

# EASO Publishes Practical Guide on Age Assessment

Following the publication of the [‘EASO age assessment practice in Europe’ in 2013](#), a new EASO Practical Guide provides updated guidance, key recommendations and tools on the implementation of the best interests of the child when assessing the age of a person from a multidisciplinary and holistic approach. It also provides up-to-date information on the methods conducted by EU+ states and on new methods to be explored.

Age assessment remains a complex process with potential far-reaching consequences for applicants undergoing the assessment. Age assessment methods and processes differ across EU Member States and reliable multidisciplinary and rights-compliant age assessment processes are not always guaranteed. To support national authorities in the safeguarding of the principle of the best interests of the child, the Practical Guide:

- analyses the impact of age assessment on the applicant and the motivation for such an assessment;
- offers guidance on the application of the necessary safeguards in the assessment process;
- describes how to implement the assessment process using a holistic and multidisciplinary approach;
- provides a model for a workflow highlighting a gradual process and use of methods to prevent unnecessary examinations;
- explores new methods used to assess an applicant’s age, the latest developments in the methods already in use and the potential impact of each method on the rights of the applicant;
- provides key recommendations to address practical challenges that might appear prior to, after and at different stages of the process;
- contains a set of tools and reference documents to complement the information provided in the practical guide, including a glossary, a compilation of legal framework and policy-guidance documents, practical tools for ensuring the best interests of the child, and an updated overview of the methods and procedural safeguards in use in the EU+ territory.

While this publication addresses age assessment for the specific purpose of international protection procedures, it may also serve as a useful reference in other contexts where age assessment is required (migrant children, minimum age of criminal responsibility, etc.).

This publication was developed by the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) in consultation with experts from EU+ states, the European Commission, EU agencies and international and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The diverse profiles of experts involved, including social workers, forensic anthropologists and radiology researchers, as well as policy officers and reception officers, ensures that the publication reflects a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach.

The Practical Guide on Age Assessment is available on the [EASO website](#).

*Any further information may be obtained from the European Asylum Support Office on the following email address: [press@easo.europa.eu](mailto:press@easo.europa.eu)*

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## **Speakings by Commissioner Thyssen on the 2018 European Semester Country Reports**

Ladies and gentlemen,

This year's European Semester cycle is a landmark.

You know that we proclaimed the European Pillar of Social Rights at the Social Summit a few months ago. This Pillar is our joint political commitment – by the Commission, by the Parliament, by the Council – to move forward with a stronger social Europe. We need to tackle longer-term causes of change, such as new forms of work and demographic ageing. The success of the Pillar depends on the extent to which we implement it. And this has to be done both at European level and national level.

How do we want to achieve this?

The Semester is our key instrument to steer social reforms in the Member States. Building on the European Pillar of Social Rights, we focus on reforms aimed at better living and working conditions for our citizens. Reforms that make labour markets more resilient and national welfare systems more effective. Our new social scoreboard helps us to monitor and implement the Pillar and social reforms, using a range of statistical indicators. The scoreboard looks at unemployment and employment rates, disposable household income and income inequality. But we also look at early school leavers, how women compare to men in the labour market and the impact of public policies on poverty, among other indicators. This Scoreboard is now an important part of the Semester. We've used it in the country-specific reports presented today. And frankly, our country specific reports have never been so social. They will also underpin the Country-Specific Recommendations that we will present in May.

Now what is the state of play today?

With more than 236 million people in jobs, employment continues to reach record highs. Unemployment is almost back to pre-crisis levels, standing at

7.7% in the EU, the average of the last quarter of 2017. And it continues to fall among young and long-term unemployed. But there are still challenges: unemployment, youth unemployment and long-term unemployment are still very high in some countries. While the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion is declining, it is still high. In some countries household income is still less than in 2008, when the crisis started.

