

Remarks by President Donald Tusk after the EU-Western Balkans summit

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Good afternoon. Before anything else, let me thank Prime Minister Borissov and his whole team; you did something excellent and I am really impressed when it comes to your effectiveness, determination, and mainly because of your engagement we can say today that the summit was successful, and of course thank you for the wonderful Bulgarian hospitality. *Blagodaria Boyko, blagodaria prelestna Bulgaria* (thank you Boyko, thank you beautiful Bulgaria)

We have just concluded a very good and fruitful EU-Western Balkans summit. I believe that it took us too long since our last meeting in Thessaloniki fifteen years ago, and this is why we decided to meet again in two years in Croatia. This is the best illustration that the integration with the Western Balkans is a top priority for the EU.

Today we reaffirmed our mutual commitment to the European perspective for the whole region. As I said during my recent visit to the region, the European Union is and will remain the most reliable partner of the entire Western Balkans.

And in very concrete terms we discussed how to improve connections with and within the Western Balkans region. We are speaking about human, economic, digital and infrastructure connections. The package of measures we signed a while ago – the so-called “Sofia Priority Agenda” – adds new initiatives to our current cooperation. For example, we agreed to double the Erasmus+ to allow more youth to study in the EU. We agreed to work towards the lowering of roaming charges and we agreed to create more favourable conditions for private investments by providing better bank guarantees.

And to avoid any confusion, let me be very clear: The connectivity agenda is neither an alternative nor a substitute for enlargement. It is a way to use the time between today and tomorrow more effectively than before, so that our citizens and businesses are not waiting for all the benefits of EU integration. Because I don't see any other future for the Western Balkans than the EU. There is no other alternative, there is no plan B. The Western Balkans are an integral part of Europe and they belong to our community.

Before concluding let me very briefly comment on EU leaders' meeting yesterday evening.

We agreed that the EU will step up its efforts on digital and innovation in order to rise to the challenge of technological revolution. You should expect very concrete decisions when we formally meet in June. They will include elements like the establishment of a European Innovation Council in the next MFF, pilot projects including for Artificial Intelligence and more funds for investments. All this will be based on our European values, including full respect of citizens' privacy, also online.

As to the Iran Nuclear Deal we agreed unanimously that the EU will stay in the agreement as long as Iran remains fully committed to it. Additionally the Commission was given a green light to be ready to act whenever European interest are affected.

inally on EU-US trade. Also here, we have achieved a united approach that will strengthen the Commission in its ongoing negotiations with the United States. The EU is even ready to talk about trade liberalisation with our American friends but only if the US decides an unlimited exemption from steel and aluminium tariffs. President Juncker will present our approach in more detail. Thank you.

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[EU-Western Balkans summit: improving connectivity and security in the region](#)

President of the European Commission **Jean-Claude Juncker** said: *"This summit has allowed us to forge even closer links with our friends from the Western Balkans who, step by step, each day come a little bit closer to the European Union – each at its own pace and merits. Being anchored in the European Union means sharing values and principles, including respect for the rule of law, independence of the judiciary and freedom of expression – because the European Union is first of all a community of values and law."*

The [summit](#) and the resulting [Sofia Declaration](#) stress the importance of the Western Balkans' continued commitment to the rule of law, the fight against corruption and organised crime, good governance, as well as respect for human rights and rights of persons belonging to minorities. The effective implementation of reforms in these areas is key for the region's further progress along the European path. EU and Western Balkan leaders agreed to take a number of actions to improve energy and [transport infrastructure](#), as well as [digital connectivity](#) in the region. The EU and Western Balkans partners also laid the ground for an ever closer cooperation in the areas of security, migration and in tackling geopolitical challenges.

Connecting infrastructures, economies and people

To support the implementation of the Sofia Declaration and drawing on the Commission's [Western Balkans Strategy](#) and its six [flagship initiatives](#), President Juncker announced today ([hyperlink to remarks](#)) a new package of measures which will boost connectivity within the region and with the EU, notably through **the Western Balkans Investment Framework**.

