



Latvian Presidency
of the Council of the
European Union

EU2015.LV

Results of the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

CONTENTS

SUMMARY	4
MAIN RESULTS IN THE OVERARCHING PRIORITIES	5
COMPETITIVE EUROPE	11
European Investment Plan	12
Single Market	12
Competitiveness of industry and entrepreneurship	15
Competition	16
Consumer protection	16
Energy Union	16
Climate and Energy	18
Transportation	20
Employment and social policy	22
Education and Youth	24
Culture	25
Health and Sports	27
Environmental policy	28
Agriculture and Fisheries	30
European Research Area and Space Policy	33
European Semester	35
European Economic and Monetary Union	35
Budget of the European Union	36
Cohesion and Regional Policy	37
Taxation	38
Financial services	39
Financial markets	40
Financial interests	41
Institutional issues	41
Procedural law	41
Cooperation in Schengen area	41
Statistics	42
Standardisation	42
International representation in economic and financial policy (G20)	42
DIGITAL EUROPE	43
Digital Economy	43
Digital Single Market	44
Legislative proposals for the Digital Single Market	46
Other issues of the Digital Single Market	48

CONTENTS

ENGAGED EUROPE . . . . .	.51
The fight against terrorism and security in Europe . . . . .	.51
Security and defence policy of the European Union . . . . .	.54
Migration . . . . .	.56
Eastern Partnership . . . . .	.59
Ukraine . . . . .	.63
Relations between the European Union and Central Asian Region countries . . . . .	.63
European Union Southern Neighbourhood . . . . .	.65
Enlargement of the European Union . . . . .	.65
External trade . . . . .	.66
European Union development cooperation policy . . . . .	.67
Cooperation with Western European countries that are not Members of the Union . . . . .	.69
European Union human rights policy in the world . . . . .	.69
Nuclear security . . . . .	.70
European Union humanitarian aid . . . . .	.70
CONDUCT OF THE PRESIDENCY . . . . .	.72
Presidency events calendar . . . . .	.73
Latvian Presidency public diplomacy and cultural programme . . . . .	.86
Presidency – engagement, growth and sustainability . . . . .	.92
Staff of the Presidency and the Presidency Internship Programme . . . . .	.96
Presidency in numbers . . . . .	.98
LIST OF LEGISLATIVE AND NON-LEGISLATIVE ACTS	
THE LATVIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE EU COUNCIL REACHED AGREEMENTS ON	100
General Affairs	100
Foreign Affairs	101
Economy and Finance	103
Justice and Home Affairs	106
Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs	108
Competitiveness	109
Transport, Telecommunications and Energy	110
Agriculture and Fisheries	112
Environment	114
Education, Youth, Culture and Sport	115
PRESIDENCY SUPPORTED BY	116

SUMMARY

Latvia took over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union from Italy on 1 January 2015. The six months of leading the work of the Council were full of opportunities and challenges.

The opportunities have been associated with the new institutional cycle that began shortly before the Latvian Presidency, when new members of the European Parliament and the European Commission began their work. The European Commission elected in November 2014 launched a series of new proposals to be submitted for approval by the legislators of the European Union: the Council, chaired by the Presidency, and the European Parliament. The Latvian Presidency seized this opportunity through active advancement of the legislative proposals and policy initiatives elaborated by the European Commission. Last year the new institutional cycle made it possible to approve strategic agenda of five key priorities for the next five years thereby achieving more goal-oriented EU action.

The main challenges of the Latvian Presidency were related to the security situation in the European Union, its neighbourhood and the world at large. The situation in Ukraine, the European Union's reaction to annexation of the Crimea has been discussed in all the meetings of the Heads of States and Governments during the last year. Significant challenges to international security have been and still are present also in other regions such as the Middle East and North Africa. In addition to that, at the beginning of the year, we have faced new challenges for the security of the European Union, which revealed the European Union's shortcomings in combating terrorism.

As regards to domestic policy developments of the European Union, when Latvia took over the leadership of the Council of the European Union from Italy, socio-economic situation in the European Union and the discussion on the promotion of growth and employment have been playing an important role on the agenda of the European Union. The fragile growth which showed signs of stagnation risk, the low inflation and the considerable unemployment rates urged the European Union to seek growth-facilitating solutions. Although Europe still has not fully overcome the consequences from the financial and economic crisis in 2008¹, this year the EU economic situation has improved and it is expected that almost all EU Member States will experience growth.

As we had foreseen at the end of last year², during the Latvian Presidency the European Union faced a considerable migration pressure which mainly affected the southern EU Member States. The migration flows turned out to be



NATIONAL LIBRARY OF LATVIA

© EU2015.LV

unexpectedly large-scale. In the first months of this year over 150,000 asylum seekers arrived in the EU.

The Latvian Presidency of the EU Council has seized all the opportunities and made considerable progress in the set priorities – *Competitive Europe, Digital Europe and Engaged Europe* – while providing an immediate and professional response to the challenges to the EU's internal security and for the EU migration and asylum policy.

Latvia ensured that the EU Council contributed to the EU's economic recovery and growth policy by focusing on the facilitation of the EU's competitiveness, the use of digital potential in economic growth and the strengthening of the EU's energy independence. Working jointly with the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy the Latvian Presidency has promoted security, economic and social stability in the EU neighbouring countries and the wider world.

Thus, the Latvian Presidency has contributed to the Presidency trio's³ main objective to: "fully overcome the economic and financial crisis and to boost growth in the EU, to strengthen the EU's capacity to deliver more jobs and seize digital opportunities, to protect fundamental rights and to fully play its role in a fast-changing world".

¹ European Economic Forecast Spring 2015 http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/publications/european_economy/2015/pdf/ee2_en.pdf

² The annual report of the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the progress made and planned activities in the field of national foreign policy and European Union matters (Report in Latvian http://www.mfa.gov.lv/images/zinojums_DRAFT_Precizyts_07_01.pdf).

³ From 1 July 2014 to 31 December 2015 the Presidency trio is made up of Italy, Latvia and Luxembourg.

MAIN RESULTS IN THE OVERARCHING PRIORITIES



COMPETITIVE EUROPE

Competitiveness of the European Union is closely associated with its growth and thus with the quality of life in the European Union. The Latvian Presidency has put much effort into creating and promoting favourable conditions for the socio-economic development of the European Union.

The Latvian Presidency supported the creation of an environment conducive to attraction of additional investments for the European Union economy. The agreement on the European Fund for Strategic Investments provides for 16 billion euros from the budget of the European Union to be used as a guarantee, which together with a five

billion euro guarantee from the European Investment Bank would allow the raising of up to 315 billion euros for the EU economy – for the development of infrastructure, research, innovations and development, investments in education and training, health care, information and communications technology, the development of the energy sector, as well

MAIN RESULTS IN THE OVERARCHING PRIORITIES

as the support for small and medium-sized enterprises. The European Fund for Strategic Investments has a potential to contribute to projects which promote innovations and facilitate competitiveness of the EU, since the Fund will support projects that have previously been considered too risky to be granted a loan. Operation of the Fund for Strategic Investments will cover the entire territory of the European Union.

