chairs of the Senate's International Relations, Economy and Europe Committees; Mr Luis Videgaray Caso, Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Mexico; Mr Ildefonso Guajardo, Secretary for Economy; and attends a working lunch with EU and Mexican business representatives.

Mr Neven **Mimica** in Dakar, Senegal (until 03/02): participates in the financing conference of the Global Partnership for Education; meets Ms Henrietta Fore, Executive Director of the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF); and Mr Macky Sall, President of Senegal.

Mr Vytenis **Andriukaitis** in Norway (until 02/02): meets Mr Bent Høie, Minister for Health and Care Services; Mr Jon Georg Dale, Minister for Agriculture and Food; and Mr Per Sandberg, Minister for Fisheries.

M. Pierre **Moscovici** prononce un discours lors de la 16ième Conférence annuel sur les services financières organisé par BNP Paribas, à Bruxelles.

M. Pierre **Moscovici** reçoit des élèves du lycée Angellier à Dunkerque Nord.

M. Pierre **Moscovici** reçoit M. Jay Carnay, Vice-président des Affaires Corporatives Mondiales chez Amazon Directeur général adjoint d'Amazon.

M. Pierre **Moscovici** rencontre des représentants d'*Informal EU Network of Independent Fiscal Institutions (EUNIFI)*.

M. Pierre **Moscovici** à Paris, France: prononce un discours sur "Comment l'Europe peut-elle protéger les citoyens" à une conférence organisé par l'Institut des hautes études de Défense nationale.

Mr Phil **Hogan** in Ireland (until 02/02): attends an event organised by Dublin Port; and speaks to the Association of European Journalists.

Ms Elżbieta **Bieńkowska** in Sofia, Bulgaria: attends the Informal meeting of competitiveness ministers.

Ms Věra **Jourová** in Prague, Czech Republic (until 02/02): delivers a keynote speech at the conference “Implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation in the daily practice of public administration”, organised by the Government office; attends roundtable of the Chamber of Commerce on Artificial Intelligence; meets representatives of the Committee for European Affairs of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament; and representatives of Prague Business Club.

Mr Tibor **Navracsics** receives Mr Andrea Agnelli, Chairman at the Executive Board of the European Club Association (ECA).

Mr Tibor **Navracsics** receives Mr Jay Carney, Senior Vice-President of Worldwide Corporate Affairs at Amazon.

Ms Margrethe **Vestager** receives Mr George Soros, Founder and Chairman of the Open Society Foundations.

Mr Carlos **Moedas** receives members of the High-Level Group of Scientific Advisors of the EC Scientific Advice Mechanism to discuss on pesticides and plant protection products.

Mr Julian **King** receives Mr Jes Staley, CEO of Barclays.

Mr Julian **King** receives Mr Jay Carney, Senior Vice-President of Worldwide Corporate Affairs at Amazon.

Mr Julian **King** in Scotland, the United Kingdom (until 02/02): meets Ms Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister of Scotland, and Mr Michael Matheson, Cabinet Secretary for Justice; and delivers a lecture at Stirling University.

Ms Mariya **Gabriel** receives Mr Phillip Malloch, Chairman of European Telecommunications Network Operators' Association (ETNO), and Ms Lise Fuhr, Director General of ETNO.

Ms Mariya **Gabriel** delivers a speech at a meeting reviewing the strategy for electronics value chains in Europe, in Brussels.

Ms Mariya **Gabriel** delivers a speech at the [2018 Open PM2 Conference](#)., in Brussels.

Ms Mariya **Gabriel** attends the opening concert of the Bulgarian presidency, in Brussels.

Vendredi 02 février 2018

Informal meeting of competitiveness ministers, in Sofia

President Jean-Claude **Juncker** receives Mr Dragan Čović, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr Maroš **Šefčovič** in Riga, Latvia: on Energy Union Tour: meets members of the European Affairs Committee of Saeima (Parliament of Latvia); participates in a [Citizens' dialogue](#); and visits the construction site of Kurzeme Ring

Project.

Mr Johannes **Hahn** in Washington D.C., the United States: on official visit.

Mr Miguel **Arias Cañete** in Madrid, Spain: delivers a keynote speech at KREAB; attends a working lunch with the Association of European Journalists; and meets Mr Borja Gumuzio, Director at Enertika Bilbao.