Broadly speaking, however, all Member States made progress in addressing last year's recommendations in the employment and social fields. Although some countries could and should have made more efforts. With high growth, we have a golden opportunity for reforms. I call on Member States to take this opportunity. Now is the time for reform. We should repair the roof when the sun is shining. Good social dialogue is key to this. Involving social partners in defining and implementing reforms increases their legitimacy, quality and also effectiveness of these reforms. In some Member States we still observe a scope for improvement in this respect.

As to the necessary reforms:

(1) High unemployment in some Member States, especially among the young, remains a key concern. Also the employment rate of older workers, women and migrants are points for attention. Many countries are, in a context of demographic change, taking decisive actions in these fields.

(2) With growth back in Europe, we see the trend of increasing divisions in the labour market – such as differences between temporary and permanent contracts- coming to a halt. But wages are not increasing as much as the current situation would call for. This is something the Commission is following closely. When our competitive position is fragile, often during a crisis, we need to be cautious about wage increases. But we also point out when there is more scope for higher wages – by and large now is the moment.

(3) Our societies are changing rapidly and the skills needs on the labour market are changing ever faster. The right education and training are the key to equal opportunities. They are indispensable to get a job in the first place – essential for keeping your skills up to date, and crucial if you need a new job. In Denmark for example a broad education reform is already underway to improve school outcomes and raise academic standards.

(4) Our social protection systems will also need to adapt to the changing society. More flexibility in the workplace must go hand in hand with more security. We have to ensure that everybody, whatever their employment status, contributes and is covered by social protection. We need to be aware of these risks, and adjust our systems in a comprehensive way. Next week I will present a proposal to address this.

Several Member States are already starting to address this problem. France, Lithuania, Poland and Portugal are extending access to social safety nets to people in non-standard and self-employed situations. In Sweden, the self-employed can now complement their unemployment insurance with a state-subsidised top-up. And I would also signal that finally both Greece and Italy, the 2 last countries, have introduced minimum income schemes, which is

the safety net of last resort.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Solidarity and fairness are founding values of the European project, and also enshrined in the European Pillar of Social Rights. We know that they strengthen sustainable growth. For our social market economy to flourish, economic and social development need to go hand in hand. The Pillar will continue to guide us on this path. Thank you.

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## [Statement by President Donald Tusk on the draft guidelines on the framework for the future relationship with the UK](#)

### **Press contacts**

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Good afternoon. I am very happy to be back in Luxembourg. And very happy to be here with my colleague and good friend, Prime Minister Bettel, to discuss the agenda of the March European Council.

Two hours ago, I sent the EU27 Member States my draft guidelines for our relations with the UK after Brexit. I'm here in Luxembourg to consult the Prime Minister on these guidelines that I hope will be adopted at our European Council in March. It is not a coincidence that once again I start my consultations ahead of a European Council meeting here in Luxembourg with Prime Minister Bettel. I really value your advice – always very constructive and responsible.

My proposal shows that we don't want to build a wall between the EU and Britain. On the contrary, the UK will be our closest neighbour and we want to remain friends and partners also after Brexit. Partners that are as close as possible, just like we have said from the very first day after the referendum.

And, in this spirit, I propose close cooperation within the following areas.

Firstly, as we are confronted with similar security threats, I propose that the EU and the UK continue our common fight against terrorism and international crime. The increasing global instability requires our uninterrupted cooperation in defence and foreign affairs. It is about the security of our citizens, which must be preserved beyond Brexit.

Secondly, we invite the UK to participate in EU programmes in the fields of research and innovation, as well as in education and culture. This is key to maintain mutually beneficial and enriching personal networks in these vital areas, and for our community of values to prosper also in future.

Thirdly, I am determined to avoid that particularly absurd consequence of Brexit that is the disruption of flights between the UK and the EU. To do so, we must start discussions on this issue as soon as possible.

Now, coming to the core of our future economic relationship. During my talks in London last Thursday, and in her speech last Friday, Prime Minister Theresa May confirmed that the UK will leave the Single Market, leave the customs union and leave the jurisdiction of the ECJ (European Court of Justice). Therefore, it should come as no surprise that the only remaining possible model is a free trade agreement. I hope that it will be ambitious and advanced – and we will do our best, as we did with other partners, such as Canada recently – but anyway it will only be a trade agreement.