The Latvian Presidency has also contributed to improving the investment environment by strengthening the EU Single Market. The Latvian Presidency has reached an agreement on a number of priorities, which will unfold the potential of the Single Market. They intend to remove unjustified and disproportionate regulatory and non-regulatory obstacles faced by EU companies, especially small and medium-sized enterprises; full implementation of the Services Directive and improvement of the notification procedure prescribed by the Directive in providing information to other EU Member States about the changes in requirements for service providers; the EU service sector policy has to emphasize those sectors, which have the strongest potential to contribute to EU competitiveness and cross-border trade (professionals and business services, construction and retail trade services); the European Commission has to undertake more active role in monitoring of the implementation and enforcement of the Single Market rules in the EU Member States.

The Latvian Presidency has reached an agreement on a number of legislative proposals providing for **facilitation of the cross-border activities of companies** in the Single Market, for example, through creation of a modern and efficient cross-border insolvency procedure; making the EU trade mark registration system less complex and less expensive for business; promoting transparency of the activities of joint stock companies; making it easier to establish companies, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises in other Member States, and providing for online registration of enterprises; and, inter alia, raising the threshold for the European small claims procedure in cross-border litigation.

In the same way, the Presidency has reached an agreement on a number of legislative acts, which **will be beneficial for the consumers**. Agreement on the payment services will protect citizens from abusive and incorrectly executed transactions, and thereby electronic payments will become more secure. The commission for transactions with bank cards levied by the banks for each transaction and included in the total prices of goods and services will be capped. And an agreement on EU rules of package holiday, also if purchased online, will provide higher protection to travellers, for example, in the case of emergency situations, and in the event of insolvency of the service provider.

The Latvian Presidency has promoted contributions of the transport sector in increasing competitiveness of the European Union and strengthening the EU Single Market. The agreement reached regarding the Fourth Railway Package is significant for the development of the railway market and economic growth of the railway sector. It will eliminate a number of obstacles to the creation of a Single European Railway Area by providing, for example, a single security certificate valid throughout the European Union, which the railway carriers operating in several EU countries will be able to use.

Competitiveness of the European Union will be promoted also by the achievements of the Presidency in the agriculture and fisheries sector. The Latvian Presidency reached an agreement with regard to a single approach to ensure animal health by means of determination of a uniform and a clear legal framework for the supervision and control of infectious animal diseases, thereby contributing to the public health and safe food chain. Accomplishments of the Presidency in organic agriculture will provide further development of this sector by improving the legal norms governing organic production, guaranteeing fair competition of farmers and entrepreneurs as well as increasing trust of consumers in organic products. Whereas the full agreement now reached on the landing obligation will stop the previous practice of discarding fish catches that had both a negative influence on fisheries as well as on the condition of the marine environment.

The Latvian Presidency has laid the foundations for the European Energy Union which is oriented toward strengthening of EU energy independence and outlines a clearer direction toward a common energy policy in the European Union. Formation of the Energy Union started in February in Riga, Latvia, with the so-called Riga process. It specifies five interconnected energy policy dimensions (energy security and solidarity mechanisms; a fully integrated internal energy market; increasing energy efficiency so as to reduce demand and help lower consumption; the transition to a low-carbon economy; and attention to research, innovation and competitiveness) and these must be viewed together, thereby giving a new quality to the EU's energy policy. The Latvian Presidency has emphasised the need to ensure stable and affordable energy prices for consumers, more options in the energy market, and clearer availability of information on the energy suppliers. Concerning questions of investment promotion, the Latvian Presidency has emphasised access to all possible sources of funding and the importance of a predictable investment environment. During the Latvian Presidency, decisions have been taken regarding the promotion of energy security, for example, by providing for greater transparency in the gas supply contracts concluded by EU

MAIN RESULTS IN THE OVERARCHING PRIORITIES

Member States or the companies operating therein with third countries or involving companies from third countries.

The Latvian Presidency has adopted important decisions related to the establishment of the European Energy Union, by promoting transition to an economy based on low-carbon power sources economy and thereby increasing the EU energy independence. The Latvian Presidency has reached an agreement with regard to commitments of the European Union on post-2020 climate change reduction, ensuring a timely EU contribution to preparation of the Climate Change Conference in Paris. In order to stimulate investments in environmentally friendly technologies, energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources, the Presidency has reached an agreement on the establishment and the functioning of the EU Emissions Trading System Market Stability Reserve. The EU Emissions Trading System is the main instrument for reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the large energy and industrial production facilities. Thereby an optimal number of emission allowances on the market will be ensured and, as predicted, the emission allowance price will increase.

The Latvian Presidency has drawn attention to the inclusive labour markets and the quality of jobs as a significant prerequisite for the strengthening of EU competitiveness in the long term. We have highlighted the issues which under the impact of the economic and financial crisis had gained less attention namely, sustainability and the quality of jobs, sufficiency of wages, career opportunities, and the secure transition from one job to another. The Latvian Presidency has also emphasised the importance of a high quality social dialogue at the national and European level in promoting competitiveness of the EU.

DIGITAL EUROPE

The Latvian Presidency contributed to unlocking the potential of Europe's digital economy and the Digital Single Market for promoting EU competitiveness, economic growth and job creation. The Digital Single Market has indeed a potential of adding up to 415 billion euros⁴ to the economy of the European Union and creating hundreds of thousands of new jobs. Just as important has been the work of the Latvian Presidency on draft legislation essential for the establishment of the Digital Single Market in the areas of telecommunications, cybersecurity and data protection. The main challenge for the Latvian Presidency was to strike the right balance between the interests of consumers and industry.

The Latvian Presidency has promoted initiatives aimed at fair treatment of all the taxpayers in the EU Single Market. In order to combat tax evasion and aggressive tax planning, the Presidency has drawn up a roadmap setting out short-term, medium and long-term measures to combat the tax base erosion and profit shifting. The Presidency has made progress on the issue of mandatory and automatic exchange of information between the Member States on the so-called tax rulings, thus stimulating enterprises to pay taxes in the countries where their profits are gained.

In order to restore the confidence of consumers and investors in the financial markets, the Latvian Presidency has contributed to stability, integrity and fairness of the financial markets. The Presidency has reached an agreement on banking structural reform that will prevent large banks that are deemed of global systemic importance to use the depositors' funds in high-risk financial operations; an agreement with regard to prevention of manipulation with benchmarks, or reference prices for financial instruments used, for instance, in setting the interest rate for the mortgage loans; and an agreement with regard to closer supervision of the so-called shadow banking.

During the Latvian Presidency, agreement was reached on three economic policy priorities of the European Union – investment promotion, structural reform and implementation of a responsible fiscal policy – as well as country specific recommendations to each Member State based on these priorities, thus concluding the annual economic policy co-ordination cycle of the European Union (the so-called European Semester).

The Latvian Presidency advanced initiatives promoting a secure and trustworthy digital environment in the European Union.

The Latvian Presidency reached an agreement at the Council on the General Data Protection Regulation, which will raise the level of personal data protection and increase business opportunities in the Digital Single Market. New data protection rules will ensure greater control for persons over their data, for instance, individuals will have easier access to their data, will be better informed about the processing of their data and have the right to erasure of their data online (the so-called "right to

⁴ Commission Staff Working Document, A Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe - Analysis and Evidence Accompanying the document Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions A Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe {COM(2015) 192 final}, p. 5.