- The EU will provide grants for additional 11 high-priority **transport** projects (road, rail, ports) worth **€190 million**. This investment can leverage up to **€1 billion** in loans from international financing institutions. This includes funding for the first two sections of the 'Peace Highway' (Nis-Pristina-Durres) and the 'Blue Highway' along the Adriatic coast.
- In order to develop the new **Digital Agenda** for the Western Balkans, the EU has earmarked **€30 million** for investments in broadband rollouts across the region. Partners agreed to extend the region's arrangements to reduce roaming costs to all six partners, while at the same time the EU will develop a roadmap to lower the cost of roaming between the Western Balkans and the EU.
- Moreover, the EU will support the region's energy transition through promoting **renewable energy** sources, including a sustainable use of **hydropower**.
- In the area of economic connectivity, the Commission continues to support the region's own plan to develop a **Regional Economic Area**, and the Summit welcomed commitments to step up work on recognition of qualifications, as well as on trade facilitation within the Western Balkans.
- The Commission will increase its support for **youth and education**, in particular by **doubling the funding for Erasmus+** for the region and by launching a pilot project for mobility in **vocational education and training**. The Commission will also establish a "Western Balkans Youth Lab" in 2018, providing space for innovative policy-making addressing the needs of young people. Finally, it will support the expansion of the **Regional Youth Cooperation Office** and introduce an intra-regional mobility scheme.

Further elements of the EU's annual Connectivity Package will be presented later on during the year.

In addition, partners committed to the [Digital Agenda for the Western Balkans](#). It will support the move of the Western Balkans towards a digital economy, and includes steps such as a roadmap to lower the cost of roaming as well as a technical assistance package for potential investments in areas such as broadband.

Closer cooperation on security

The EU and the Western Balkans face shared security challenges. At the Summit, the EU and the Western Balkans agreed to step up common work on **key security priorities**:

- countering terrorism including its financing, violent extremism and the return of foreign fighters as well as preventing radicalisation;
- enhanced cooperation in the fight against serious and organised crime, in particular on illicit firearms and drugs trafficking, smuggling of goods and persons, as well as cyber and hybrid threats.

The EU and the Western Balkan partners agreed to build on already substantial on-going efforts by enhancing strategic and operational work in the field of **police and judicial cooperation**, in particular through the participation of the Western Balkans in the EU Policy Cycle 2018-2021, the coordinated EU-wide cooperation against serious and organised crime. With support from the Commission, EU Justice and Home Affairs agencies, such as Europol or CEPOL, will further engage in the Western Balkans for effectively linking internal and external actions against all forms of cross-border crime.

Cooperation in responding to the refugee crisis has demonstrated the value of coordinated efforts. EU and Western Balkan leaders agreed to strengthen cooperation on **migration** and **border management**, including through the liaison officers deployed by the EU.

For More Information

[Sofia Declaration of the EU-Western Balkans summit](#)

Website of the [EU-Western Balkans summit](#)

[Enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans](#)

[Directorate General of European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiation](#)

[Connectivity agenda 2018](#)

[Factsheet Boosting Connectivity](#)

[Factsheet Boosting Digital Connectivity](#)

[Video – Connectivity agenda](#)

[Factsheet – Six new flagship initiatives to support the transformation of the Western Balkans](#)

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[Factsheet – Economic relations – Investing in people, infrastructures and reforms](#)

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[New vans sold in Europe in 2017: large decrease in annual average CO₂ emissions](#)