Mr Karmenu **Vella** delivers a speech at the conference on "[EU aquaculture – farmed in the EU regions](#)", in Brussels.

Mr Vytenis **Andriukaitis** in Norway: meets Mr Jon Georg Dale, Minister of Agriculture and Food; Norwegian participants of the European Reference Networks (ERN); attends a presentation on Norwegian priorities in the area of eHealth; and a presentation on Norway's contribution to Emergency Medical Teams.

M. Pierre **Moscovici** en Bretagne, France: visite les entreprises Technicolor et Excelcar; et participe à un [dialogue citoyens](#) et à un débat sur le sujet "Quel avenir pour la social-démocratie en Europe".

Mr Phil **Hogan** in Kilkenny, Ireland: delivers a keynote address at the opening of the [PAC Conference: "Smart Farming – Contractors and Farmers Working Together"](#); and meets representatives of the Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association (ICMSA).

Ms Věra **Jourová** in Prague, Czech Republic: meets Ms Marta Nováková, President of the Czech Confederation of Commerce and Tourism.

Ms Margrethe **Vestager** in Copenhagen, Denmark (until 03/02): meets Mr Brian Mikkelsen, Minister for Industry, Business and Financial Affairs of Denmark; delivers a speech at the international "Democratic debate in a complex world"; meets Mr Thomas Friberg and Mr Ludvig Wier, researchers at the Department of Economics of the University of Copenhagen; and Mr Gabriel Zucman, Assistant Professor of Economics at Berkeley, University of California.

Mr Carlos **Moedas** in Sofia, Bulgaria: attends the Informal meeting of competitiveness ministers.

Mr Julian **King** in Scotland, the United Kingdom: meets with Mr Iain Livingstone, Acting Chief Constable for the Scottish Police College; participates in a roundtable hosted by Mr James Wolffe, Lord Advocate; and in a cybersecurity roundtable at the Heriot Watt University; and visits the Scottish Crime Campus agencies.

Samedi 03 février 2018

Ms Margrethe **Vestager** in Copenhagen, Denmark: delivers a speech at the European Movement Denmark "Taskforce" seminar.

Prévisions du mois de février:

05/02 EU-Georgia Association Council

09/02 EU-Azerbaijan Cooperation Council

15/02 Education, Youth, Culture and Sports Council on education

15-16/02 Informal meeting of foreign affairs ministers, in Sofia

19/02 Agriculture and Fisheries Council

19/02 Eurogroup

20/02 Economic and Financial Affairs Council

23/02 European Council – Informal meeting of heads of state or government

26/02 Foreign Affairs Council

26/02 Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council on energy

26/02 EU-Kazakhstan Cooperation Council

27/02 General Affairs Council (Art. 50)

27/02 General Affairs Council

27/02 Informal meeting of foreign affairs ministers on trade, in Sofia

28/02 Informal meeting of education, youth, culture and sport ministers on culture, in Sofia

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[State aid: Commission opens in-depth investigation on Slovenia's new proposed commitments for Nova](#)

Ljubljanska Banka

The partial sale of Slovenia's shares in NLB is a key commitment to ensure NLB's long-term viability, on the basis of which the Commission was able to approve significant State aid of up to €2.32 billion to NLB [in December 2013](#). In [May 2017](#), Slovenia requested a gradual sale of its shares in NLB in two tranches, which the Commission approved. However, after putting the sale of NLB on hold [in June 2017](#), Slovenia did not complete the sale of a first tranche of its shares in NLB before the end of 2017, nor did Slovenia nominate a trustee to comply with the alternative commitment of divesting its Balkan subsidiaries. Since Slovenia failed to comply with its commitments, the aid granted to NLB in 2013 has not been lawfully implemented. Furthermore, the Commission has doubts that Slovenia's proposed alternative measures of December 2017 can be considered equivalent to Slovenia's original commitment.

For these reasons, the Commission has today opened an in-depth investigation. This gives Slovenian authorities and other interested third parties the opportunity to submit comments on the Commission's preliminary views, without prejudging its outcome.

Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *"Slovenia has proposed changes to its commitment to sell 75% of its shares in NLB and has missed a deadline under its existing commitment. It is the responsibility of Member States to comply with their commitments. At this stage, we have doubts that Slovenia's new proposal is equivalent to its original commitment, which is why we have opened an in-depth investigation. We have to make sure that NLB, which has received significant State aid, is viable in the long-run, also for Slovenian taxpayers. And we have to ensure equal treatment of all EU countries. We will continue to work constructively with the Slovenian authorities over the course of this investigation."*

The new proposed commitments

On 21 December 2017, the Slovenian authorities formally notified the Commission of a new commitment package to replace its existing commitment on the sale of 75% of its shares in NLB. This proposal foresees a significant extension of the sales deadline. It also proposes the appointment of an independent trustee that would exercise the State's shareholder rights until the sale has been completed. Finally, Slovenia proposes that all other existing commitments cease to apply as of 31 December 2017.

The Commission can only accept modifications to existing commitments by Member States and aided banks that were given to obtain approval for restructuring aid (such as the one leading to the 2013 Commission decision), if the new commitments can be considered equivalent to those originally provided. In particular, the new measures have to ensure the viability of NLB to the same extent as the original commitments and address potential additional competition distortions.

At this stage, the Commission has doubts whether the new Slovenian proposal can be considered equivalent to Slovenia's original commitment, for the following reasons:

- The Commission has doubts whether the appointment of an independent trustee can ensure NLB's viability to the same extent as a change in ownership. A change in ownership would allow the bank – at all its levels – to operate solely for commercial objectives, without there being competing short-term or long-term political objectives. In this context, it is important to recall that corporate governance issues were a main factor leading to NLB's past financial difficulty and the need for State aid in the first place. In this context, previous corporate governance measures proved to be rather ineffective. Furthermore, Slovenia was not able to appoint a trustee on 1 January 2018, notably because the selection process is time consuming and will inevitably require regulatory approvals. This means that there will be a time gap during which the bank will neither be partially sold on time as Slovenia had committed to, nor controlled by a trustee.
- The Commission's preliminary assessment indicates that a further delay of the sale unduly prolongs NLB's restructuring period. To ensure compliance with EU State aid rules and equal treatment of all EU countries, the restructuring period to ensure a bank's viability should not be longer than necessary.
- The Commission also considers at this stage that, since the sale of NLB is delayed further, certain other commitments – and in particular those linked to the restructuring period – should be prolonged as well. One example is a commitment to only grant loans if the bank can expect a minimum return on equity on those loans. This would help ensure viability and address potential additional competition distortions as a result of the delay.
- Finally, the Commission also has doubts whether the new proposal for State aid commitments sufficiently compensates for this delay in the restructuring process and will investigate further whether more behavioural and structural measures are required, to ensure the new commitments can be considered equivalent to those originally provided.

The opening of an in-depth investigation gives Slovenian authorities and other interested third parties the opportunity to submit comments on the Commission's preliminary views. This opening of an investigation does not prejudice its outcome. The Commission will carefully review the responses received before taking a final decision.

Background

NLB is the largest Slovenian banking group and had a balance sheet of €12 billion at the end of September 2017. It has received three State recapitalisations, one of €250 million [in March 2011](#), one of €383 million [in July 2012](#). Furthermore, NLB benefitted from a transfer of impaired assets to a State-owned bad bank with an implied aid element of €130 million. In [December 2013](#), the Commission approved under EU State aid rules €2.32 billion in State aid to NLB – equivalent to 20% of the bank's risk weighted assets as on December 2012.

The Commission took its 2013 decision on the basis of the bank's restructuring plan and associated commitments. As a crucial part of this restructuring plan, Slovenia committed to sell a 75%-1 share of NLB by the end of 2017, in order to ensure that the State would no longer influence NLB's day-to-day business. In [May 2017](#), the Commission accepted a request from Slovenia for a more gradual sale, whereby Slovenia committed to sell (at least) 50% of its shares by the end of 2017, and to sell the remainder of (at most) 25%-1 by the end of 2018.

More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the [public case register](#) under the case number [SA.33229](#).

[It's time the Tories put jobs and living standards first in Brexit talks](#)

Five years ago former Prime Minister David Cameron delivered one of the most significant and fateful political speeches in the UK's recent history.

[Go to Source](#)

Author:

[Press release: Warrington's £34 million flood defence scheme officially complete](#)

More than 2,000 Warrington homes and businesses will benefit from the town's multi-million pound flood defence scheme, officially opened today (26 January) by Environment Agency Chief Executive, Sir James Bevan and the town's Mayor, Councillor Les Morgan.