MAIN RESULTS IN THE OVERARCHING PRIORITIES

be forgotten"). **The introduction of the new provisions will promote fair competition and the use of the Digital Single Market opportunities by companies, especially small and medium-sized enterprises.** The EU's unified data protection regulation will be applicable both to European and third country online service providers, thereby ensuring an unimpeded cross-border data exchange. Increased cooperation of the Member State supervisory authorities will ensure a coherent application of these rules in all EU Member States. In important transnational cases, the newly-established one-stop-shop mechanism will ensure cooperation and joint decision-making among various data protection authorities, allowing for a single supervisory decision to be taken and thus enabling the most effective protection of the data subject.

A major step has been taken during the Latvian Presidency towards strengthening cybersecurity. The agreement reached with the European Parliament on the main elements of Network and Information Security Directive will pave the way for finishing the work on the proposal during the Luxembourg Presidency. The Directive will provide the framework for unified action of operators that provide essential services and public authorities of the Member States in case of cyber-attacks to critical infrastructure, such as energy, transport, banking, drinking water, financial markets infrastructures.

The Latvian Presidency has reached an agreement with the European Parliament on a considerable reduction of roaming fees that will become effective already as of 30 April 2016, with a complete abolition of the roaming surcharges as of 15 June 2017, and the first EU-wide open internet rules.

The Latvian Presidency has contributed to the establishment of the EU Digital Single Market. During the Presidency, the most essential prerequisites for releasing and utilising the potential of digital economy were identified, as were priority measures to remove obstacles for creating a fully-functioning Digital Single Market. Issues of importance for tapping into the potential of a digital economy must be addressed at the EU and Member State level, such as high-speed broadband networks, improving digital skills, building consumer trust and enhancing cyber-

security; support to digital research, cloud computing and use of data; support to digital start-ups and digitalization of businesses. Priorities identified at the Council configurations chaired by the Presidency were reflected in the Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe published by the European Commission. For its part, to contribute to the preparation of the June European Council, the Latvian Presidency submitted to the President of the European Council the issues identified at the meetings of the Council configurations to be addressed in near or more distant future: support for small and medium-sized enterprises and digital start-ups; increasing public and private investment into infrastructure; improving digital skills; addressing unjustified geo-blocking; modernising the copyright framework as well as reviewing the audiovisual regulation.

The Digital Assembly 2015 – *One Europe, One Digital Single Market* – on 17–18 June in Riga sent a clear message on the significance of the Digital Single Market. Special focus was placed, amongst other things, on the development of digital skills and setting up a secure and trustworthy digital environment; possible solutions were identified for breaking down barriers to Europe's digital economy, as well as opportunities and challenges for the creative sectors that contribute to the digital economy.

During the Latvian Presidency, the foundation was laid for streamlining digital aspects and solutions into all policy areas and initiatives. The application of the 'digital by default' principle will ensure that legislation is in keeping with the 'digital age': every piece of legislation will be developed in a manner to also enable its efficient functioning in the digital environment. This will reduce the administrative burden for individuals and companies alike.

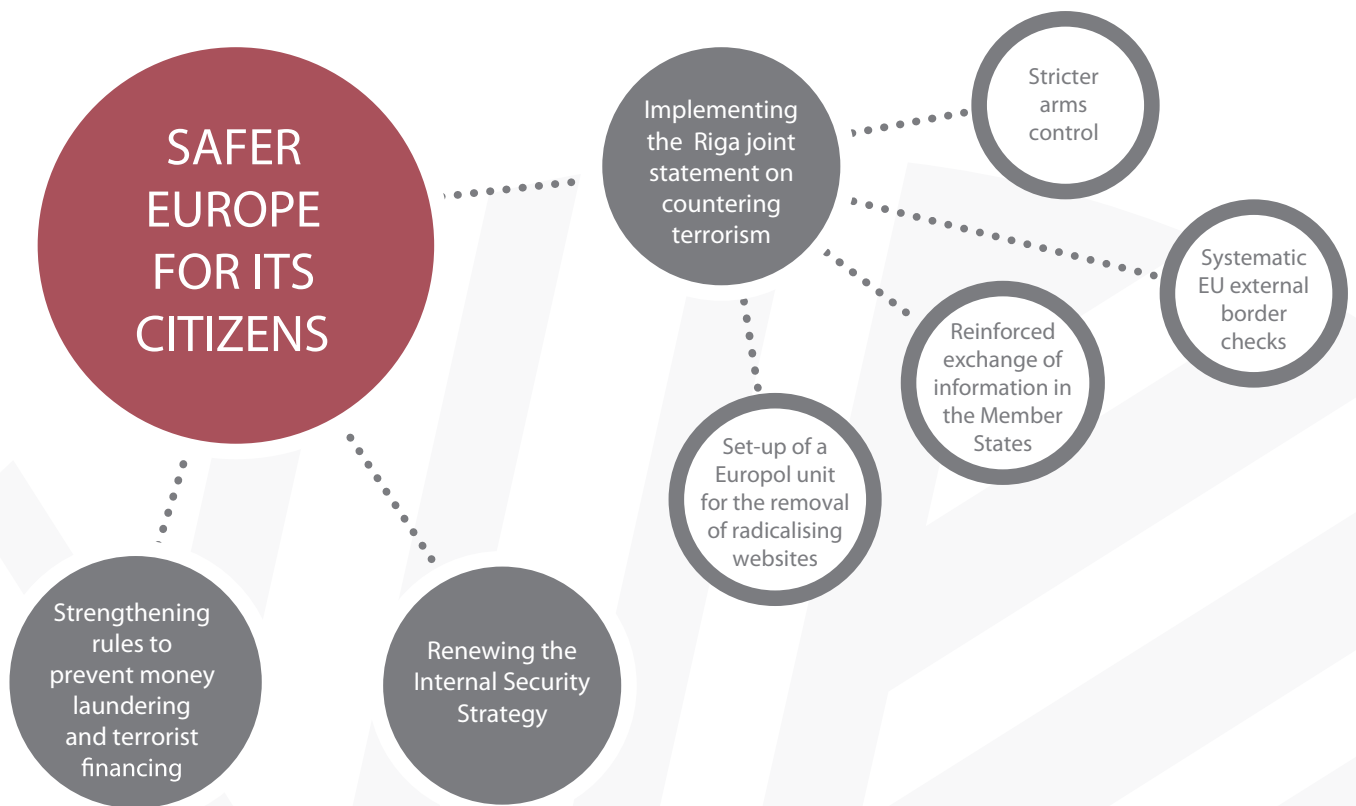
The Latvian Presidency promoted initiatives to unlock the potential of information and communication technologies for modernisation of public administration by reaching an agreement on the continuation of the programme "Interoperability solutions for European public administrations, businesses and citizens" until 2020. It will assist Member States to modernize their public administration and render digital services interoperable both at the national and the European level.

ENGAGED EUROPE

Working jointly with the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Latvian Presidency promoted security, as well as economic and social stability in the countries neighbouring the EU and in the wider world. The Presidency focused in particular on the relations with the Eastern Partnership and Central Asian

countries, as well as on the EU cooperation with its strategic partners in trade and security. Significant work was carried out in strengthening the EU Common Security and Defence Policy, both in evaluating emerging security threats and in providing guidelines for further work.

MAIN RESULTS IN THE OVERARCHING PRIORITIES



During the Latvian Presidency decisions that will enhance the internal security of the European Union were taken.