I propose that we aim for a trade agreement covering all sectors and with zero tariffs on goods. Like other free trade agreements, it should address services. And in fisheries, reciprocal access to fishing waters and resources should be maintained.

This positive approach doesn't change the simple fact that because of Brexit we will be drifting apart. In fact, this will be the first FTA in history that loosens economic ties, instead of strengthening them. Our agreement will not make trade between the UK and the EU frictionless or smoother. It will make it more complicated and costly than today, for all of us. This is the essence of Brexit.

To sum up, we will enter the negotiations of the future relations with the UK with an open, positive and constructive mind, but also with realism. From my point of view, the outcome of the negotiations must pass two key tests:

- the test of balance of rights and obligations. For example, the EU cannot agree to grant the UK the rights of Norway with the obligations of Canada;
- the test of integrity of the Single Market. No Member State is free to pick only those sectors of the Single Market it likes, nor to accept the role of the ECJ only when it suits their interest. By the same token, a pick-and-mix approach for a non-member state is out of the question. We are not going to sacrifice these principles. It's simply not in our interest.

Finally, a few words about another topic of the March summit. Following the announcement of President Trump, there is a risk of a serious trade dispute between the United States and the rest of the world, including the EU.

President Trump has recently said, and I quote: 'trade wars are good, and easy to win'. But the truth is quite the opposite: trade wars are bad, and easy to lose. For this reason, I strongly believe that now is the time for politicians on both sides of the Atlantic to act responsibly.

Given that President Trump's announcement may have repercussions for our citizens and European businesses, not to mention the global economy, I will propose that the EU leaders have an extraordinary trade debate at the upcoming summit. We should have a clear objective in mind: to keep world trade alive. And, if necessary, to protect Europeans against trade turbulence, including by proportionate responses in accordance with the WTO. Thank you.

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## **Daily News 07 / 03 / 2018**

### **European Semester Winter Package: reviewing Member States' progress on their economic and social priorities**

The European Commission has presented the [European Semester](#) Winter Package. The package includes 27 Country Reports (for all Member States except Greece, which is under a stability support programme), the annual analysis by Commission staff on the economic and social situation in Member States and progress made in implementing Country-Specific Recommendations over the years. For the 12 Member States selected last November for an in-depth review, the Country Reports include an assessment of possible macroeconomic imbalances and the package provides an update of the categorisation of countries under the so-called Macroeconomic Imbalances Procedure. For the first time, the Country Reports put a special emphasis on mainstreaming the priorities of the European Pillar of Social Rights, proclaimed in November 2017. A [press release](#) and [memo](#) are available online. (*For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Annikky Lamp – Tel.: +32 229 56151; Sara Soumillion – Tel.: +32 229 67094*)

### **European Commission outlines EU plan to counter US trade restrictions on steel and aluminium**

The College of Commissioners discussed today the EU's response to the possible US import restrictions for steel and aluminium announced on 1 March. The EU stands ready to react proportionately and fully in line with the World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules in case the US measures are formalised and affect EU's economic interests. The College gave its political endorsement to the proposal presented by President Jean-Claude **Juncker**, Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen** and Commissioner for Trade Cecilia **Malmström**. Speaking after the

College meeting, Commissioner **Malmström** said: *"We still hope, as a USA security partner, that the EU would be excluded. We also hope to convince the US administration that this is not the right move. As no decision has been taken yet, no formal action has been taken by the European Union. But we have made clear that if a move like this is taken, it will hurt the European Union. It will put thousands of European jobs in jeopardy and it has to be met by firm and proportionate response. Unlike these proposed US duties, our three tracks of work are in line with our obligations in the WTO. They will be carried out by the book. The root cause of the problem in the steel and aluminium sector is global overcapacity. It is rooted in the fact that a lot of steel and aluminium production takes place under massive state subsidies, and under non-market conditions. This can only be addressed by cooperation, getting to the source of the problem and working together. What is clear is that turning inward is not the answer. Protectionism cannot be the answer, it never is."* The EU remains available to continue working on this together with the United States. The EU has been and remains a strong supporter of an open and rules-based global trade system. (For more information: Daniel Rosario – Tel.: +32 229 56185; Kinga Malinowska – Tel: +32 229 51383)

#### **Eurostat: 8 mars 2018: Journée internationale de la femme**

Les femmes ont gagné en moyenne 16% de moins que les hommes dans l'UE en 2016, l'écart de rémunération le plus faible en Roumanie et en Italie, le plus élevé en Estonie. En 2016, l'écart de rémunération non ajusté entre les hommes et les femmes était juste supérieur à 16% dans l'Union européenne (UE). Autrement dit, pour chaque euro gagné dans l'heure par un homme, une femme gagnait en moyenne 84 centimes. L'écart de rémunération dans les États membres, en 2016, allait de juste plus de 5% en Roumanie et en Italie à plus de 25% en Estonie, suivie par la République tchèque et l'Allemagne (près de 22% chacune). Le communiqué Eurostat est à votre disposition [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Mélanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659)

#### **More Commission support for industrial regions to build resilient and competitive economies**

Today the Commission has selected 7 additional EU regions and Member States for tailored assistance under [the Commission pilot action](#) on industrial transition: Cantabria (Spain), Centre-Val de Loire (France), East-North Finland, Grand-Est (France) and Greater Manchester (United Kingdom) as well as Lithuania and Slovenia, in addition to [the regions already selected](#) in December 2017. Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina **Crețu** said: *"Industrial transition is a major challenge for our economy and society. I am very glad that we will be working with 10 regions and two Member States to help them make full use of their strengths and potentials to embrace innovation, decarbonisation, digitisation, and to develop the skills for the future."* The selected authorities will be able to develop or redesign strategies for regional economic transformation based on their [smart](#)

[specialisation](#) priorities i.e. the regions' niche areas of competitive strengths. Tailored assistance will be offered by the Commission services, external experts and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development ([OECD](#)) to help prepare for the jobs of the future, broaden innovation, support the transition to a low-carbon economy, encourage entrepreneurship and promote inclusive growth. A [press release](#) and a [factsheet](#) are available online. More information on smart specialisation in the participating Member states and regions is available on [DG REGIO's website](#). A signature ceremony between Commissioner **Crețu** and representatives from the Member States and regions will take place today at 14h at the Commission's VIP corner, which you can follow live on [EBS](#). (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)

**Eurostat: Estimation du PIB et des principaux agrégats pour le quatrième trimestre 2017, le PIB en hausse de 0,6% tant dans la zone euro que dans l'UE28, +2,7% et +2,6% respectivement par rapport au quatrième trimestre 2016**

Au cours du quatrième trimestre 2017, le PIB corrigé des variations saisonnières a progressé de 0,6% tant dans la zone euro (ZE19) que dans l'UE28 par rapport au trimestre précédent, selon l'estimation publiée par Eurostat, l'office statistique de l'Union européenne. Au cours du troisième trimestre 2017, le PIB avait augmenté de 0,7% dans les deux zones. En comparaison avec le même trimestre de l'année précédente, le PIB corrigé des variations saisonnières s'est accru de 2,7% dans la zone euro et de 2,6% dans l'UE28 au quatrième trimestre 2017, après +2,7% dans les deux zones au troisième trimestre 2017. Au cours du quatrième trimestre 2017, le PIB des États-Unis a progressé de 0,6% par rapport au trimestre précédent (après +0,8% au troisième trimestre 2017). Par rapport au même trimestre de l'année précédente, le PIB a progressé de 2,5% (après +2,3% au troisième trimestre 2017). Sur l'ensemble de l'année 2017, le PIB a augmenté de 2,3% dans la zone euro et de 2,4% dans l'UE28, contre 1,8% et 2,0% en 2016. Un communiqué de presse est disponible [en ligne](#). (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Annikky Lamp – Tel.: +32 229 56151; Sara Soumillion – Tel.: +32 229 67094)

**Concentrations: la Commission autorise l'acquisition du contrôle conjoint d'European Broadcaster Exchange par les sociétés ProSiebenSat.1, TF1, Mediaset et Channel Four Television**

La Commission européenne a approuvé, en vertu du règlement européen sur les concentrations, l'acquisition du contrôle en commun de European Broadcaster Exchange (EBX) Limited basée au Royaume-Uni par les sociétés ProSiebenSat.1 Media SE, basée en Allemagne, Télévision Française 1 S.A., basée en France, Mediaset S.p.A., basée en Italie et Channel Four Television Corporation, basée au Royaume-Uni. European Broadcaster Exchange est active dans la commercialisation et la vente, au niveau pan-européen, de l'inventaire publicitaire vidéo affiché avant, pendant et après le contenu vidéo disponible sur les médias numériques exploités par les entreprises actionnaires ou par des tiers. ProSiebenSat.1 Media SE est la société holding de l'un des grands réseaux de télévision à accès libre en Allemagne. Télévision Française 1 SA, appartenant au groupe Bouygues, est la société



holding de l'un des grands réseaux de télévision à accès libre et à péage en France. Mediaset SpA, appartenant au groupe Fininvest, est la société holding de l'un des grands réseaux de télévision à accès libre et à péage en Italie et en Espagne. Channel Four Television Corporation est la société holding de l'un des grands réseaux de télévision au Royaume-Uni. La Commission a conclu que la concentration envisagée ne soulèverait pas de problème de concurrence, compte tenu de son impact très limité sur la structure du marché sur le territoire de l'Espace économique européen. L'opération a été examinée dans le cadre de la procédure simplifiée de contrôle des concentrations. De plus amples informations sont disponibles sur le site internet [concurrence](#) de la Commission, dans le [registre public](#) des affaires sous le numéro d'affaire [M.8714](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

### **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of controlling shares in Hyperion by CDPQ**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of controlling shares in Hyperion Insurance Group Limited (“Hyperion”) of the UK by Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec (“CDPQ”) of Canada. Hyperion is an insurance and reinsurance broker, and underwriting agency, active worldwide. CDPQ is a long-term institutional investor that manages funds for public as well as private pension and insurance funds, active worldwide. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because there are no overlaps between the companies’ activities in the European Economic Area. The transaction was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission’s [competition](#) website, in the [public case register](#) under the case number [M.8767](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

### **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Century by Nufarm**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of Century, a portfolio of assets belonging to Adama Agricultural Solutions Ltd of Israel and Syngenta AG of Switzerland, by Nufarm of Australia. Century comprises a portfolio of pesticides including herbicides, fungicides, insecticides, seed treatment products, as well as plant growth regulators. It is sold as part of the [commitments offered by ChemChina](#) to the Commission to approve the acquisition of Syngenta. Nufarm is a public company that offers pesticides including herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, and seed technologies. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because of the presence of several alternative competitors in various pesticide markets within the European Economic Area. The operation was examined under the normal merger review procedure. More information will be available on the Commission’s [competition](#) website, in the [public case register](#) under the case number [M.8725](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### **Security Union: EU Mayors to discuss security of public spaces**

Tomorrow, mayors from cities across Europe will gather in Brussels to discuss lessons learned from recent terrorist attacks and to share best practices to enhance the protection of public spaces. The EU Mayors' Conference, "Building Urban Defences Against Terrorism", jointly organised by the European Commission and the European Committee of the Regions, will notably focus on "security by design" solutions, measures to enhance the prevention of radicalisation at local level, public-private cooperation and funding opportunities for public spaces under the different EU financial instruments. Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris

**Avramopoulos** said: *"In a Europe that protects, it is fundamental that our citizens feel safe when walking down the street. Security by design should become a cornerstone of the way we protect our public spaces from terrorism. We are here to concretely help our Member States with funds and expertise so they step up their efforts at all levels – European, national and local."*

Commissioner for the Security Union Julian **King** said: *"We are committed to working closely with cities and local authorities to strengthen the protection of our public spaces, without compromising the very values that we are defending: openness, tolerance and freedom."* Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina **Crețu** said: *"Security in our cities has a social dimension: access to quality and non-segregated basic services, urban regeneration, community empowerment. Solutions will be found by working together at all levels, so we are able to tackle extremism and violence before they can take roots in our streets."* President of the European Committee of the Regions Karl-Heinz **Lambertz** said: *"Community safety is a priority and by bringing together every level of government, the EU is taking the right steps to counter terrorism. We need to cooperate across borders, invest locally to tackle radicalisation and ensure our security services are ready to prevent future attacks. This work starts in our cities"*. Following up on the [Nice Declaration](#) of 29 September 2017, the conference is one of the key deliverables of the [EU Action Plan](#) to support the protection of public spaces, presented by the Commission in October 2017. A press conference with Commissioner Julian King, French Minister of Interior, Gérard Collomb, the Mayor of Mechelen, Bart Somers on behalf of the European Committee of the Regions, and the Mayor of Nice, Christian Estrosi will take place tomorrow at 9:45 and will be broadcast on [EbS](#). Factsheets on the Commission's efforts to [protect public spaces](#) and [fight radicalisation](#) are available online. More information on the conference is available on the event's [website](#). (For more information: Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456; Tove Ernst – Tel.: +32 229 86764; Katarzyna Kolanko – Tel.: +32 229 63444)

### **Commissioner Andriukaitis in Sofia for the 'Role of the Wildlife in Animal Health Management' workshop and Citizens' Dialogue**

On 8 March, Vytenis **Andriukaitis**, Commissioner for Health and Food safety will be in Sofia to participate in the multi-country workshop on the 'Role of the Wildlife in Animal Health Management' organised by the Technical

Assistance and Information Exchange Instrument (TAIEX) of the European Commission and the Bulgarian Presidency. *'Clearly there is no one-size-fits-all overall strategy to deal with wildlife in relation to animal health management. The EU animal health policy that covers all animals in the EU kept for food, farming, sport, companionship, entertainment, as well as animals used in research and kept in zoos is currently covered in many different pieces of EU legislation. The intention is to replace it, over time, by the new Animal Health Law and its implementing legislation which will be presented and discussed in more detail during the event.'* said Commissioner **Andriukaitis** ahead of the visit. In Sofia the Commissioner is scheduled to meet with Mr Rumen Porodzanov, Minister for Agriculture, Food and Forestry, Mr Kiril Ananiev, Minister for Health and coordinators of European Reference Networks. During his visit Commissioner will also participate in the Citizens' Dialogue "Towards more sustainable food production and healthier consumption in the EU" alongside Ms Desislava Taneva, Member of the Parliament and Chair of Agriculture and Food Committee, webstream available [here](#). (For more information: Anca Paduraru – Tel.: +32 229 91269; Aikaterini Apostola – Tel.: +32 229 87624)