The scheme is one of the largest value flood defence projects constructed in the region in recent times, and will significantly reduce flood risk to the town which has been no stranger to flooding – given it sits in naturally low-lying land and within the path of the River Mersey and its tributaries.

The £34 million scheme brings increased flood protection to properties in 9

residential and public areas of Warrington, better protecting the hundreds of families and businesses who have experienced flooding in the past and are aware of the destruction it can bring.

Sir James Bevan, Environment Agency Chief Executive, said:

The scheme not only brings flood risk benefits but the work in the area is also good news for walkers, birdwatchers and wildlife. It's been great to see the Environment Agency working together in partnership to better protect Warrington – a fine example of what can be achieved by working with others.

These new flood defences will not only benefit hundreds of homes and businesses in the area but will also safeguard critical infrastructure, vital in keeping the town moving.

Due to the scale and complexity of works, the scheme was delivered in 3 phases – parts of which have been effectively operating for some time. Phase one (the Knutsford Road section) was put to the test during the 2013 December high tides, preventing some 200 properties from being flooded. The predicted value of damage to properties that would have otherwise occurred, covered the actual cost of this section of the scheme.

Floods Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

Warrington's new £34 million flood scheme will reduce the flood risk to over 2,000 homes and businesses, and protect vital infrastructure helping to bring investment to the area.

This scheme is an excellent example of how working together with councils and local businesses allows us to make the most of government funding to secure the best possible defences for communities. By 2021, we will have invested £47 million in flood defences to better protect 4,280 homes in Cheshire.

Comprising 5km of flood walls and 2.2km of embankment, the 7.2km scheme has improved amenity and recreational opportunities, as well as habitat conditions along the river corridor.

The widening and clearing of formerly impassable footpaths has improved connectivity, as well as views of the river and across the town, and extensive tree planting has created many pleasant vantage points for walkers and cyclists.

At the Twiggeries site behind Kingsway North, a 500m section of Padgate Brook has been realigned to create a more natural look and 5 hectares of reed bed habitat has been established to attract wildlife to the area.

The town's main park, Victoria Park, has seen major improvement works to the

main entrance, and a 'wavy-topped' railing along the road frontage at Knutsford Road makes a strong urban design statement.

The scheme was designed not only to be functional but to be aesthetically fitting within its environment. Children from local primary schools were challenged to create the winning artworks that adorn the defence walls, from Kingsway North all the way along Knutsford Road.

Funding for the scheme came from a number of sources. The majority – £29m – came from Government Grant-in-Aid, the remaining came from the partners the Environment Agency worked with to deliver the scheme.

The Environment Agency worked closely with Warrington Borough Council, who contributed £4 million towards the scheme, of which £1 million was 'works in kind'. Scottish Power, who owns and operates a high voltage substation in the Howley area that serves almost half of the town, also contributed £2 million to the scheme to better protect this key piece of Warrington infrastructure.

As well as contributing funding, the Council was a key partner in cementing a strong relationship with stakeholders and landowners within the scheme's footprint.

Councillor Hans Mundry, Warrington Borough Council's executive board member for public realm, said:

The work done by the Environment Agency will bring peace of mind to many Warrington people as we work together to protect homes and businesses along the Mersey.

It is more than just functional though, as you will see if you take a walk by the river. It is an attractive addition to the waterfront and has improved the ecology and helped protect wildlife in the area.

You can view [aerial drone footage of the Warrington flood defence scheme on YouTube](#).

Drone footage filmed by Suave Air Photos

[Money for Wokingham and West Berkshire Councils](#)

I had a meeting with the new Local government Minister yesterday, Rishi Sunak.

I explained the poor deal both Councils received when social care funding was reorganised, and asked that DCLG and the Health department considered it again as part of their current review of social care finance. The Minister reminded me that the Councils should respond to the current consultation which ends in March, and was aware of the way the Councils lost out through the 2014 Care Act changes.

I also raised the issue of negative rate support grant, where the Minister again said he was well aware of the difficulties. I have lobbied for no move into negative grant, as our Councils have similar needs to Councils that remain in receipt of grant.

The Minister reminded me that we are part of the Business rates retention pilot which should offer more money. I pointed out that we would want that to continue after the pilot year.