Achieving these decisions was based on three priorities of countering terrorism – safeguarding public security, preventing radicalisation and protecting values, as well as cooperation with the international partners. The Riga Joint Statement on countering the threat of terrorism adopted by the Ministers of Justice and Home Affairs of the EU Member States contributed considerably to the identification and implementation of relevant counter-terrorism measures. Based on the European Council Conclusions of 12 February as well as the Riga Joint Statement, Latvia, during its Presidency, focused particular attention on full employment of the possibilities provided by the Schengen system for strengthening and modernizing external border control; countering Internet content that promotes terrorism and violent extremism; engendering a more intensive exchange of information between competent authorities and agencies and intensifying fight against illegal trade in firearms. During the Presidency, the EU Internal Security Strategy 2015–2020 was renewed, thereby bringing fight against terrorism forward, as well as the combat of serious crimes, organized crime and cybercrime as priorities for further work. The renewed EU Internal Security Strategy will enable a comprehensive and co-ordinated reaction to new threats, including hybrid threats.

The Latvian Presidency raised awareness in the European Union on new security challenges, including hybrid threats, and possible EU responses, including through use of strategic communication.

During the Latvian Presidency, revision of the European Security Strategy was started by giving a mandate to the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to elaborate the first EU global foreign policy and security policy strategy by June 2016. Also, during the Presidency, an EU action plan on strategic communication was elaborated in order to counter disinformation and propaganda campaigns and a mandate was given to High Representative to develop a wider common EU framework for withstanding hybrid threats. These measures will facilitate greater resilience of the EU and its partners to hybrid threats posed both by countries and non-state actors and groups.

The Latvian EU Presidency ensured immediate involvement of the Council in finding solutions to reduce the pressure caused by migration flows in the Mediterranean.

The Latvian Presidency contributed to the preparation of an extraordinary European Council meeting which sought immediate and long-term solutions to the migration crisis. During the Latvian Presidency, a decision was also taken on the strengthening of the FRONTEX agency and agreement was reached on launching a naval **operation** targeting human **smuggling networks** in the **Mediterranean**.

MAIN RESULTS IN THE OVERARCHING PRIORITIES

The Latvian Presidency strengthened consular cooperation among the EU Member States. As a result of efforts by the Latvian Presidency, the Member States agreed on a mechanism for providing assistance to their citizens in emergency situations in countries with no embassy of their respective Member State. The agreement provides for support from EU Member State embassies to the nationals of other Member States in emergency situations, for instance, in the case of evacuation following natural disasters.

The Eastern Partnership Summit in Riga strengthened cooperation with the Eastern Partnership countries – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Cooperation was reinforced in areas such as justice and home affairs, security and defence policy, agriculture, digital economy, health, trade and transport, business, media, civic society as well as youth education and employment. The European Union pledged support for partner countries in the implementation of association agreements and their free trade components. The Riga Summit sent a strong message to the nations of Georgia and Ukraine that visa liberalisation is a question for the near future.

During the Latvian Presidency an agreement was achieved on financial support to Ukraine and a common EU position was adopted in seeking a solution to the conflict in the eastern Ukraine. The EU agreed on a new 1.8 billion euro financial assistance to Ukraine which, in addition to the earlier aid programme of 1.6 billion euros granted in 2014 and the beginning of 2015, amounts to the largest allotment of financial aid ever allocated by the EU to a third country. At the March European Council, the Heads of State and Government emphasised the direct link between full implementation of the Minsk agreements with the extension of restrictive measures (sanctions) against Russia. Based on the European Council decision, on June 22 Foreign Ministers of the Member States extended the measures restricting economic co-operation until 31 January 2016.

The Latvian Presidency facilitated the EU's cooperation with the Central Asian countries – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. During the Presidency, the EU and Central Asia Strategy was revised which confirmed the importance of the co-operation between the EU and the Central Asian countries, enhancing EU and Central Asian cooperation in sectors such as justice,

economy, agriculture, environmental protection, education, the development of green technologies, energy efficiency and security.

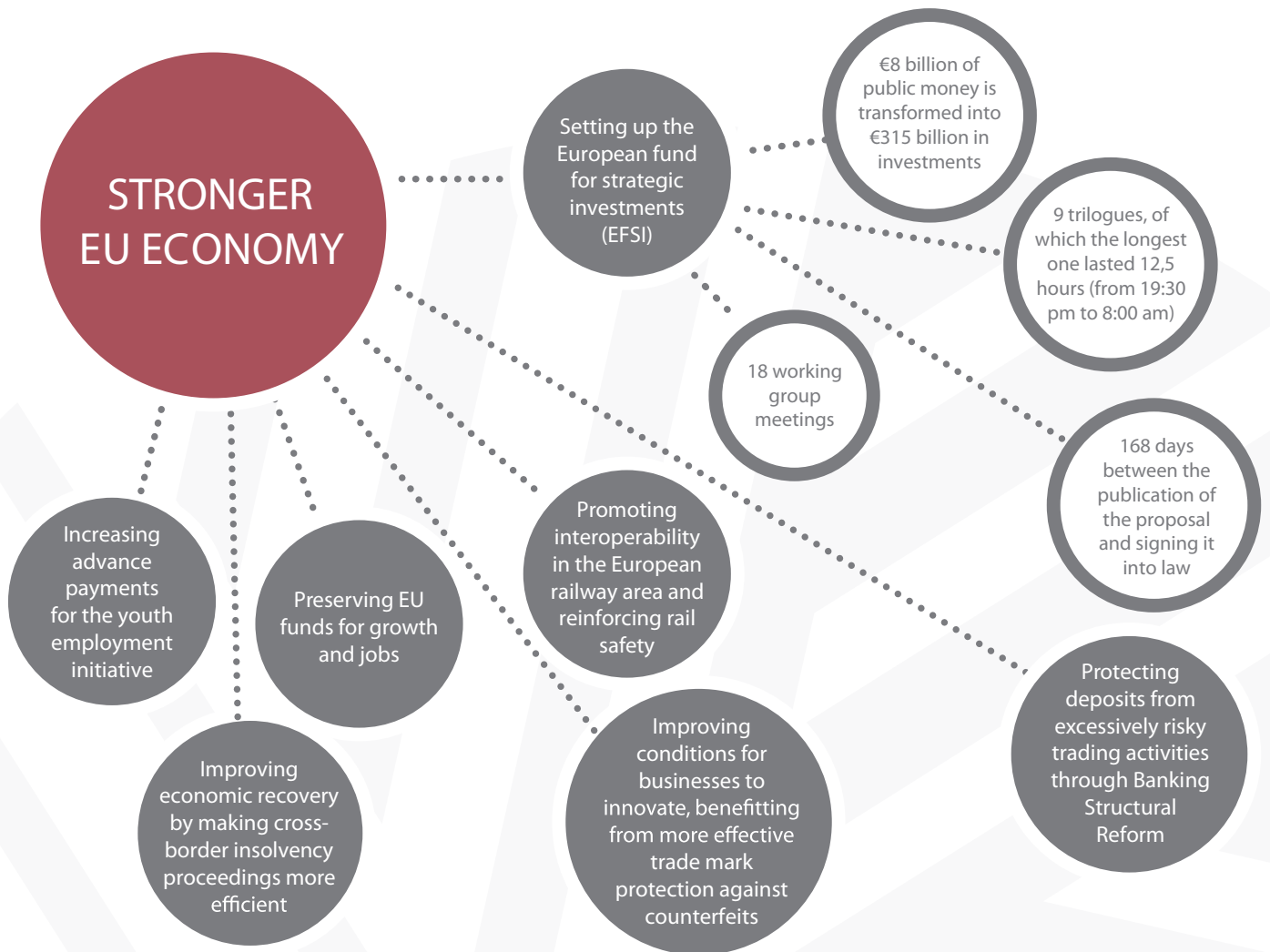
The Latvian Presidency ensured consistent implementation of the EU enlargement policy and reaffirmed the EU's support for the EU integration efforts of the Western Balkans countries – Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Macedonia⁵, Albania, and Turkey. The Latvian Foreign Minister chaired the Stabilisation and Association Councils with these countries on behalf of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. The Latvian Presidency succeeded in reaching an agreement on the opening of four new chapters in the EU–Montenegro accession negotiations. The Presidency also promoted the development of the inter-parliamentary dimension between the EU and accession countries by representing the Council at the EU–Turkey, EU–Serbia, EU–Montenegro and EU–Iceland Parliamentary Committees.