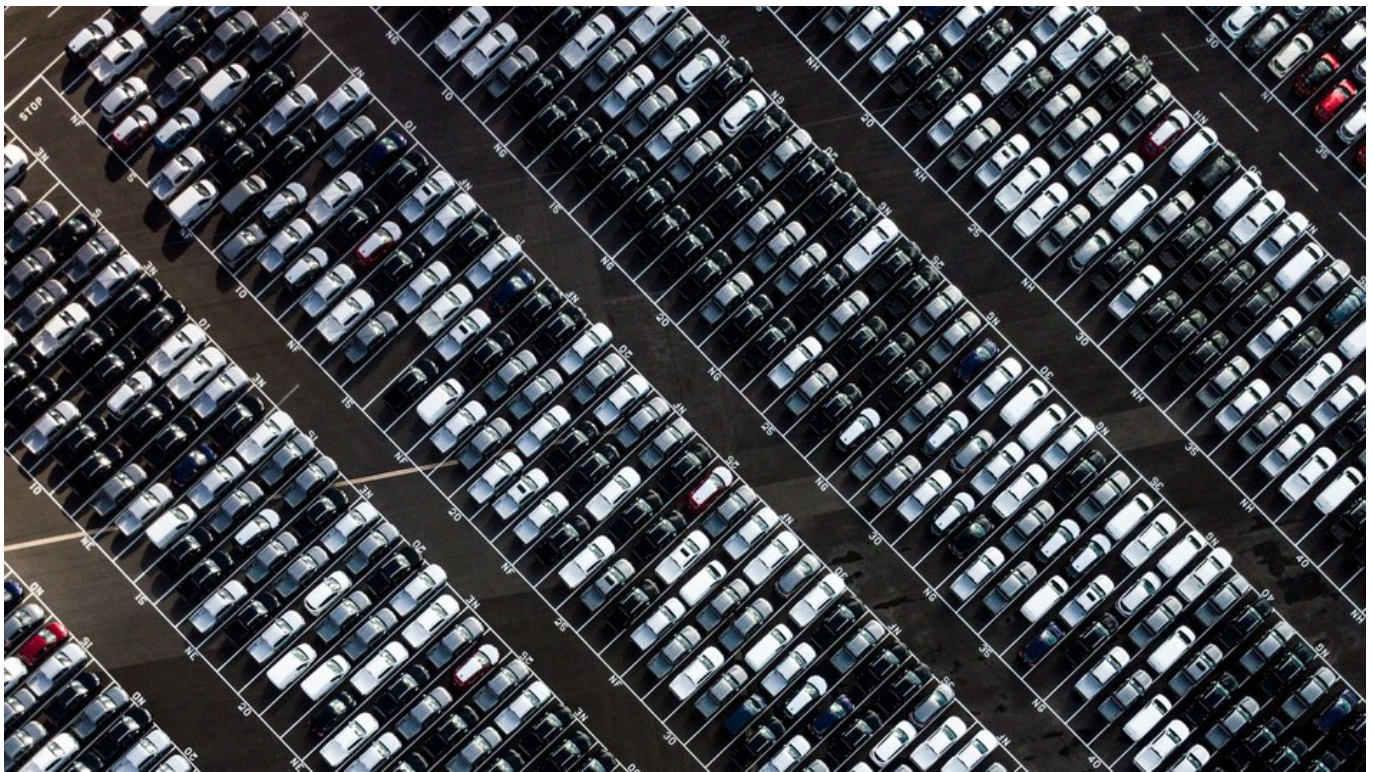


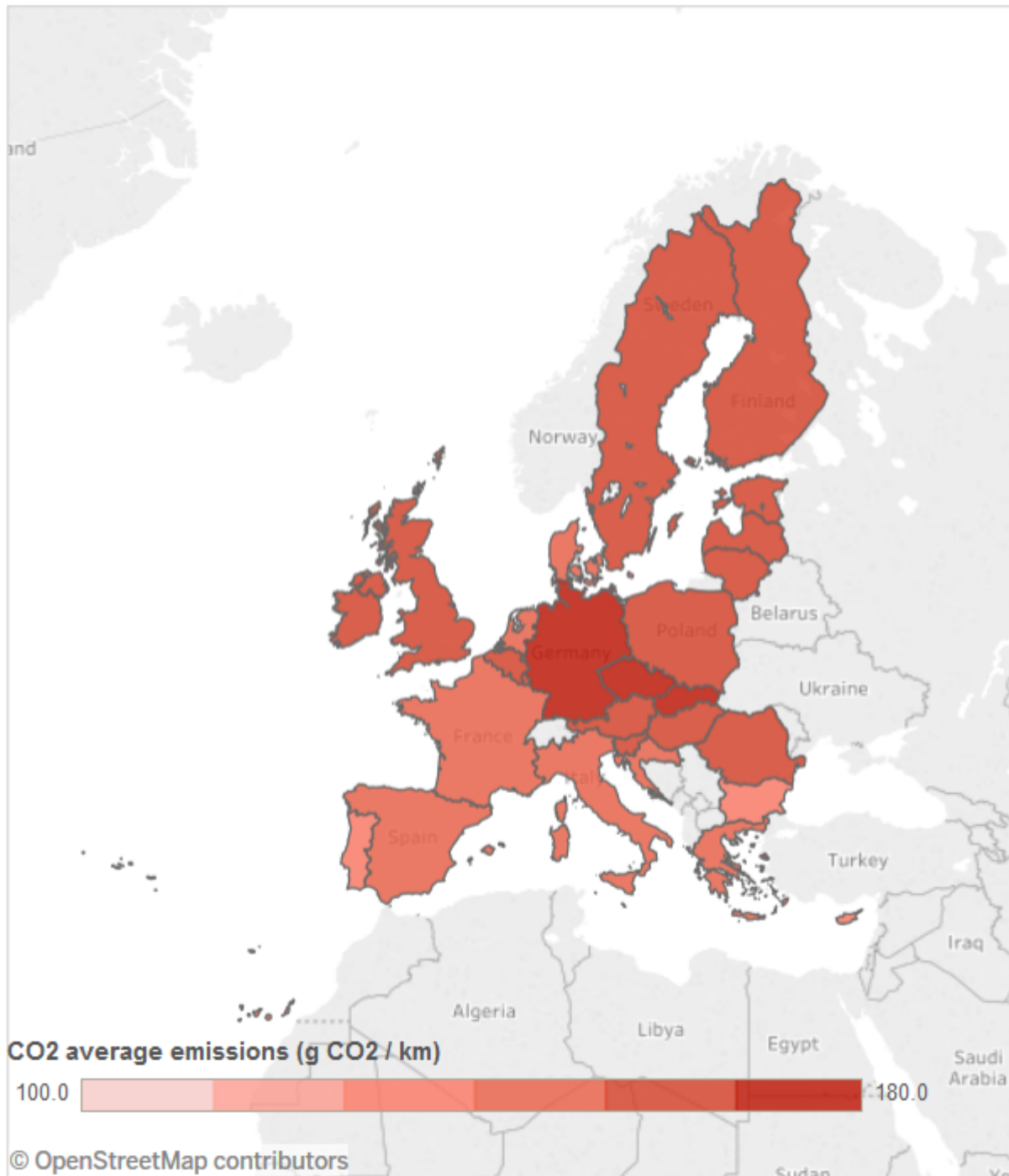
Image © Ryan Searle

The average van registered in the EU in 2017 [emitted 156.0 grams of CO₂ per kilometre](#) (g CO₂/km), which is 7.7 grams less than in 2016. This reduction brings the EU average emissions 10.9% below the 2017 target of 175 g CO₂/km. This target was already met in [2013](#). Further efficiency improvements of 6% are still needed to reach the EU's more stringent target of 147 g CO₂/km set for 2020.

Key findings

- In 2017, almost 1.6 million new vans were registered in the EU as in 2016. Higher sales in Sweden (+48%), Czech Republic (+26%) and Slovenia (+20%) were balanced by lower sales in Croatia (-27%), Hungary (-16%), Ireland (-13%), Poland (-12%) and United Kingdom (-10%).
- Two out of three new vans (64%) registered in the EU were sold in just four Member States: the United Kingdom (20%), France (19%), Germany (15%) and Italy (10%).
- The average fuel-efficiency of new vans varied widely across Member States due to the different models and sizes of vehicles sold in each country. As last year, average emissions were lowest in Portugal (133.2 g CO₂/km), Cyprus (133.4 g CO₂/km) and Bulgaria (134.9 g CO₂/km) and highest in the Czech Republic (173.6 g CO₂/km), Slovakia (170.1 g CO₂/km) and Germany (169.2 g CO₂/km).
- The average weight of new vans sold in 2017 also varied across countries. Smaller vehicles were sold in Malta, Cyprus and Portugal (< 1 570 kg); larger vehicles (>1 950 kg) in Slovakia, Czech Republic and Finland.
- There is now an increasing number of electric and plug-in hybrid van models available on the EU market. Registrations of such vehicles increased by 32% in 2017, compared with previous year, representing 0.8% of the total EU van sales. However, this is significantly lower than electric and plug-in hybrid passenger cars' 1.5 % share of total car sales in the same year.
- Diesel vehicles continue to make up the vast majority of the new van fleet, constituting 96% of sales.

CO2 emissions from vans - Map



Background

The EEA collects and regularly publishes data on new light commercial vehicles registered in Europe, in accordance with Regulation (EU) No 510/2011. The data reported by all Member States in order to evaluate the efficiency of the new vehicle fleet includes information on CO₂ emissions and vehicle weight.

