

Daily News 11 / 04 / 2017

Bank On Nature: Commission and EIB sign first loan agreement backed by Natural Capital Financing Facility to support biodiversity

The European Commission and the European Investment Bank (EIB) are announcing today the first loan agreement backed by the Natural Capital Financing Facility (NCFF), a financing partnership between the Commission and the EIB supporting nature and climate adaptation projects through tailored loans and investments, backed by an EU guarantee. Today's agreement will see [Rewilding Europe Capital](#) receive a EUR 6 million loan to provide support for over 30 businesses across Europe, focused on restoring and protecting natural areas. This will support and is in line with the upcoming Action Plan of the Commission to improve the implementation of the [EU's Habitats and Birds Directives](#) and is expected to create hundreds of new jobs. Karmenu **Vella**, Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries said, *"Nature is essential for our lives, and our economy. The recent successful evaluation of the EU nature directives illustrated this. The Rewilding Europe project will be the first of many that the Bank on Nature initiative, building on the NCFF, will assist in our plans to create rural jobs and protect nature"*. The rewilding areas concerned are: Western Iberia (Portugal), Velebit Mountains (Croatia), Central Apennines (Italy), Southern Carpathians (Romania), Danube Delta (Romania), Rhodope Mountains (Bulgaria), Oder Delta (Germany/Poland) and Lapland (Sweden). A signing ceremony with Vice-President **Katainen**, Commissioner **Vella** and EIB Vice-President Taylor will take place today at 15.00 and can be followed live on [EbS+](#). A press release will be available at the time [here](#). (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Iris Petsa – Tel.: + 32 229 93321; Enda McNamara – Tel.: +32 229 64976)

EU's Official Development Assistance reaches highest level ever, with €75.5 billion in 2016

New figures confirm that the EU and its Member States have consolidated their place as the world's leading aid donor in 2016. With €75.5 billion in 2016, this constitutes an 11% increase compared to 2015 levels. The EU's assistance has increased for the fourth year in a row and reached its highest level to date. In 2016, EU collective ODA represented 0.51% of EU Gross National Income (GNI), having increased from 0.47% in 2015. Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven **Mimica**, said: *"I am proud that the EU remains the world's leading provider of Official Development Assistance – a clear proof of our commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. We call on all development actors to re-double their efforts to do likewise. And we do not stop there. Leveraging private sector investments, helping mobilise domestic resources and intensifying joint efforts with EU Member States, we seek to make the most of all financing sources for development."* Read the [press release](#) and the [fact sheet](#). (For more information: Carlos Martín Ruiz de Gordejuela – Tel.: + 32 229 65322; Christina Wunder – Tel.: + 32 229 92256)

First Vice-President Timmermans announces Commission plans to revise European Citizens' Initiative Regulation

In a speech this morning at the annual European Citizens' Initiative Day, First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** announced the Commission's plans to revise the European Citizens' Initiative Regulation and further improve the use of this important tool. The First Vice-President said, *"I want to make the ECI more accessible and citizen-friendly. I want the ECI to become a popular and living instrument, one that citizens are familiar with... There are obstacles to a more accessible and citizen-friendly ECI which have their origin in provisions of the ECI Regulation itself. We should take a careful look at those too... This process could culminate in a proposal to revise the ECI Regulation this year."* The Commission will make proposals later this year, based on lessons learned in the five years since the Regulation came into force, and drawing on a public consultation to be launched before the summer. European Citizens' Initiatives were introduced by the Lisbon Treaty as a democratic tool in the hands of citizens. If a registered Initiative receives the signatures of one million citizens from at least seven Member States, the Commission must decide whether or not it will take the requested legislative action, and explain the reasons for that choice. In the first five years, the Commission has registered over 40 Initiatives, which have collected over six million signatures. Three Initiatives have reached the College of Commissioners for discussion after passing the one million signature threshold and two of the three have seen concrete policy actions in response, including in the Commission's 2017 Work Programme. More information on European Citizens' Initiatives is available on the dedicated website [here](#). (For more information: Alexander Winterstein – Tel.: +32 229 93265; Tim McPhie – Tel.: +32 229 58602)