The Latvian Presidency ensured the EU Council's contribution to the foreign trade development in order to facilitate access to foreign markets and offer new opportunities to European businesses. Latvian Presidency devoted increased attention to negotiations on a comprehensive and mutually advantageous Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership agreement between the EU and the United States. Two rounds of talks were held during the Latvian Presidency period dealing with significant aspects of the agreement, including the framework for regulatory cooperation, support for small and medium-sized enterprises, and energy issues. Due to public interest in the EU–U.S. negotiations, greater transparency was achieved: the EU negotiations mandate and negotiations documents are now publicly accessible.

The Latvian Presidency ensured the engagement of the EU as the biggest development aid donor in the United Nations intergovernmental negotiations on new post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals and their financing and implementation, with a special focus on gender equality. The Latvian Presidency was able to facilitate the achievement of a common EU position that will provide the basis for the EU's participation at the UN Third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia).

⁵ Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

COMPETITIVE EUROPE



COMPETITIVE EUROPE

EUROPEAN INVESTMENT PLAN

- The Latvian Presidency has been actively working on all pillars of the **European Investment Plan**: European Strategic Investment Fund; direct link between investors and projects, including establishing the European Investment Advisory Hub; as well as improvement of the investment-friendly environment. The Latvian Presidency secured



LAIMDOTA STRAUJUMA, PRIME MINISTER OF LATVIA AND PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION JEAN-CLAUDE JUNCKER

- To facilitate fundraising for the economy of the European Union, the Latvian Presidency purposefully worked on the **European Strategic Investment Fund**, reaching through intensive negotiations an agreement with the European Parliament. The compromise reached will maintain adequate funding for science and infrastructure support in the framework of the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) instrument and the Horizon 2020 programme, while providing a transparent and stable funding for Fund's purposes in accordance with initially planned amount. When starting op-

SINGLE MARKET

- Effectively functioning EU Single Market is a prerequisite for increased competitiveness of both Latvian and EU economy. The Latvian Presidency stressed the importance of the Single Market and contributed to its political visibility by deciding on concrete action to identify and eliminate existing barriers and gaps in the Single Market in order to fully unleashing its' potential. Strengthening the Single Market is of particular importance in the context of the third pillar of the European Investment Plan, which focuses on creating an investment-friendly environment.
- A particular breakthrough was agreement reached by

the agreement on establishing the Investment Fund, the advisory centre for investments attracted to establish the Investment Fund – European Investment Advisory Hub; EU single market was strengthened to improve the investment-friendly environment, the foundations for the Energy Union and Capital Markets Union were laid.



PRESS CONFERENCE FOLLOWING THE TRIPARTITE SOCIAL SUMMIT

eration this summer, the Fund will attract the investment of least 315 billion euro to EU economy. The Fund provides support to a number of areas – infrastructure development, research, innovations and development, investment in education and training, health care, information and communication technologies, development of the energy sector, as well as support to small and medium-sized enterprises. The project selection will be based on evaluation of their compliance with EU policies, economic viability and potential to attract private investments.

the Member States on Council Conclusions prepared and adopted by the Competitiveness Council under the Latvian Presidency on the Single Market policy, which includes a wide range of settings, commitments and tasks both for the Member States and the European Commission, that are of a priority for strengthening EU Single Market, including⁶:

- To improve the **regulatory environment** of the Single Market by preventing unjustified and disproportionate regulatory and non-regulatory obstacles, in particular to better monitor implementation and enforcement of regulation, exercise more the maximum harmonisation

⁶ For information on the Digital Single Market please refer to the section on Digital Europe.

COMPETITIVE EUROPE

regulation, or, where this is not possible and there is no need for it, to incorporate in the legislation the mutual recognition clauses, to revise the minimum harmonisation regulation in order to reduce the EU Single Market fragmentation caused by legislative differences.

- To ensure the effective functioning of the EU Single Market for **services**, by fully implementing the Services Directive in all EU Member States and to ensure that in the future EU service policy focuses on those service sectors that have the greatest potential to contribute to EU competitiveness and cross-border trade, namely, professional and business, construction and retail services. The European Commission is invited to come up with guidelines for proportionality assessment of the legislation to remove obstacles to cross-border business activities; assess and improve the notification procedure of national rules, while making it more efficient and more accessible to the public to prevent the introduction of such national regulation which would be contrary to the principle of free movement of services and would deny equal access to the national market of the Member State etc.
- The European Commission and EU Member States to pay particular attention to the application of the **principle of mutual recognition** to ensure that any product which has been lawfully placed on the market

in one of the EU Member States markets are freely put into circulation in market of any other EU Member State. In this regard, the application of the principle of mutual recognition should be extended, in particular, to those areas where such application would be contributing most to the EU's competitiveness and growth; to make economic operators and responsible authorities aware of application rules of the principle of mutual recognition, as well as to share best practices and strengthen the cooperation between the responsible authorities, thus promoting the confidence between the Member States.

- EU Member States to urgently complete the mutual evaluation on **regulated professions** in the priority sectors and, where appropriate, to encourage structural reforms in order to facilitate the mobility of qualified professionals and the provision of professional services in the EU Single Market.
- In order to facilitate a cross-border operation of enterprises in the Single Market, EU Justice Ministers approved at the Council meeting on 12–13 March the amendments to the **Regulation on insolvency procedures**. The regulation will ensure modern and effective cross-border insolvency proceedings at EU level for persons and companies. The regulation will also offer the second option for companies that are in financial difficulties, not to initiate an immediate bankruptcy, and to seek solutions to restore solvency.



DZINTARS RASNAČS, MINISTER FOR JUSTICE OF LATVIA AND VĚRA JOUROVÁ, EUROPEAN COMMISSIONER FOR JUSTICE, CONSUMERS AND GENDER EQUALITY

- To **modernise the EU trademark system** (making the EU trademark registration system more accessible to entrepreneurs, increasing the efficiency of the system, reducing costs, simplifying and speeding up the process itself, while ensuring greater transparency



DZINTARS RASNAČS, MINISTER FOR JUSTICE OF LATVIA CHAIRS THE MEETING OF THE JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS COUNCIL

and legal certainty), the Presidency actively continued the negotiations with the European Parliament on the Trade Mark⁷ Package, that started the Italian Presidency, reaching an agreement with the European Parliament on the package.