### **Commissioners Avramopoulos, Jourová and King to attend the Justice and Home Affairs Council**

Commissioners Dimitris **Avramopoulos**, Věra **Jourová** and Julian **King** will participate in the Justice and Home Affairs Council taking place in Brussels on 8 and 9 March. On Thursday, Home Affairs Ministers together with Commissioners Avramopoulos and King will exchange views on the implementation of the [Passenger Name Record \(PNR\) Directive](#), cooperation between CSDP missions and EU Justice and Home Affairs Agencies and the work with the Western Balkan countries in the area of security and counter terrorism. Over lunch, the Ministers will discuss the issue of terrorist content online and the recent [Recommendation](#) presented by the Commission. In the afternoon, the discussion will focus on the Commission's proposal on [interoperability of EU information systems](#) and the state of play on migration. A press conference is scheduled to take place after the meeting at 18:00 CET and will be streamed live on [EbS](#). On Friday, Commissioner Jourová will discuss with Justice Ministers the reform of the Brussels IIa [Regulation](#) on cross-border matrimonial matters and parental responsibilities. Commissioner Jourová will also inform Ministers on the state of play of the setting up of the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO). Ministers will exchange views on improving the [cross-border access to electronic evidence](#), a session which Commissioner King will also participate in, ahead of Commissioner Jourová's visit to the U.S. and the presentation of a proposal by the Commission on this topic. Finally, the lunch session will be dedicated to the issue of radicalisation in prisons. A press conference is scheduled to take place after the meeting at around 15:30 CET and will be broadcast on [EbS](#). (For more information: Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456; Tove Ernst – Tel.: +32 2 298 67 64; Christian Wigand Tel.: +32 2 29 62253)

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

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# Commission decides on priorities for the Structural Reform Support Programme in 2018

Today, the Commission adopted the [2018 Annual Work Programme](#) defining reform support measures that will be funded through the [Structural Reform Support Programme](#) (SRSP). In 2018, the SRSP will provide technical support to 24 Member States to carry out more than 140 projects. This comes in addition to more than 150 projects selected in 2017.

Valdis Dombrovskis, Vice-President for the Euro and Social Dialogue, also in charge of Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union, said: *“While Europe’s economy has strengthened and is on a steady growth path, further structural reforms are needed to make our economies more stable, inclusive, productive and resilient. Today’s decision will enable us to continue providing support to EU Member States to prepare, design and implement growth-enhancing reforms.”*

The SRSP Annual Work Programme sets out the priorities, objectives, expected results, and outlines actions that will be implemented through the Programme. In 2018, technical support will for example be provided to help Member States reform budgetary systems, modernise public administration and enhance the quality and efficiency of national judicial systems, as well as to help fight against fraud, corruption and money laundering. Further support will be deployed to better manage natural resources and resource efficiency, and to implement Energy Union initiatives. Numerous Member States will also benefit from support to implement reforms of healthcare and social welfare systems. In addition, Member States will be assisted with the development of capital markets, reforms of insolvency frameworks and with strengthening their ability to deal with non-performing loans.

This year, Member States’ requests for technical support exceeded five times the available amount and the number of Member States that will benefit from technical support under the SRSP has increased substantially compared to 2017. To be able to accommodate more requests, the Commission [proposed in December](#) to increase the funding available for technical support activities.

The support provided by the Commission for structural reforms is closely linked to the European Semester framework, as the SRSP is also intended to improve the implementation of reforms highlighted in the Country-Specific Recommendations and Country Reports. Examples of technical support provided in 2017 and earlier are outlined in the [2018 Country Reports](#), published today.

## **Background**

The Commission created the [Structural Reform Support Service](#) in 2015 to support Member States in the preparation, design and implementation of institutional, structural and administrative reforms. The Structural Reform Support Service (SRSS) manages a dedicated support programme, the [Structural Reform Support Programme](#) (SRSP), with a budget of €142.8 million over the years 2017-2020. The Programme entered into force in May 2017. The support provided through the Programme is available to all EU Member States upon their request and requires no co-financing.

As part of its proposals to [deepen Europe's Economic and Monetary Union](#) put forward in December 2017, the Commission proposed to increase the SRSP budget until 2020 by €80 million. An additional €80 million is expected to come through voluntary transfers by Member States from their technical assistance component under the European Structural and Investment Funds. This would increase the available budget for support activities to €300 million until 2020, thus allowing the SRSP to respond to the greater than expected demand for technical support and to provide support for reforms in non-euro-area Member States on their way to joining the euro.

### **Further information**

Factsheet: [Structural Reform Support Service](#)

Press release: [European Semester Winter package](#)

Memo: [European Semester Winter Package](#)

[Country Reports](#)

[Structural Reform Support Service](#)

[Structural Reform Support Programme](#)