EU releases humanitarian assistance to Africa as needs grow

With an aid of €47 million, the EU will help support the most vulnerable in the Great Lakes as well as in Southern Africa and Indian Ocean region, who continue to face the consequences of years of conflict and displacement, as well as widespread food insecurity and natural disasters. Of this support, €32 million will go to populations in the Great Lakes region – including the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda, Burundi, and Tanzania, while €15 million will go to the Southern Africa and Indian Ocean region, including Madagascar, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Swaziland, and Lesotho. *"We stand in full solidarity with the people of Africa. The assistance announced today will help the millions affected by forced displacement, food insecurity, and natural disasters in the Great Lakes region and in the Southern part of the continent. The EU remains committed to help people in need wherever they are and to leave no one behind,"* said Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides**. Humanitarian partners in Democratic Republic of Congo, where more than 2 million people remain displaced by internal conflict and where malnutrition is high, will receive the main bulk (€22.7 million) of the funding allocated for the Great Lakes region. The

regional impact of the Burundi crisis will also be covered. In Southern Africa and Indian Ocean, funds will go towards helping those affected by food insecurity caused by prolonged drought, as well as to strengthening capacities to manage recurrent disasters. The largest part (€6.2 million) of the package to this region will go to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable in Madagascar, which was hit by the tropical cyclone Enawo last month – one of the most powerful cyclones to have affected the country during the last ten years. *(For more information: Carlos Martín Ruiz de Gordejuela – Tel.: + 32 229 65322; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.:+32 229 69140)*

Capital Markets Union: Commission holds public hearing ahead of Mid-term Review

The Commission is today hosting a public hearing on the progress of the Capital Market Union (CMU) Action Plan and to gather views on the next steps for this flagship project. Vice-President Valdis **Dombrovskis**, responsible for Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union, opened the event in Brussels and Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen** will give a keynote speech. Panellists will include Members of the European Parliament, representatives from national governments, industry and supervisory authorities, as well as consumer and investor associations. Vice-President Valdis **Dombrovskis** said: *“The CMU involves a deep rebalancing of our financial system so we can offer more funding opportunities to our businesses and more investment choices for citizens. We have already delivered more than half of the first batch of 33 actions. We must now build on this solid start and tackle other barriers to cross-border investment. Today’s public hearing is a welcome chance to hear views on how best way to achieve our policy goals”*. Building on the recent public consultation, today’s hearing will inform the preparation of the CMU Mid-term Review, scheduled for June 2017. The programme of the conference is available [here](#). The event is web streamed [here](#). *(For more information: Annika Breidhardt – Tel: +32 229 56153; Letizia Lupini– Tel: +32 229 51958)*

Un rapport de la Commission montre comment la politique de Cohésion de l’UE peut aider les régions à faible revenu et à faible croissance

Dans ce [rapport](#) sur les régions de l’UE qui accusent un retard en matière de croissance ou de richesse, la Commission définit clairement les voies à suivre afin de soutenir des stratégies de croissance régionale avec l’aide des fonds européens. Le rapport évalue ce qui favorise ou entrave la compétitivité de ces régions et les raisons pour lesquelles elles n’ont pas encore atteint les niveaux de croissance et de revenus escomptés. Il identifie également leurs besoins en matière d’investissement – le capital humain, l’innovation, la qualité des institutions ou encore l’accessibilité – ainsi que les instruments de la politique de cohésion de l’UE susceptibles d’aider ces régions à construire leur avenir. La Commissaire européenne chargée de la politique régionale, Corina **Crețu**, a déclaré: *«Pour chaque obstacle au développement, la politique de cohésion propose une solution. Des*

stratégies de développement régional sur mesure peuvent rendre ces régions plus attrayantes pour les habitants, les travailleurs et les entreprises. Voilà ce que nous faisons: nous aidons les régions à cerner leurs besoins et leurs atouts concurrentiels et nous leur fournissons les outils qui leur permettront de mettre en place de meilleures politiques». Un [communiqué de presse](#) et [un mémo](#) sont disponibles en ligne. (Pour plus d'informations: Anna-Kaisa Itkonen – Tel.: +32 229 56186; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tél.: +32 229 56169)

Concentrations: la Commission européenne autorise l'acquisition du Groupe Prosol par Ardian