It has not yet been confirmed whether different manufacturers have met their own specific annual target for 2017, based on the average weight of the vans they sold. The EEA will publish the final data and the European Commission

will confirm manufacturers' individual performances in the autumn.

Testing vehicle emissions

Member States report new vehicles' CO₂ emission levels, measured under standardised laboratory conditions, following the requirements of the New European Driving Cycle (NEDC) test procedure. This procedure is designed to allow a comparison of emissions for different manufacturers. However, in recent years it has been widely recognised that the NEDC test procedure, developed in the 1970s, is out-dated and does not necessarily represent real-world driving conditions and emissions due inter alia to a number of flexibilities that have allowed vehicle manufacturers to optimise the conditions under which their vehicles are tested.

The EEA has published a [non-technical guide](#) explaining the key reasons for the differences observed between official and real world driving emissions. The 'Worldwide harmonized Light vehicles Test Procedure' (WLTP) has been introduced since September 2017 to decrease the divergence between laboratory test and real world emissions.

Sofia declaration of the EU-Western Balkans summit, 17 May 2018

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Remarks by President Donald Tusk ahead of the EU-Western Balkans summit and the Leaders' agenda dinner

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We are ahead of a summit during which EU leaders will discuss innovation, European future for Western Balkans, and the response to President Trump's policies on trade and Iran.

Starting with our dinner tonight, we will have a debate on innovation and the digital economy. Europe is lagging behind other major economies in terms of innovation. Innovation is set to impact our lives at an ever-growing pace over the coming years, raising not only hopes but also ethical questions. Europe needs to play an active part in this transformation, as it will be the reality of all Europeans. That is why tonight, I will ask EU leaders two questions: *What do they want to do at the EU level to boost breakthrough innovation? And: How do they want the EU become a major player in big data?*

Following last week's announcement of the United States withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran, we need a united European front. I want leaders to reconfirm that the EU sticks to the deal as long as Iran does. The deal is good for European and global security, which is why we must maintain it. Despite the US hesitation. We will also look at options for the EU to protect European companies from negative consequences of the US decision. And I want the European Commission to be given a green light, so that it is ready to act whenever European interests are affected. We should also seek ways, together with other partners, to address very real concerns over Iran's ballistic missile programme and its regional activities.

Trade is another topic for tonight's discussion. We will decide on the best way forward in EU-US trade relations. Here again, unity is our greatest strength. And my objective is simple: we stick to our guns. This means a permanent exemption from US tariffs on aluminium and steel if we are to discuss possible trade liberalisation with the US. The EU and US are friends and partners, therefore US tariffs cannot be justified on the basis of national security. It is absurd to even think that the EU could be a threat to the US. We need to bring back reality in this discussion, which is not the case today.

Tomorrow, we will meet our Western Balkan partners collectively for the first

time in fifteen years. It will be an opportunity for both sides to reaffirm that the European perspective remains the Western Balkans' geostrategic choice. Beyond the longer-term outlook, we want to demonstrate that we care about socio-economic development in the region here and now. Investing in infrastructural and human connections with and within the Western Balkans is in the EU's best interest. And it will be the objective of our summit. I hope to bring our Western Balkan friends closer to the EU.

Everything we are going to discuss today and tomorrow, has a global dimension. I have no doubt that in the new global game, Europe will either be one of the major players, or a pawn. This is the only real alternative. In order to be the subject and not the object of global politics, Europe must be united economically, politically and also militarily like never before. To put it simply: either we are together, or we will not be at all.

Besides traditional political challenges such as the rise of China, or the aggressive stance of Russia, we are witnessing today a new phenomenon: the capricious assertiveness of the American administration. Looking at the latest decisions of President Trump someone could even think: with friends like that who needs enemies. But frankly speaking, Europe should be grateful to President Trump. Because thanks to him we have got rid of all illusions. He has made us realise that if you need a helping hand, you will find one at the end of your arm. Europe must do everything in its power to protect, in spite of today's mood, the transatlantic bond. But at the same time we must be prepared for those scenarios, where we will have to act on our own. We have enough potential to rise to the challenge. But what we need is more political unity and determination. There is no single objective reason why Europe should have any complexes about anyone else. Being a European is a reason to be proud. We have a right and an obligation to hold our heads up high, both when with our enemies and when with our friends. And this is what, in some sense, our summit will be about.

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