⁷ The trade mark is a mark used for identification of goods and services in trade. Trade mark may consist of words, names of persons, signs, letters, numerals, the shape of goods or packaging. Examples of Latvian trademarks (verbal) are: GRINDEKS, Lauma, Laima. Examples of EU trademarks: VOLVO, SKODA, Milka.

COMPETITIVE EUROPE

- The Latvian Presidency actively worked to contribute to improving the business environment in the EU and to reduce the regulatory burden on enterprises, particularly on small and medium-sized enterprises. The Latvian Presidency reached an agreement in the Council on **Shareholder Rights Directive**. Since the European Parliament is planning the plenary vote on the proposal in July 2015, our trio partner – Luxembourg – will start the negotiations with the European Parliament. The proposal provides for greater shareholder involvement in management of the EU's listed companies as shareholders will be able to vote for the remuneration policy and remuneration reports of the listed company managers. The transparency of the listed companies will be also strengthened as the representatives

of listed companies will be obliged to inform shareholders of related party transactions, such as stock transactions between the company and its management, controlling bodies or shareholders. During the Competitiveness Council on 28 May the agreement was reached and the mandate was approved to begin the negotiations with the European Parliament on the **Directive on single-member private limited liability companies**⁸. The proposal aims to facilitate the establishment of start-ups, particularly SMEs, in other EU Member States, as the registration of these companies will be made possible online and a minimum share capital requirement of 1 euro will be set (a Member State will be able to determine the legal reserve accumulation).



DANA REIZNIECE-OZOLA, MINISTER FOR ECONOMIC AFFAIRS OF LATVIA



PRESS CONFERENCE FOLLOWING THE COMPETITIVENESS COUNCIL

- In order to reduce the administrative burden and encourage the free movement of citizens and businesses, during the Justice and Home Affairs Ministerial meeting of 15 June the Latvian Presidency reached an agreement on Regulation on **abolishing the requirement of legalisation**. The agreement in the Council enables to initiate the triologue with the European Parliament, which will be continued by our trio partner – Luxembourg. The draft regulation provides for the abolition of legalisation (Apostille) requirements for public documents of an official probative value in relation to the fact of birth, the fact of death, name and surname, marriage, registered partnerships, parental rights, adoption, residence, citizenship, nationality, real estate, the legal status and representation rights of a company or other types of merchants, intellectual property rights and (non)existence of a criminal conviction.
- Negotiations with the European Parliament on **Small Claims Procedure Regulation** were concluded during

the Latvian Presidency. Regulation will determine the threshold for small claims in European cross-border legal procedures, will facilitate the creation and use of video-conferencing and determine the amount of court fees. This will result in lower litigation costs and less time consumption, an efficient legal protection mechanism will be offered to small and medium sized enterprises to support their economic activity that will equally provide a higher level of consumer protection.

- The Latvian Presidency begun negotiations with the European Parliament and made a great progress on the three legislative proposals in the field of technical harmonisation – for Regulation on personal protective equipment, Regulation on appliances burning gaseous fuels and Regulation on cableways installations. Progress reached in negotiations with the European Parliament will contribute to the final agreement reached under the Luxembourg Presidency. **Regulation on personal protective equipment** provides for increase of the

⁸ In all of the EU Member States this type of a company will be denoted by the abbreviation SUP (*Societas Unius Personae*).

COMPETITIVE EUROPE

protective level of protective equipment, such as helmets, reflectors and protective clothing, reducing the number of accidents in the workplace and in everyday life. With the entry into force of **Regulation on appliances burning gaseous fuels** the safety of the appliances burning gaseous fuels, such as gas stoves, heating systems and boilers, will be improved but the **Regulation on cableways installations** would improve the safety of cableways installations, such as cable car or ski lift. Luxembourg Presidency intends to reach the agreement with the European Parliament on all three proposals.

- To ensure **timely proceedings before the General Court of the European Union**, which examines claims of the physical and legal persons on annulment of legal acts of the EU institutions and claims of the Member States against the Commission, amendments were made to the Statutes of the Court of Justice of the European Union and to the first annex thereof on increase of the number of judges in the General Court. The Latvian Presidency reached an agreement in the Council on the method of appointment of additional judges, and Luxembourg Presidency will lead the negotiations with the European Parliament towards reaching a final agreement.
- To ensure the enforcement of legal acts in customs matters, protecting the financial interests of the European Union and promoting equal treatment of entrepreneurs in all EU Member States, the Latvian Presidency has contributed to discussions at expert level on the list of customs regulations' infringements prepared by the Presidency,

which is to supplement the Proposal **for a Directive on customs infringements and sanctions**.

- In order to promote the competitiveness of EU companies, ensuring adequate and uninterrupted supply of the goods, insufficiently produced in the EU, **the Council Regulations on suspension of customs duties and opening the tariff quotas for certain agricultural and industrial products** have been adopted under the Latvian Presidency.
- The Latvian Presidency concluded the work on European Parliament and Council Regulation **on mutual assistance between the administrative authorities of the Member States and cooperation between the latter and the Commission to ensure the correct application of the law on customs and agricultural matters**. These amendments provide for establishing a registry at Union level, which would include information on container movement in maritime traffic, which will be used to improve fraud detection, investigation and prevention of irregularities in customs matters.
- The work on establishing the **High Level Working Group on Competitiveness and Growth** was completed under the Latvian Presidency. It aims to strengthen the role of EU Competitiveness Council in evaluating EU policies, as well as to monitoring and providing the necessary guidance for closer integration of EU Single Market and industry issues. This is particularly important at a time when the EU's competitiveness globally continues to decline and must be improved.

COMPETITIVENESS OF INDUSTRY AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

- European industrial companies in Europe are working in the environment of constantly increasing competition. It is therefore particularly important to use the opportunities and potential of the 'digital era', both encouraging the digital transformation of industry, and creation and development of the digital entrepreneurship. Therefore, to highlight important developments of the digitalisation of industry and to ensure inclusive industrial and entrepreneurial policies, thus fostering a coordinated approach to competitiveness of industry and entrepreneurship, at the Competitiveness Council on 2 March and at the Informal Meeting of Competitiveness Ministers on 26–27 March the discussions were held on the basis of which the Council conclusions on the digital transformation⁹ of European industry were adopted at the Competitiveness Council on 28–29 May.



MEETING BETWEEN THE CABINET OF MINISTERS OF THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA AND THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION IN RIGA

© EU2015.LV

⁹ Council conclusions are set out in the section on the Digital Single Market.