La Commission européenne a approuvé, en vertu du règlement européen sur les concentrations, l'acquisition de Groupe Prosol par Ardian, les deux basées en France. Le Groupe Prosol est un distributeur au détail en France de fruits et légumes frais, de produits de la mer et de produits laitiers. Ardian est une société de capital-investissement. La Commission a conclu que l'opération envisagée ne soulèverait pas de problème de concurrence dans la mesure où les deux entreprises ne sont pas actives sur le même marché ou sur des marchés liés ou complémentaires. La transaction a été examinée dans le cadre de la procédure simplifiée du 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.8442](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission approves acquisition of Hamburg Süd by Maersk Line, subject to conditions

The European Commission has cleared under the EU Merger Regulation the proposed acquisition of container liner shipping company Hamburg Südamerikanische Dampfschiffahrts-Gesellschaft KG (HSDG) of Germany by Maersk Line A/S of Denmark, subject to conditions. Both Maersk Line and HSDG are active worldwide in container liner shipping. The proposed transaction would lead to the combination of two leading container liner shipping companies. Maersk Line is the largest container shipping company, while HSDG is number nine worldwide. The clearance is conditional upon the withdrawal of HSDG from five consortia (Eurosal 1/SAWC, Eurosal 2/SAWC, EPIC 2, CCWM/MEDANDES and MESA) on trade routes connecting (i) Northern Europe and Central America/Caribbean, (ii) Northern Europe and West Coast South America, (iii) Northern Europe and Middle East, (iv) the Mediterranean and West Coast South America and (v) the Mediterranean and East Coast South America. On these routes, the merged entity would have faced insufficient competition after the transaction. Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *“Competitive shipping services are essential for European companies and for the EU's economy as a whole. The commitments offered by Maersk Line and HSDG will maintain a healthy level of competition to the benefit of the very many EU companies that depend on these container*

shipping services.” A full press release is available online in [EN](#), [FR](#), [DE](#) and [DA](#) (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Concentrations: La Commission autorise l’acquisition du contrôle conjoint de trois parcs photovoltaïques par Engie, Omnes Capital et Prédica

La Commission européenne a approuvé, en vertu du règlement européen sur les concentrations, l’acquisition des sociétés françaises PV Besse et PV Sanguinet par la société française Futures Energies Investissements Holdings contrôlée conjointement par les sociétés françaises Engie, Omnes Capital et Prédica Prévoyance Dialogue du Crédit Agricole (“Prédica”). PV Besse exploite un parc photovoltaïque à Besse-sur-Isole dans la région du Var et PV Sanguinet possède deux parcs photovoltaïques à Sanguinet dans la région des Landes. PV Besse et PV Sanguinet sont actuellement contrôlées par Engie. Engie est active dans les secteurs du gaz, de l’électricité et des services énergétiques. Omnes Capital est une société de gestion d’actifs indépendante. Prédica est active dans le secteur de l’assurance et fait partie du Groupe Crédit Agricole. La Commission a conclu que l’acquisition envisagée ne soulèverait pas de problèmes de concurrence en raison des chevauchements limités entre les activités des entreprises concernées au niveau de la production, de la vente en gros et de la fourniture d’électricité, ainsi que du développement de parcs photovoltaïques. La transaction a été examinée en vertu de la procédure simplifiée du 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.8413](#). (Pour plus d’informations: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission approves energy consulting joint venture between Siemens and Allgäuer Überlandwerk

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the creation of a joint venture between Siemens AG and Allgäuer Überlandwerk GmbH (AÜW), both of Germany. The joint venture is based in Kempten, Germany and operates under the name of egrid applications & consulting GmbH (egrid). egrid is currently solely controlled by AÜW. It will provide energy consulting services on decentralised electricity networks, primarily in Germany. Siemens has worldwide activities in several areas, in particular digitalisation, automatisisation and electrification. AÜW is a local energy supplier and operator of a distribution network in Allgäu. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns due to the limited activities of the joint venture. 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.8430. (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Eurostat: La production industrielle en baisse de 0,3% dans la zone euro – En baisse de 0,2% dans l'UE28

