

[Justin Madders response to Philip Dunne saying that there are seats to sit on if beds aren't available](#)

Justin

Madders MP, Labour's Shadow Health Minister, responding to Philip Dunne MP's remark that there are seats to sit on if beds aren't available, said:

"This is an appalling and ignorant remark from a Minister entirely out of touch with the reality of the NHS winter crisis.

"Placing sick patients in chairs because of acute bed shortages is clearly not acceptable in the 21st Century. And yet with numerous Trusts this winter at times reporting 100 per cent bed occupancy, hospitals simply cannot cope and are being forced into these intolerable situations.

"Patients and staff are currently facing an unprecedented winter crisis. Instead of worrying about reshuffles, the Prime Minister must urgently sort this mess out."

[BGS communications dashboard for December 2017](#)

Here is a round up of metrics for December 2017. For all social media, the item shown is the most popular this month.

[Visit to Unilink in Spencers Wood](#)

I was invited to visit Acante Solutions, a member of the Unilink Group, on the Heron Industrial Estate on Friday 5th January.

This local business has grown well over the 23 years since its foundation. It assembles kiosks and terminals that allow people an electronic means of

ordering meals, managing payments and organising their time and visits. It has been adopted widely by the Prisons service but can also be used in other contexts like a student campus, an immigration and visa centre or shopping centre.

The company has grown to employ 80 people, and exports to Australia and New Zealand where there are similar needs and systems. It is currently seeking 6 more people to help assemble the kiosks.



EU strategy on Iraq: new proposal to strengthen support to the Iraqi people

The proposal outlines both ongoing and longer term EU support to the country, fully taking into account the Iraqi government's priorities.

Federica **Mogherini**, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the European Commission said: *"Iraq is at a crossroads in its history following the territorial defeat of Da'esh at great sacrifice. It is now crucial to act quickly and rebuild the country with the participation of all the components of Iraqi society, to promote and protect fundamental rights and the rule of law in each and every area: only inclusiveness can guarantee true reconciliation so that Iraqis can close once and for all with the past. This needs international support and we are ready to contribute, to keep supporting the Iraqi people and government in these challenges, for the sake of the people of the country and the region"*.

Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides**, who has visited Iraq several times to assess EU aid projects on the ground said: *"The EU has been providing emergency assistance to the Iraqi people since the beginning. Humanitarian needs remain high and many people remain displaced by conflict. I have seen first-hand the suffering in places like Mosul and Fallujah and it is crucial that all aid efforts continue to be impartial and neutral. It is essential to support all Iraqis in need of assistance today and tomorrow, for as long as it takes."*

Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development Neven **Mimica**, added: *"As Iraq takes steps towards a more stable future, the EU is committed to being a key partner in reconstruction, stabilisation and longer term sustainable development. The EU aims to strengthen concrete support to the Iraqi people in a wide range of areas, to foster economic growth, good governance and strengthening the judicial system as well as boosting education."*

The strategy focuses on delivering continued EU humanitarian aid to the Iraqi people and facilitating the stabilisation of areas liberated from Da'esh, with three million displaced Iraqis still unable to return home. It also seeks to address the longer term reform, reconstruction and reconciliation efforts that Iraq needs to pursue in order to consolidate peace and build a united, democratic country in which all citizens can fully enjoy their rights in greater prosperity.

The EU's support focusses on the following strategic objectives:

- Preserving the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq and supporting Iraqi efforts to establish a balanced, accountable and democratic system of government;
- Promoting sustainable, knowledge-based and inclusive economic growth;
- Strengthening Iraq's national identity and reconciliation amongst its

- diverse communities;
- Promoting an effective and independent justice system;
- Addressing migration challenges,
- Supporting Iraq's good relations with all its neighbours.

The actions proposed in the Joint Communication will be discussed with EU Member States at the Foreign Affairs Council on 22 January and with the European Parliament, and will contribute to a new EU strategy for Iraq.

Background

The European Union's last strategy relating to Iraq was adopted in March 2015 as part of the [EU regional strategy for Syria and Iraq, as well as the ISIL/Da'esh threat](#). This Joint Communication is a natural, next step in the EU's engagement moving beyond the territorial struggle against Da'esh. It responds to the request of the [EU Foreign Affairs Council of 19 June 2017](#) for the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the European Commission to present a new strategy to focus on the ways in which the EU can contribute to addressing the specific challenges that Iraq now faces.

In order to implement the proposed strategy, the EU will work closely with the Iraqi government but also with the EU Member States, the United Nations (UN), the Global Coalition against Da'esh, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB), as well as other regional and international partners.

