

EU steps up support to address the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh

The new initiative aims at supporting the identification and registration of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, at facilitating the provision of humanitarian support, as well as at ensuring the better protection of particularly vulnerable individuals.

The EU's initiative is a demonstration of its commitment to support the creation of all necessary conditions for the eventual voluntary, safe and dignified return of Rohingya refugees who have fled Myanmar to Bangladesh to their place of origin. In this respect, the EU's initiative aims to support the implementation of the bilateral repatriation agreement between the governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh, which was signed on 23 November 2017. This programme will build on ongoing identification and registration efforts, including biometric registration by the Bangladeshi government. In view of the high levels of vulnerability among the refugees, where there are high numbers of women-led households, many of whom have suffered various forms of violence and deep psychological harm, individual protection and special assistance is essential to ensure appropriate, targeted humanitarian support.

During her visit to the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar on 19 November 2017, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission, Federica Mogherini, reiterated the European Union's support to the Bangladeshi authorities for receiving those who have fled Northern Rakhine State. She also underlined the EU's commitment to provide humanitarian support to the refugees and stressed that *"the European Union will continue to lead the work of the donor community because we believe that human dignity and peoples' lives must always be protected."*

Today's announcement is the latest in a significant number of EU-led actions in response to the crisis, notably: the EU co-hosted donors' conference, which took place in Geneva in October, at which the European Union pledged the leading amount of new funding, and together the EU and its Member States pledged almost half of the overall amount; the EU's initiative to lead the resolution at the United Nations Human Rights Council to establish an independent, international Fact-Finding Mission for the situation in Northern Rakhine State, and then to extend its mandate; as well as several high-level visits to Bangladesh and Myanmar, which enabled direct contacts with the authorities, both by High Representative/Vice-President Mogherini and the European Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response, Christos Stylianides.

This measure is funded by the EU's Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP), and will be implemented by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). It complements the EU's significant emergency humanitarian aid mobilised to meet the most urgent needs of the Rohingya refugee population and host communities in Bangladesh and Myanmar, which in 2017 totalled over €51 million, as well as support to early recovery

and development actions in both countries.

More Information

[Further information on the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace](#)

[Statement by the High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini on the signing of a bilateral repatriation agreement between the governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh](#)

[Press release: High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini's visit to Bangladesh](#)

[Press release: The EU pledges additional €30 million for the Rohingya crisis at Geneva donors' conference](#)

[Press release: Federica Mogherini holds bilateral meetings in the margins of ASEM ministerial: the Rakhine State and the Rohingya refugees issues in focus](#)

[Factsheet on EU-Myanmar relations](#)

[Website of the EU Delegation to Bangladesh](#)

[Website of the EU Delegation to Myanmar](#)

[State aid: Commission approves Polish investment aid to SMEs in the shipbuilding sector; opens investigation into Polish tax incentive for shipyards](#)

Separately, the Commission opened an in-depth investigation into a Polish tax scheme for shipyards. It has concerns that the scheme would give some shipyards a selective advantage over competitors.

Polish investment aid for SMEs in the shipbuilding sector

The Polish regional investment aid scheme aims to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the shipbuilding sector in the Polish Pomorskie and Zachodniopomorskie regions. The aid will take the form of grants, interest-rate subsidies and guarantees. The overall budget is around PLN 77 million (around €18 million).

The Pomorskie and Zachodniopomorskie regions are eligible for regional aid

(under [Article 107\(3\)\(a\)](#)) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union).

The Commission assessed the measure under the [Guidelines on Regional State Aid](#) for 2014-2020, which enable Member States to support economic development and employment in the EU's less developed regions and to foster regional cohesion in the Single Market.

The Commission found that the aid will encourage new investment to modernise a sector that has traditionally been very important for the local economy. The Commission also found that the aid was limited to the minimum necessary. It therefore concluded that the positive effects of the project on regional development clearly outweigh any distortion of competition brought about by the State aid.

Tax incentive for Polish shipyards

In September 2016, Poland adopted a law giving shipyards operating in Poland an option to pay a 1% flat-rate tax on sales from the building and conversion of ships, instead of paying the generally applicable corporate or personal income tax.

This option gives shipyards the possibility of paying less tax than under the normal corporate income tax (19% on taxable income) or personal income tax regime (18% or 32% on taxable income for natural persons, or 19% for entrepreneurs). In addition, the payment of the flat-rate tax is postponed until the building or conversion of a ship is completed.

The Commission started looking into the proposed tax incentive for shipyards after Poland notified the measure to the Commission in December 2016. The Commission does not question Poland's right to decide on its tax system. However, under the EU Treaty the Commission has to verify that the tax system respects EU State aid rules and does not selectively favour certain companies over others.

At this stage, the Commission has concerns that the proposed flat-rate sales tax constitutes so-called operating aid, which uses public funds to relieve shipyards from costs they would otherwise have to bear in their day-to-day activities. Generally speaking, operating aid is not allowed under EU State aid rules, because it distorts competition on the merits without serving any objective of common EU interest. In the present case the Commission is concerned that the aid would harm shipyards in the EU, which are not eligible under the Polish tax scheme. In addition, the aid does not seem to be necessary, given that there are shipyards in Poland which are able to compete on the market on their own merits.