En février 2017 par rapport à janvier 2017, la production industrielle corrigée des variations saisonnières a diminué de 0,3% dans la zone euro (ZE19) et de 0,2% dans l'UE28, selon les estimations d'Eurostat, l'office statistique de l'Union européenne. En janvier 2016, la production industrielle avait augmenté de 0,3% dans les deux zones. En février 2017 par rapport à février 2016, la production industrielle a progressé de 1,2% dans la zone euro et de 2,1% dans l'UE28. Un communiqué de presse est disponible [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Mirna Talko – Tel.: +32 229 87278; Maud Noyon – Tel.: +32 229 80379)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Stakeholder Forum concludes the Commission's consultation on the future shape of the European Solidarity Corps

Tomorrow in Brussels, a major [Stakeholder Forum](#) will bring together around 500 representatives of volunteering and youth organisations, other civil society actors, public employment services, national authorities and young people, to discuss how to further shape and consolidate the [European Solidarity Corps](#). European Commission President **Juncker** said: "Every gesture of solidarity makes a positive difference to someone. Yet, if we bring individual acts together in a common European effort, a whole society benefits. This is what the European Solidarity Corps is all about. We have to cater for the different needs of our young people, organisations and communities across Europe. We have to ensure that everyone who wants to can take part. And we have to respect and make the most of the diverse cultures and traditions that make our Union what it is." The Stakeholder Forum will focus on how to make attractive offers to both young people and organisations, how to ensure the Solidarity Corps functions effectively, supports participants' transition into the labour market and participation in society, and is open to young people with fewer opportunities. The Stakeholder Forum wraps up a broad consultation process involving a [public consultation](#) and a series of meetings with key interested parties. The input received will feed into the Commission's legislative proposal on the future of the initiative, to be presented in late spring. Already now the European Solidarity Corps offers volunteering opportunities, traineeships and job placements in solidarity projects across Europe. Since the launch in December more than 27,000 young people have registered. The database opened to [organisations](#) in March and the first participants already started their placements. The closing session of the Stakeholder Forum with President **Juncker** and the President of the European Parliament, Antonio Tajani, as well as the opening session with Commissioners **Oettinger** and **Navracsics** and the President of the Committee of the Regions, Markkula, can be followed live via [web-streaming](#). (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: +32 229 56184)

Johannes Hahn in Warsaw tomorrow for the Visegrad group Ministerial meeting on Eastern Partnership

Johannes **Hahn**, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, will be in Warsaw, Poland, tomorrow 12 April to participate at the Ministerial Meeting on Eastern Partnership organised by the [Visegrad Group \(V4\)](#). The meeting will bring together Commissioner **Hahn**, Ministers of Foreign Affairs from EU and from [Eastern Partnership](#) countries ([Armenia](#), [Azerbaijan](#), [Belarus](#), [Georgia](#), [Moldova](#) and [Ukraine](#)). The participants will take stock of the progress on deliverables and will focus their discussions on priority projects, such as connectivity and economic developments. Ahead of the mission, Commissioner **Hahn** said: *“The success of the Eastern Partnership is based on our shared values. Our partnership aims to deliver tangible and visible results for our citizens; results that contribute to greater stability and resilience of the region. I am looking forward to participate at the Visegrad group Ministerial. In the last year, we have been advancing in priority areas – economic development, strengthening institutions and good governance, mobility and people-to-people contacts, and notably connectivity, but still more needs to be done. In Warsaw, I will stress that Eastern Partnership is and will remain our priority for the future.”* Videos and photos of the visit will be available on [EbS](#). (For more information: Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Alceo Smerilli – Tel.: +32 229 64887)

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

[Press release – Proposals for cutting food waste – Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety](#)

Environment MEPs put forward a number of possible measures to cut the EU 88 million tonnes per year food waste by half by 2030 on Tuesday. MEPs called on the European Commission to lift existing restrictions on food donations and stressed a solution is needed for the confusion created for many consumers by the “best before” and “use by” labelling.

“In developed countries food is wasted mostly at the end of the chain, at distribution and consumption. Everyone has a responsibility to tackle this problem”, said lead MEP [Biljana Borzan](#) (S&D, HR). “My report calls for a coordinated policy response on labelling, liability and education, as most consumers do not understand the precise meaning of “best before” and “use by” labelling”, she said.