COMPETITIVE EUROPE

- **Mainstreaming the aspects of industrial competitiveness into initiatives of the European Commission** (Energy Union, the Digital Single Market Strategy etc.) was one of the important objectives of the Latvian Presidency in the context of strengthening the European industrial and entrepreneurial competitiveness. In addition to the work on digital aspects of the industry the Latvian Presidency actively worked with policy initiatives that are currently under development and will form a part of the existing and forthcoming European Commission's new strategies, such as the cluster policy, defence industry, digital entrepreneurship etc.
- **Access to finance** is one of the main problems that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have experienced in recent years as well as at the present moment. To emphasize the urgency of this matter and examine the possibility of offering new financial instruments for entrepreneurs, and implementing the existing instruments more effectively, the Latvian Presidency held the "First Innovative Enterprise week" (15–17 June in Riga). The objective of the event was to raise awareness of available financial instruments, resources and accompanying measures under the "Horizon 2020" programme, and to improve the access to finance for research work, innovations and SMEs. The European Investment Plan also emphasizes the urgency of the matter.

COMPETITION

- **The discussions on topical aspects for ensuring the equal and fair competition continued** under the Latvian Presidency. The European Competition Day Conference, held on 7 May in Riga, provided an opportunity for the representatives of EU competition authorities, the world's leading competition law experts, the Latvian entrepreneurs, representatives of NGOs and public administration authorities, as well as judges and attorneys for Competition Law to meet, discuss and share experiences on capacities of different countries to ensure fair competition, when public companies are acting in the markets, on cartel detection and prevention methods as well as on the possibilities to balance the power between the markets of large retailers and small suppliers.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

- Following the intensive work on a **Directive on package travel and assisted travel arrangements**¹⁰ the Latvian Presidency reached a political agreement with the European Parliament on the proposal, which was approved by ministers at the Competitiveness Council on 28 May. Directive's main objective is to modernise the existing Package Travel Directive that has been in force since 1990 in accordance with trends of modern market and travel purchase of the 'digital era.' The new directive will extend the protection from traditional packages to combination of separate travel services, in particular if purchased online. For example, travellers will benefit from the improved pro-contractual information requirements, the customer will have termination rights of contract if the travel price is increased by more than 8%; the protection in case of trader's insolvency will be more effective, as well as a greater protection will be ensured, if customers encounter the problems while travelling or there are unavoidable and extraordinary circumstances during the trip. The directive will offer a benefit also to the tourism industry as a whole by promoting cross-border trade, competition and reducing the administrative burden.
- The Latvian Presidency has continued work on the **Product Safety Package**. Following the publishing of the European Commission's technical study on the impact of mandatory marking of origin the issue was discussed for the first time at ministerial level at the Competitiveness Council of Ministers on 28 May. The Council failed to reach an agreement, because of the different opinion on the principle of mandatory marking of origin. Ministerial discussions showed that an agreement on the disputed principle of mandatory marking of origin is not possible within the framework of this package and that the European Commission should decide on the future of the package and possible way forward, in order to facilitate further development of the product safety and market surveillance rules.

ENERGY UNION

- The current geopolitical situation in Europe has led to the need to strengthen the EU's energy independence, establishing the Energy Union, which has become a priority at EU level and a component in the third pillar of

¹⁰ A travel is classified as a package travel, if it includes at least two types of services, such as flights, accommodation in a hotel or a car hire.

COMPETITIVE EUROPE

the European Investment Plan (improving the framework conditions for investment).

- At the High Level Conference organised by the Latvian Presidency in collaboration with the European Commission, held on 6 February 2015 in Riga, the so-called Riga Process was launched, taking the first step towards formation of the EU Energy Union. Several elements stressed in the conference, such as how to ensure energy supply security, prices at the lowest possible level and support for vulnerable consumers, were included in the **Energy Union Strategy**, which the Commission presented on 25 February.
- Energy Union Strategy provides viewing together **five closely interrelated dimensions of energy policy** (energy security and solidarity; a fully integrated internal

energy market, energy efficiency as a means to limit energy demand; transition to a low-carbon economy, research, innovations and competitiveness), thereby giving the EU's energy policy a new quality. The Presidency has led the discussions in the Council on the Energy Union proposal at both ministerial and expert level. In particular, we have focused on three issues: **regional cooperation** as the fundamental element of the Energy Union's governance, **energy prices that are affordable for consumers** and **access to financing** for the energy-related projects. We have particularly encouraged the debate on security of energy supply and external dimension of the Energy Union. We have highlighted interconnectivity of all five dimensions, for the implementation of which the horizontal issues related to consumers and investment that were discussed under the Latvian Presidency, are particularly important.



THE ENERGY UNION CONFERENCE OF THE EU ENERGY MINISTERS



FAMILY PHOTO OF THE ENERGY UNION CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS

- We are pleased that the **European Council in March** adopted the important decisions both for further promotion of the energy security as well as diversification of energy supply routes and the development of a common European energy infrastructure.
- Following the European Council in March the Presidency increasingly focused on: **renewable energy and biodiversity, energy efficiency of buildings and industrial sector** (heating and cooling), and **regional cooperation issues**. Informal Energy and Environment Councils discussed further development and implementation of the EU energy and climate policy, as well as nature and biodiversity policy. In addition, the Presidency has submitted to the Commission the summary of the Informal Energy Council's discussion on the role of heating and cooling in the energy efficiency policy. It will contribute to the future EU heating and cooling strategy. The Latvian Presidency prepared the recommendations to foster regional cooperation that were discussed at the meeting of Directors-General for Energy in Brussels. The recommendations and outcomes of the debates will serve as the contribution of the Member States to help the Commission to shape related

initiatives. The Baltic Energy Market Interconnection Plan (BEMIP) was recognised as an effective regional cooperation model, which is used as a model for regional cooperation formats across the European Union.

- Being aware of the BEMIP effectiveness and importance of regional cooperation, the participating Member States (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Sweden; Norway has an observer status) have confirmed their readiness to continue cooperation, combining BEMIP initiative with the Initiative in the Energy policy area of EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), thereby optimising the two formats of regional cooperation in the energy sector of the Baltic Sea region. During the joint meeting of the High-Level Group of the Baltic Energy Market Interconnection Plan (BEMIP) and the Energy policy area of the EUSBSR, held on 29 May in Jūrmala, organised by the Latvian Presidency in collaboration with the European Commission, the Member States agreed on Memorandum of Understanding on reinforced BEMIP and a new joint Action Plan for Energy Policy. Memorandum of Understanding on reinforced BEMIP was signed at the Energy Council on 8 June.

COMPETITIVE EUROPE



OPENING OF THE VI ANNUAL FORUM OF THE EU STRATEGY FOR THE BALTIC SEA REGION



VI ANNUAL FORUM OF THE EU STRATEGY FOR THE BALTIC SEA REGION

- Energy Union is particularly important for Latvia as it would help to ensure its energy infrastructure's connectivity to the rest of Europe, increasing the energy security. The coming

autumn it is planned to approve the EU's second list of proposed Projects of Common Interest¹¹, which provides the implementation of various gas and electricity projects.