This does not mean that Poland cannot intervene in its shipbuilding industry. Certain categories of aid, such as aid for research, development and innovation or regional aid, are allowed under EU State aid rules. They are considered to be more effective and to have less distortive effect on competition than operating aid. This is the case of the Polish investment aid to SMEs in the shipbuilding sector approved today by the Commission (see

above). However, the proposed flat-rate sales tax does not appear to belong to any of these categories.

The Commission will now investigate further to determine whether its initial concerns are confirmed. The opening of an in-depth investigation gives interested third parties the opportunity to submit comments. It does not prejudge the outcome of the investigation.

Background

In the past, aid for the shipbuilding sector was covered by specific EU rules contained in the [Framework on State Aid for Shipbuilding](#). In 2011, the Commission announced its policy to eliminate differences between the rules applicable to the shipbuilding industry and to other industrial sectors. Consequently, the Shipbuilding Framework expired on 30 June 2014. The proposed flat-rate sales tax does not seem to fall under any other specific EU State aid rules or Guidelines. Therefore, the Commission is assessing the measure on the basis of general assessment principles under the EU Treaty.

More information will be available on the Commission's [competition website](#), in the public [State Aid Register](#) under the case number SA.47690 (investment aid to SMEs in shipbuilding sector) and SA.46981 (tax incentive for shipyards).

November 2017 – Euro area international trade in goods surplus €26.3 bn – €8.0 bn surplus for EU28

The first estimate for **euro area** (EA19) exports of goods to the rest of the world in November 2017 was €197.5 billion, an increase of 7.7% compared with November 2016 (€183.5 bn). Imports from the rest of the world stood at €171.2 bn, a rise of 7.3% compared with November 2016 (€159.6 bn). As a result, the **euro area** recorded a €26.3 bn surplus in trade in goods with the rest of the world in November 2017, compared with +€23.8 bn in November 2016. **Intra-euro area** trade rose to €165.5 bn in November 2017, up by 6.9% compared with November 2016.

[Full text available on EUROSTAT website](#)

Speech: Statement on behalf of NATO allies, 24th OSCE Ministerial Council

STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE UNITED KINGDOM
(ALSO ON BEHALF OF ALBANIA, BELGIUM, BULGARIA, CANADA, CROATIA, THE CZECH REPUBLIC, DENMARK, ESTONIA, FRANCE, GERMANY, GREECE, HUNGARY, ICELAND, ITALY, LATVIA, LITHUANIA, LUXEMBOURG, MONTENEGRO, THE NETHERLANDS, NORWAY, POLAND, PORTUGAL, ROMANIA, SLOVAKIA, SLOVENIA, SPAIN, TURKEY, THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA)

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

This statement is delivered on behalf of the following participating States: Albania, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey, and the United States of America, as well as my own country, the United Kingdom.

Mr. Chairperson,

Arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation continue to play an important role in the achievement of our security objectives. Both the success and failure of these efforts can have a direct impact on our security environment. We welcome the Decision on small arms and light weapons and stockpiles of conventional ammunitions.

Enhancing military transparency and confidence in Europe is a top priority. We remain committed to conventional arms control as a key element of Euro-Atlantic security. Full implementation and compliance with these commitments is essential to rebuild trust and confidence in the Euro-Atlantic region. Russia's unilateral military activity in and around Ukraine continues to undermine peace, security, and stability across the region, and its selective implementation of the Vienna Document and Open Skies Treaty and long-standing non-implementation of the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty have eroded the positive contributions of these arms control instruments. We call on Russia to fully adhere to its commitments and treaty obligations. Reciprocal military transparency and risk reduction have the potential to improve stability and security in the Euro-Atlantic area, helping to avoid miscalculation and misunderstanding. We are determined to preserve, strengthen, and modernise conventional arms control in Europe, based on key principles and commitments, including respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, reciprocity, transparency, and host nation consent.

We remain, inter alia, committed to improving implementation of and achieving concrete progress in 2018 on modernising the Vienna Document to adapt it to the evolving security environment, including through its substantive update. We welcome the wealth of concrete proposals aimed, inter alia, at strengthening risk reduction mechanisms, enhancing military transparency,

preventing military incidents and rendering verification more effective. We call on Russia, which has a very substantial conventional military force, to constructively engage by joining other Participating States in the ongoing discussions in the OSCE to modernise the Vienna Document, so that we can reach agreement on meaningful updates. Full implementation and modernization of Vienna Document will help to avoid miscalculation and misunderstanding. We also underline that the OSCE remains a relevant and inclusive forum to rebuild trust and confidence through multilateral military dialogue.

We welcome the Structured Dialogue as an opportunity to renew a meaningful exchange of ideas among all of the stakeholders of European Security in the OSCE area to rebuild trust. The process will take more time but we value the significant, initial work done in the Structured Dialogue at OSCE during 2017, including discussions of threat perceptions, challenges to the rules-based order, military to military contact, and analysis of trends in military force postures and exercises. We look forward to the continuation of the Structured Dialogue in 2018.

Mr. Chairperson,

The participating States subscribing to this statement request its inclusion in the journal of this Ministerial Meeting.

Thank you.

Scotland's Brexit plan: protecting jobs and living standards

Ahead of the second stage of Brexit negotiations, the First Minister has launched new analysis of the economic impact on Scotland leaving the EU.

[Go to Source](#)

Author: