

EU Intelligence Report

June 2014



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Institutional change

New Parliament takes shape

European Parliament

During the month of June new MEPs met in Brussels to organise themselves into political groups and elect key office holders.

Major developments include:

The EPP group (221 MEPs) elected Manfred Weber (DE) as its new leader.

The S&D group (191 MEPs) elected Martin Schulz (DE) as its interim leader until a new ballot is held in July.

The ECR group (70 MEPs) elected Syed Kamall (GB) as its leader and emerged as the third largest party in the Parliament.

The ALDE group (67 MEPs) elected Guy Verhofstadt (BE) as its leader.

The GUE group (52 MEPs) re-appointed Gabi Zimmer (DE) as leader.

The Green group (50 MEPs) elected Rebecca Harms (DE) and Philippe Lamberts (BE) as co-leaders.

The EFDD group (48): Nigel Farage is likely to be re-appointed leader next week.

The Group has only just managed to fulfil the criteria of 25 MEPs from 7 Member

States with the late addition of MEPs from SW, LT, LV, CZ, FR as well as the 17 from Beppe Gillo's M5S in IT.

Marine Le Pen (FR National Front) failed to put together a coalition and so sits with the Non-Inscrits (NI).

Tourism Policy

European Commission holds Conference on Accessible Tourism

European Commission

On 6 June the European Commission held a [Conference](#) on accessible tourism called "Mind the Accessibility Gap". The conference aimed at presenting three specially commissioned studies on Tourism Accessibility in Europe. The project was carried out in the framework of the Commission's "Preparatory Action on Accessible Tourism, 2012 – 2014", which was requested by the European Parliament. At the event Pedro Ortún, Director for Service Industries, Directorate General Enterprise and Industry declared that accessibility is to be a permanent element of the EU's future tourism policies. Speaking to an audience of over 200 tourism professionals and representatives of NGOs, Mr. Ortún outlined the Commission's view of tourism policy development and actions in the coming

years and highlighted the Commission's continued focus on quality, sustainability and reaching new tourism markets, including seniors, in particular.

Mr. Ortún welcomed the results of the 3 EU-wide studies on Accessible Tourism demand, supply and skills requirements highlighting the large economic value of investments in accessibility. He also hoped for greater recognition of tourism amongst member states and the EU as a whole, as the sector has shown to be a key driver of growth and jobs.

ETC reports expected Tourism Growth

European Travel Commission

In its [latest](#) Quarterly report 'European Tourism 2014 – trends and prospects' the [European Travel Commission](#) reported about sustained growth for tourism for the fifth year in a row.

According to the latest report air travel performed strongly in large outbound markets such as Germany, UK, France and the USA as well as growth in international arrivals for destinations during the first quarter. Overnight stays also rose. Accommodation sector. The report claims that

the positive data was due to Europe's mix of highly attractive offers, short distances, high tolerance and stable political climate.

Commenting on the publication of the report, ETC's President urged Europe to coordinate marketing so that it can define a clear image as a tourism destination in long-haul markets.

Taxation

Regulatory Fitness and Performance Programme (REFIT) progress report European Commission

On 18 June 2014, the Commission [reported](#) on the progress in implementing the Regulatory Fitness and Performance Programme (REFIT) which is designed to cut red tape, remove regulatory burdens, simplify and improve the design and quality of legislation. Under REFIT, the Commission regularly screens the entire stock of EU legislation for burdens, inconsistencies and ineffective measures and identifies corrective action. The Commission formally approved the withdrawal of 53 pending proposals after consultation with the Parliament and Council, including all nine REFIT initiatives, including those on simplification of VAT

obligations. Still pending are proposals for a common set of rules to calculate the corporate tax base which would aim at reducing tax compliance costs of businesses operating in the Single Market.

The Commission will continue to implement all REFIT initiatives as outlined in its Work Programme for 2014.

Employment Law/ Training/ Skills **Eurobarometer shows gap between Europeans' education and job** European Commission

A new [Eurobarometer](#) survey on the 'European Area of Skills and Qualifications' shows also that around a quarter (23%) of EU citizens feel that their education or training has not provided them with the skills to find a job in line with their qualifications. (see [press release](#)) or does not allow their job to be recognized elsewhere in Europe.

The same results were enshrined in the separate Commission online [consultation](#), 'Towards a European Area for Skills and Qualifications', aimed at education and training specialists. Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou, European

Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth commented on the results of the Eurobarometer stressing the need for every European to have a job that can be recognised in other member states. To this end the Commission has taken initiatives such as the adoption of the European Qualifications Framework a scheme for awarding and accumulating credits for coursework, quality assurance and documentation of skills and competences.

Other findings from the Eurobarometer survey include that the most important aspects of education and training relate to the teachers' ability to motivate pupils, the perception that some skills can be gained outside the education system.

The Eurobarometer survey was carried out in all 28 Member States between 26 April and 11 May; 28 000 people from different social and demographic groups were interviewed face-to-face.

New European Skills Passport will facilitate recruitment in hospitality sector European Commission

On 17 June, the European Commission launched the [European Hospitality Skills Passport](#), a European Commission tool developed to facilitate contact between jobseekers and employers in the hospitality and tourism sector in Europe.

The passport is Hosted on the European Job Mobility Portal [EURES](#) and it is available in all EU official languages. The passport will be extended to other sectors in the future.

At the tool's launch Commissioner for Employment László Andor said that the tool promotes mobility of European workers, the initiative was developed in collaboration with HOTREC and EFFAT, the European Federation of Trade Unions in the Food, Agriculture and Tourism sectors.

Consumer Issues

Consumer rights now in force Member States

On Friday 13th June, the [EU Consumer Rights Directive](#) came into force across 28 countries.

The EU legislation will strengthen consumers' rights in all 28 EU countries, particularly when shopping online. Some of

the key provisions of this piece of legislation include the following:

- The new rules will ban hidden charges and costs on the Internet. Traders will have to disclose the total cost of the product or service
- Banning pre-ticked boxes on websites when shopping online.
- Enhanced refund rights.
- Elimination of surcharges for the use of credit cards and hotlines.
- Introduction of an EU-wide model withdrawal form.

Standards

CEN Technical Committee discusses Swimming pools related Standards CEN

On 4-6 June the CEN Technical Committee (TC) 136 "Sports, playground and other recreational facilities and equipment" held its 33rd plenary meeting in Delft, Netherlands.

The CEN/TC 136 gathered to discuss latest developments concerning two standards: 136/WG 3 "Water slides and water play equipment" and CEN/TC 136/WG 8 "Swimming pools". Discussions concentrated on structure or built-in equipment used for play where water is a

part of the function, all safety requirement and test methods and instruction related matters.

As a trade association whose members can be directly affected by the current developments of Swimming pool and water play equipment standards, IAAPA was accepted to participate as an observer.

The next meeting of the technical committee will take place in October in Berlin.

MEP Questions

Commission responds to EP question on VISA Policy European Commission

The European Commission [replied](#) to an MEP [question](#) on tourist visa formalities in Europe tabled by MEPs Bizzotto and Borghezio (EFD/IT). In their question they expressed concern over the recently proposed simplification of VISA policy and the risk for EU security of easing access for third country nationals. Commissioner for Home Affairs Malstroem replied saying that the proposal on the Union Code on Visa takes into account the increased political emphasis given to the economic impact of visa policy on the EU economy, and in particular on tourism, and that the proposal has been designed in such a manner that

security in the Schengen Area will be preserved.

Funding

Erasmus+

Council/ European Commission

The Council adopted on 3rd December a regulation establishing "[ERASMUS +](#)", the Union Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport for the period 2014-2020. It brings together in a single programme activities previously covered by a number of separate programmes (including the Lifelong Learning Programme, Erasmus Mundus and Youth in Action) and it also covers activities in the new area of European competence, sport.

The new programme has a total budget of about €14.7 billion which represents an increase of 40% compared to the precedent budget - and can also benefit for Any additional funding from external action instruments (such as the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance, the Development Cooperation Instrument, the European Neighbourhood Instrument, as well as the European Development Fund). Its main operational priorities are simplification of procedures and a performance-based allocation of funds, as

well as closer links between the formal, informal and non-formal education and learning sectors.

COSME - Programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and SMEs

European Commission

For the period 2014-2020, the European Commission has published a proposal for a [Programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and SMEs](#) (COSME) with a planned budget of € 2.5 billion.

The Programme has the following general objectives: 1) improve access to finance for SMEs in the form of equity and debt; 2) improve access to markets inside the Union and globally through Enterprise Europe Network that will facilitate expansion of businesses beyond the borders; 3) promote entrepreneurship by developing entrepreneurial skills and attitudes, especially among new entrepreneurs, young people and women.

The Commission proposal includes a reference to specific objectives to improve the competitiveness of enterprises in the tourism sector. The Commission intends to ensure coherence and consistency implementation, as well as informed policy-making at Union level. Benchmarking, the

exchange of best practices and sectorial initiatives in particular will be encouraged. The main beneficiaries will include existing entrepreneurs (small businesses in particular), future entrepreneurs (including young people) as well as national, regional and local authorities. On this basis, eligible tourism partners could include: Accommodation providers, Transport providers, Restaurants/ Cafés, **Attractions**, Public Authorities

Consumer Programme 2014-2020

European Commission

The new consumer programme was adopted last 23 October and [proposed](#) by the Commission in November 2011. Although ensuring continuity with the previous one, the new initiative aims to better serve consumers' interests by enhancing product safety through effective market surveillance, improving consumers' information, education and awareness of their rights, consolidating consumer rights and strengthening effective redress, especially through alternative dispute resolution.

This programme sets financial framework for many actions that aim to improve consumer protection throughout the EU. These actions include financing of joint cooperation actions between Member



States market surveillance authorities and supporting Union level consumer organizations.

European Regional Development Fund 2014 - 2020

European Commission

[The European Regional Development Fund](#)

(ERDF) aims to strengthen economic and social cohesion in the European Union by correcting imbalances between its regions. For the next period (2014 – 2020), the ERDF focuses its investments on several key priority areas namely Innovation and research, the digital agenda, support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and the low-carbon economy.

The ERDF resources allocated to these priorities will depend on the category of region.

Upcoming Events

- 04/07/2014 > 04/07/2014 - [European Tourism Indicators System for Sustainable Management workshop](#)
- 30-31/10/2014: European Tourism Forum, Naples, Italy.
- November 2014: [UNWTO event on Accessible Tourism](#) in San Marino.