“Moreover, we should address the shortcomings of existing EU legislation where it hinders food donations. We need to update our common VAT system to allow for tax exemptions. A form of “good Samaritan” legislation at EU level could lead to greater volumes of food being donated and reducing food being wasted, without compromising current standards of food safety”, she added.

MEPs call on EU countries to achieve food waste cuts by 30% by 2025 and 50 by 2030, reiterating the objective Parliament set out in its [waste legislation voted in March](#).

National authorities and stakeholders need to educate consumers in the understanding of “use by” and “best before” dates and the usability of foodstuffs after the “best before” date, MEPs stated. The Commission will have to assess the possible benefits of removing certain dates for products without any risk to public health or the environment.

Facilitate food donations

The Commission should also propose a change in the VAT directive that would explicitly authorise tax exemptions on food donations. The EU Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) should get the possibility to finance the cost of collecting, transporting, storing and distributing food donations.

Next steps

The report was adopted unanimously. It will be put to a vote by the full House during the 15-18 May plenary session in Strasbourg.

Note to editors

In the EU, food waste has been estimated at some 88 million tonnes, or 173 kg per capita per year. The production and disposal of this food waste leads to the emission of 170 million tonnes of CO₂ and consumes 261 million tonnes of resources.

The highest food waste occurs in the Netherlands (541 kg per capita and per year) and Belgium (345 kg), the lowest in Slovenia (72kg) Malta and Romania (76kg).

[EU Official Development Assistance](#)

reaches highest level ever

Preliminary OECD figures show that Official Development Assistance (ODA) provided by the EU and its Member States has reached €75.5 billion in 2016. This constitutes an 11% increase compared to 2015 levels. The EU's assistance has increased for the fourth year in a row and reached its highest level to date. In 2016, EU collective ODA represented 0.51% of EU Gross National Income (GNI), having increased from 0.47% in 2015. This is significantly above the 0.21% average of countries that are not members of the EU's Development Assistance Committee (DAC).

The European Union and its Member States have hence again consolidated their place as the world's leading aid donor in 2016.

Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven **Mimica**, said: *"I am proud that the EU remains the world's leading provider of Official Development Assistance – a clear proof of our commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. We call on all development actors to re-double their efforts to do likewise. And we do not stop there. Leveraging private sector investments, helping mobilise domestic resources and intensifying joint efforts with EU Member States, we seek to make the most of all financing sources for development."*

In 2016, five EU Member States provided 0.7% or more of their Gross National Income (GNI) in Official Development Assistance: **Luxembourg** (1.00%), **Sweden** (0.94%), **Denmark** (0.75%), **Germany** (0.70%), who has reached the target for the first time, and the **United Kingdom** (0.70%). Sixteen EU Member States increased their ODA compared to their GNI, while 5 Member States reduced their ODA and 7 remained at the same level as last year. In total, 20 Member States increased their ODA nominally by €10.9 billion, while the decreases in 6 others amounted to €3.4 billion.

In 2016, faced with an unprecedented migration crisis, the EU and its Member States were able to increase both their support to refugees as well as their 'development aid' to developing countries. The overall increase in European Union Official Development Assistance, with €7.6 billion, was greater than the surge in in-donor refugee costs €1.9 billion. Only 25% of the growth of EU Collective ODA between 2015 and 2016 was due to in-country refugee costs, hence, there was growth in ODA, even if these costs are excluded. EU collective ODA excluding in-country refugee costs grew from €59.1 billion in 2015 to €64.8 billion in 2016, constituting a 10% increase.

Background:

Official Development Assistance remains a vital source of financing for many developing countries, but it is clear that efforts have to go much further. This vision, of how development financing should evolve to support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, is agreed in the [Addis Ababa Action Agenda](#)^[1] (AAAA).

In support of this agenda, the European Union (EU) seeks to increase resources for sustainable development, including through:

- Domestic resource mobilisation
- Leveraging private sector resources at domestic and international level to mobilise finance for the development of the private sector
- Stepping up joint programming efforts between the EU and its Member States as a way to improve efficiency, ownership and efficacy of development cooperation.