Also, to help consolidate regional and international engagement in support of Iraq, the EU intends to co-chair with the Iraqi Government, Kuwait, the United Nations, the World Bank and other partners a Conference on Iraq's Reconstruction and Development in February 2018. The conference will be hosted by Kuwait and will involve all key donors as well as countries in Iraq's neighbourhood.

The EU foresees a review of this proposed strategy after two years, to assess the impact of the actions outlined therein and to make adjustments as appropriate.

For More Information

[Joint Communication: Elements for an EU strategy For Iraq](#)

[Factsheet – The EU and Iraq](#)

[Delegation of the European Union to Iraq](#)

[International Cooperation and Development – Iraq](#)

[Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection – Iraq](#)

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EU strategy on Iraq: new proposal to strengthen support to the Iraqi people

Today, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the European Commission adopted a [Joint Communication](#) proposing an EU strategy for Iraq in order to address the many challenges the country faces following the territorial defeat of Da'esh. The proposal outlines both ongoing and longer term EU support to the country, fully taking into account the Iraqi government's priorities. The High Representative/Vice-President Federica **Mogherini** said: *"It is now crucial to act quickly and rebuild the country with the participation of all the components of Iraqi society [...]. This needs international support and we are ready to contribute, to keep supporting the Iraqi people and government in these challenges, for the sake of the people of the country and the region"*. Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides** said: *"The EU has been at the forefront in providing emergency assistance to the Iraqi people since the beginning of this crisis. I've seen first-hand the suffering of civilians from places like Mosul and Fallujah and it is crucial that all aid efforts continue to be impartial and neutral. It is essential to support all Iraqi's in need of assistance today, tomorrow and for as long as it takes."* Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development Neven **Mimica** added: *"As Iraq takes steps towards a more stable future, the EU is committed to being a key partner in reconstruction, stabilisation and longer term sustainable development. The EU aims to strengthen concrete support to the Iraqi people in a wide range of areas, to foster economic growth, good governance and strengthening the judicial system as well as boosting education."* Read the full press release [here](#). (For more information: Catherine Ray – Tel.: +32 229 69921; Carlos Martin Ruiz De Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Lauranne Devillé – Tel.: +32 229 80833; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)

Eurostat: Le volume des ventes du commerce de détail en hausse de 1,5% dans la zone euro et dans l'UE28

En novembre 2017 par rapport à octobre 2017, le volume des ventes du commerce de détail corrigé des variations saisonnières a augmenté de 1,5% tant dans la zone euro (ZE19) que dans l'UE28, selon les estimations d'Eurostat, l'office statistique de l'Union européenne. En octobre, le commerce de détail avait reculé de 1,1% dans la zone euro et de 0,6% dans l'UE28. En novembre 2017 par rapport à novembre 2016, l'indice des ventes de détail s'est accru de 2,8% dans la zone euro et de 2,7% dans l'UE28. Un communiqué de presse est disponible [ici](#). (Pour plus d'information: Lucía Caudet – Tel.: +32 229 56182; Victoria von Hammerstein – Tel.: +32 229 55040; Maud Noyon – Tel. +32 229-80379)

STATEMENTS

Removing illegal content online: Commission calls for more efforts and faster progress from all sides

Several Commissioners will meet tomorrow in Brussels with representatives of online platforms to discuss progress made in tackling the spread of illegal content online, including online terrorist propaganda and xenophobic, racist or hate speech as well as breaches of intellectual property rights. The meeting will be a good opportunity for a frank and open exchange about progress made and lessons learned. Vice-President Andrus **Ansip**, Commissioners Dimitris **Avramopoulos**, Elżbieta **Bieńkowska**, Věra **Jourová**, Julian **King** and Mariya **Gabriel** issued a joint statement ahead of the meeting, saying: *“The Commission is counting on online platforms to step up and speed up their efforts to tackle these threats quickly and comprehensively, including closer cooperation with national and enforcement authorities, increased sharing of know-how between online players and further action against the reappearance of illegal content. We will continue to promote cooperation with social media companies to detect and remove terrorist and other illegal content online, and if necessary, propose legislation to complement the existing regulatory framework.”* The full statement is available [here](#). Tomorrow’s meeting follows the Commission [guidelines and principles](#) for online platforms presented in September 2017 to increase the prevention, detection and removal of illegal content online. Further details are available [here](#). (For more information: *Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456; Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel. +32 229 67083; Inga Höglund – Tel.: +32 229 50698*)

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