

Agenda of the European Commission

17 – 23 February 2014

**Background notes from the Spokespersons' service for journalists.
The European Commission reserves the right to make changes.**

Monday 17 February:

Organisers of first successful European Citizens' Initiative visit Commission to make their case for action

Monday 17 - Tuesday 18 February:

Strengthening the urban dimension of Regional Policy

Wednesday, 19 February 2014:

Commission adopts new state aid guidelines for airports and airlines

Thursday 20 February:

Commission to launch coastal tourism strategy

Thursday 20 February:

The Commission adopts its monthly infringements package

Monday 17 February:

Organisers of first successful European Citizens' Initiative visit Commission to make their case for action

The news:

On 17 February Commission Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič will receive organisers of the first successful European Citizens' Initiative, [Right2Water](#), for a formal meeting with all Commission services concerned by the initiative. The meeting, a legal right under the ECI legislation, provides successful organisers with an opportunity to explain their ideas and demands in more depth to the relevant Commission departments. It will be followed in the afternoon by a public hearing, jointly organised by the European Parliament and Commission on the Parliament's premises.

The background:

The European Citizens' Initiative was introduced by the Lisbon Treaty. Implementing legislation was adopted on 16 February 2011, although the Member States asked for a delay in application until 1 April 2012, to give them time to make the necessary administrative preparations at national level.

The organisers of an ECI, a citizens' committee composed of at least seven EU citizens who are resident in at least seven different Member States, have one year to collect at least one million statements of support with a minimum number from at least seven Member States. The Right2Water initiative was the first to start collecting signatures online, and the first to successfully reach the target, delivering 1,680,172 statements of support to the Commission, certified by the competent authorities in the Member States.

After the meeting with organisers and the public hearing later in the day, the Commission will have until 20 March to take a decision on the way forward, through a Communication adopted by the whole College.

The event:

- On 17 February, 9h30-10h in Brussels, at the Berlaymont/VIP corner: Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič meets the organisers of the successful Right2Water European Citizens' Initiative.
- There will be a photo and film opportunity at the VIP corner. Vice-President Šefčovič will make a short statement, and the organisers will symbolically 'hand over' the successful ECI. One or two questions will be possible if time allows before the meeting formally starts at 10h. An esPRESSo will be issued soon afterwards.

The sources:

- Homepage of European Citizens' Initiative: <http://ec.europa.eu/citizens-initiative/public/welcome>
- Homepage of Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič: http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/sefcovic/index_en.htm
- Twitter: @MarosSefcovic

The contacts:

Antony Gravili:	+32 2 295 43 17	Antonio.Gravili@ec.europa.eu
Marilyn Carruthers:	+32 2 299 94 51	Marilyn.Carruthers@ec.europa.eu

Strengthening the urban dimension of Regional Policy

The news:

Over two-thirds of Europeans live in cities, setting the trend globally and emphasising the need for urban development to be at the heart of EU political discussions. The urban dimension is now a central element in the reformed EU Cohesion Policy and it is expected that 50% of European Regional Development Fund investments for 2014-2020 will be made in cities and urban areas.

On 17 and 18 February, European Commissioner for Regional Policy, Johannes Hahn will bring together key players in the policies aimed to make Europe's cities 'smarter', 'greener' and 'more inclusive'. The forum "Cities of Tomorrow: Investing in Europe" aims to stimulate a debate at European level on how to strengthen the urban dimension in EU policymaking and to increase recognition of the key role cities play in implementing policies set at all governance levels.

The Mayors of 16 Member State Capital Cities* are expected to join the calls for more effective responses to urban challenges under the umbrella of an EU urban agenda. UN Habitat will also lead the call for this agenda as exporting an EU urban model is considered an effective way of addressing global challenges.

*Rome, Vienna, Amsterdam, Sofia, Zagreb, Warsaw, Bratislava, Bucharest, Nicosia, Riga, Helsinki, Ljubljana, Lisbon, Tallinn, Athens and Valletta.

The background:

Because of their potential and their front line position, cities have a key role to play in addressing global challenges and implementing the Europe 2020 strategy. This forum will debate the issues surrounding a prospective EU Urban Agenda, including how it could facilitate the participation of cities in EU policy development and implementation.

Commissioner Hahn was given responsibility for urban policy in 2012 in recognition of the growing importance of cities as key actors for European development. He is actively seeking better synergy and consistency between the urban-related initiatives of different EU policies, to improve their coordination and favour integrated approaches.

The event:

- The Forum will open on 17th February with a 'family photo' with Commission President José Manuel Barroso, Commissioner Johannes Hahn and Capital City Mayors, BERLAYMONT/outside Hallstein room, followed by a meeting between Commissioner Johannes Hahn meets EU Capital City Mayors, BERLAYMONT/Hallstein room (closed event, but footage can be taken at the opening).
- There will be a joint press conference at 13:15 with Commissioner Hahn and Joan Clos, UN Habitat (CHARLEMAGNE/Room Mansholt).
- A plenary session at 14:00 will feature opening addresses by Commissioner Hahn and Greek Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Change, Stavros Kalafatis, followed by presentations by French Minister for Urban Affairs, François Lamy and Italian Minister for Territorial Cohesion, Carlo Trigilia,.
- An IP will be available on Friday 14th February and a speech on Monday 17th February.
- Urban stock shots available on EbS

The sources:

- Information on multilingualism: http://ec.europa.eu/languages/index_en.htm
- Information on Eurobarometer: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm
- Information on Commissioner Vassiliou: http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/vassiliou/index_en.htm

The contacts:

Shirin Wheeler +32 2 29 665 65 shirin.wheeler@ec.europa.eu
Annemarie Huber +32 2 29 933 10 annemarie.huber@ec.europa.eu

Wednesday, 19 February 2014:

Commission adopts new state aid guidelines for airports and airlines

The news:

On 19 February 2014, the European Commission will adopt the new guidelines for state aid to the aviation sector in the EU, which will replace the 1994 and 2005 Aviation guidelines.

The new state aid guidelines for airports and airlines will set out how Member States can support airports and airlines in line with EU state aid rules. During a transitional period the new rules will in particular provide compatibility criteria for operating aid to airports, which is not allowed under the current guidelines.

The background:

Member States' public funding of airports and airlines is currently assessed by the Commission under the 2005 Aviation Guidelines. These Guidelines contain provisions for assessing public support measures to airports and for the start-up of airline services from regional airports.

In view of the significant market changes that have taken place over the last decade, the Commission initiated a review, with a first public consultation in 2011 (see [IP/11/445](#)). In light of the submissions received, the Commission reviewed the existing rules and consulted the public on [revised draft guidelines](#) in July 2013 (see [IP/13/644](#)).

At the same time the Commission is working on about 50 state aid cases (including 32 formal investigations) in the aviation sector.

The Commission is reacting boldly to changing market realities. The new guidelines will aim at ensuring that taxpayers' money is well-spent and that a level playing field is preserved in the Single Market between airports and airlines, regardless of their business models (from large hubs to regional airports and from flag carriers to low-cost airlines).

The event:

- Vice-President Almunia will give a press conference.
- Available on EbS
- Press details to be announced.
- Press release and memo will be available on the day.

The sources:

- Competition website: <http://ec.europa.eu/competition/consultations/open.html>
- Vice-President Almunia's website: http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/almunia

The contacts:

[Antoine Colombani](#) (+32 2 297 45 13, Twitter: [@ECspokesAntoine](#))

Thursday 20 February:

Commission to launch coastal tourism strategy

The news:

The European Commission's will launch a new strategy for coastal and maritime tourism which will strengthen Europe's position as the world's number 1 tourist destination. The strategy focuses on promoting innovation in the sector and bringing stakeholders together to help maximise the potential of Europe's coastal areas.

The strategy recognises that coastal and maritime tourism makes up the economic backbone of many coastal regions and has the potential to be a major driver for growth and job creation across Europe, especially amongst the young.

The background:

Coastal and maritime tourism is the largest maritime activity in Europe. It employs almost 3.2 million people, generating a total of € 183 billion in gross value added, which is more than one third of the maritime economy. Almost half of the nights spent in accommodation establishments in the EU are spent in coastal areas. Coastal and maritime tourism could be a major source for further growth and jobs, particularly for the young, since 45% of tourism workers are between 16 and 35 years old.

But the sector is also faced with many challenges: competition from destinations worldwide is increasing, the environmental footprint needs to be tackled, and there are data gaps and skills shortages. The proposed strategy aims to address and overcome these challenges through specific initiatives to be taken at EU, Member states, regional and stakeholder level to boost the sector's performance and competitiveness.

Coastal and Maritime Tourism is one of the five focus areas of the EU's Blue Growth Strategy, which aims at creating sustainable economic growth and employment in the marine and maritime economy to help Europe's economic recovery. These 'blue' economic sectors today provide jobs for 5.4 million people and contribute a total gross added value of around 500 billion euros. By 2020, these should increase to 7 million and nearly 600 billion euros respectively.

The event:

- There will be a joint press conference by Vice-president Antonio Tajani, European Commissioner for Enterprise and Industry and Maria Damanaki, European Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries in the press room of the Berlaymont. A press release and Memo will be available on the day.
- Available on EbS

The sources:

- Maritime Affairs website: http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/policy/blue_growth/index_en.htm
- DG ENTR website: http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/index_en.htm
- Website of Commissioner Maria Damanaki:
http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/damanaki/index_en.htm
- Website of Vice-president Commissioner Antonio Tajani:
http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/tajani/index_en.htm

The contacts:

Oliver Drewes	+32 2 299 24 21	oliver.drewes@ec.europa.eu
Carlo Corazza	+32 2 295 17 52	carlo.corazza@ec.europa.eu
Lone Mikkelsen	+32 2 296 05 67	lone.mikkelsen@ec.europa.eu
Sara Tironi	+32 2 299 04 03	sara.tironi@ec.europa.eu

Thursday 20 February:

The Commission adopts its monthly infringements package

The news:

On Thursday 20 February 2014, the European Commission will adopt its monthly infringements package. These decisions cover all Member States and most of EU policies and seek to enforce EU law across Europe in the interest of both citizens and businesses.

The background:

Article 258 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) gives the Commission the power to take legal action against a Member State that is not respecting its obligations under EU law.

There are three successive stages: Letter of formal notice, reasoned opinion and referral to the Court of Justice.

If, despite the ruling, a Member State still fails to act, the Commission may open a further infringement case under Article 260 of the TFEU. After only one written warning, Commission may refer a Member State back to the Court and it can propose that the Court imposes financial penalties based on the duration and severity on the infringement and the size of the Member State.

The event:

- A comprehensive Memo on all referrals and reasoned opinions, specific IPs on each referral and a Memo on the procedure will be available on the day on Rapid: <http://europa.eu/rapid/>

The sources:

- For more information on infringements: http://ec.europa.eu/eu_law/infringements/infringements_en.htm
- On the general infringement procedure: [MEMO/12/12](#)

The contacts:

Overall coordination:

Olivier Bailly	+32 2 296 87 17	olivier.bailly@ec.europa.eu
Jonathan Todd	+32 2 299 41 07	jonathan.todd@ec.europa.eu

On specific infringements, please contact the spokesperson in charge.