In 2005, the EU and its Member States pledged to increase their collective ODA to 0.7% of EU Gross National Income (GNI) by 2015. Even though the economic crisis and severe budgetary pressures in most EU Member States meant that the EU did not meet this ambitious target in 2015, there has been continuous real growth in European ODA of almost 40% since 2002. In May 2015, the European Council reaffirmed its commitment to reaching this target before 2030. The EU also undertook efforts to collectively meet the ODA target of 0.15-0.20% of GNI to Least developed Countries in the short term, and to reach 0.20% of ODA/GNI to LDCs by 2030.

The ODA pledge is based on individual targets. Member States which joined the EU before 2002 reaffirmed their commitment to achieve the 0.7% ODA/GNI target, taking into consideration budgetary circumstances, whilst those which have achieved that target committed themselves to remain at or above that target. Member States which joined the EU after 2002 committed to strive to increase their ODA/GNI to 0.33%.

The data published today is based on preliminary information reported by the EU Member States to the OECD and to the EU Commission. EU collective ODA consists of the total ODA spending of the 28 EU Member States and the ODA of EU institutions not attributed to individual Member States (i.e. own resources of the European Investment Bank).

In-donor refugee costs reported by EU Member States rose from €8.8 billion (or 12.9% of collective EU ODA in 2015) to €10.7 billion (or 14.2% of collective EU ODA in 2016). The increase of EU ODA dedicated to finance in-donor refugee costs reflects the fact that in 2015 and 2016, many EU countries, faced with an unprecedented increase in refugees, provided vital emergency assistance and support to large numbers of refugees within their borders. Most of the related costs^[2] can be recorded as ODA only for the first year of a refugee's stay.

There are 30 members of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), including the European Union, which acts as a full member of the committee.

For further information:

Factsheet: [Publication of new figures on 2016 Official Development Assistance](#)

Annex: [Achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals: Putting together the](#)

[means of implementation; highlight on EU early achievements in three key areas](#)

[1] The Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) was agreed at the third United Nations International Conference on Financing for Development in July 2015

[2] See: <http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/38429349.pdf>, line I.A.8.2 Refugees in donor countries (code 1820)

[Estonian-President-visits-euLISA](#)

The President of the Republic of Estonia Kersti Kaljulaid met with the Executive Director of eu-LISA Krum Garkov today in the headquarters of the Agency in Tallinn, Estonia. The principle purpose of the meeting was to discuss the evolving role of the large-scale IT systems in contributing to safety and security in Europe.

Mr Garkov welcomed President Kaljulaid and thanked her on behalf of the Agency for the interest and support demonstrated by the high-level visit. According to the Executive Director it gives a clear sign that the issues of an open, yet safe and secure European Union are high up on the European agenda. Likewise are matters related to innovation, digital transformation and information technology, which increasingly affect the way we manage EU justice and home affairs. Since eu-LISA is the Agency that has a role in both EU values and modern technologies, the importance of eu-LISA for Member States and for the EU as a whole will continue to grow.

President Kaljulaid and the Mr Garkov discussed the impact of transformations in the area of EU freedom, security and justice, which has become increasingly reliant on modern technologies and information sharing. The Executive Director elaborated on the eu-LISA 2017 priorities related to the evolution of the existing IT systems and the integration of new ones in line with their respective legal basis. Both of these major task areas are linked to the revision of the Agency's mandate and with legal proposals that are currently being negotiated at institutional level.

During a brief tour of the Agency's current headquarters, located in the EU House in Tallinn, the President and Mr Garkov spoke about progress on the new headquarters building that will house eu-LISA in Tallinn. The expanded tasks of the Agency related to the current as well as the new systems have made the need for a larger working space increasingly evident.

President Kaljulaid also met and spoke to the staff of eu-LISA, with the offices in Strasbourg and Brussels connected via video conference.

Links:

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Public consultation: effects of pesticides on amphibians and reptiles

EFSA is inviting comments on its overview of scientific knowledge concerning the risks to amphibians and reptiles from pesticides.

The Panel on Plant Protection Products and their Residues has investigated the coverage of the risk to amphibians and reptiles provided by risk assessments for other vertebrate groups. The experts have also reviewed available test methods and exposure models with regard to their applicability to amphibians and reptiles.

In a draft scientific opinion launched for public consultation today the Panel proposes that a specific environmental risk assessment scheme should be developed for these two groups.

Interested parties can submit comments up to 24 May 2017.