CLIMATE AND ENERGY

- One of the main objectives of the Latvian Presidency in climate policy was to effectively coordinate and represent EU position during the preparatory process for **Paris Climate conference** (COP21, 30 November – 11 December this year):
 - On 6 March the European Union environment ministers agreed on Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC), namely, the European Union's commitment to emission reduction beyond 2020, to achieve an at least 40% domestic reduction in greenhouse gas emissions compared to 1990 levels by 2030. The European Union was the first major economy to submit its contribution to the United Nations Climate Change Secretariat.
 - During the six month period the Presidency ensured the coordination and **development of a single EU position and represented it in negotiations with other countries** during the two preparatory sessions

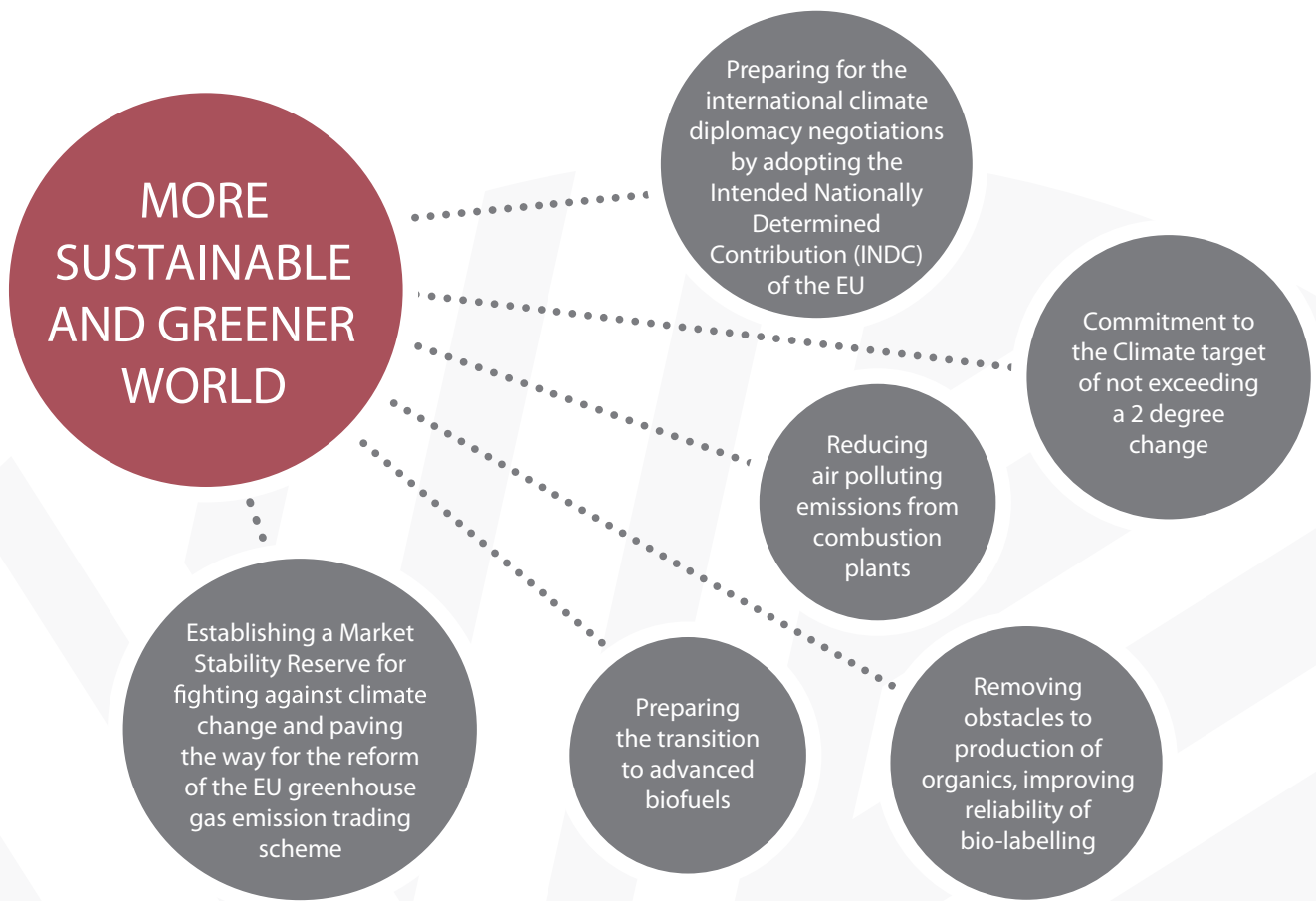
in Geneva and Bonn¹². During these sessions the Presidency presented the European Union's position at the bilateral meetings between the European Union and other countries participating in the UN climate talks.

- The Latvian Presidency represented the EU position on main issues related to the preparation process for the Paris Climate Change conference during **the high-level events** such as the Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate in Washington (19–20 April) and the Petersberg Climate Dialogue in Berlin (17–19 May). On the way to the Paris Climate Change conference **explanation of the EU position to other groups of countries** is very important in order to bring closer country positions on the main issues yet open for negotiations.
- The Presidency started to **develop the European Union position** for the Paris Climate Change conference,

¹¹ The electricity projects, significant for Latvia, that we would like to include in the second list of proposed Projects of Common Interest: 1) Latvian-Estonian 3rd interconnection; 2) 3rd stage – Kurzeme Ring "Ventspils-Tume-Imanta"; 3) BalticCorridor – Tartu (EE) – Valmiera (LV) and Tsirgulina (EE) – Valmiera (LV); 4) BalticCorridor – Riga TEC2 (LV) – Salaspils (LV); 5) 3rd stage of Kurzeme Ring; 6) Estonia-Latvia 3rd interconnection and Estonian inland transmission network reinforcement with Harku-Sindi overhead transmission lines. The gas projects, significant for Latvia, that we would like to include in the second list of proposed Projects of Common Interest: 1) The Gas Interconnection Poland – Lithuania (GIPL) construction; 2) Study on the Gas Interconnection Poland – Lithuania (GIPL); 3) Modernisation and enhancement of Inčukalns underground gas storage (IUGS); 3) Improvement of interconnection between Latvia and Lithuania; 4) Tallinn Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) terminal; 5) Paldiski Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) terminal.

¹² The preparatory session for Geneva Climate Change Conference took place on 8–13 February and the second session took place on 1–11 June in Bonn.

COMPETITIVE EUROPE



organising the ministerial discussions during the EU Environment Council meetings on 14 April and on 15 June. The Council conclusions at first reading were also prepared. Luxembourg Presidency will continue the work started by the Latvian Presidency in order to approve the EU position in September this year. This will enable the EU to actively participate and make progress in the international climate talks.

- The EU Member States have agreed on the need for structural reforms of the EU Emissions Trading System (EU ETS). The Latvian Presidency secured an agreement on **establishment and operation of the EU ETS market stability reserve**. The EU ETS is the main tool for reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the large-scale energy and industrial production facilities. The agreement reached is an important achievement in the EU climate and energy policy, as it will allow an optimal functioning of carbon market, stimulating investment in green technologies, energy efficiency and use of renewable energy, thus contributing to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions'.
- The Latvian Presidency ensured the adoption of the legislation in order to conclude on behalf of the European Union the adoption of Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol added to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Presidency also ensured the agreement between the EU and Iceland concerning Iceland's participation in the joint fulfilment of commitments of the EU, its Member States and Iceland of Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol joint commitments to mitigate the climate change by 2020.
- In order to ensure the representation of interests of the EU, the Presidency prepared a common EU position for the fifth General Assembly of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), and the ninth meeting of the Council. The main focus in both meetings was on the contribution of renewable energy to Paris Climate Change conference, as well as the transformation of the energy sector, while developing the sources of renewable energy.

TRANSPORTATION

- In the transport sector, the priority for the Latvian Presidency was the work on **the Fourth Railway Package**. The Fourth Railway Package consists of six legislative proposals that were already presented in 2013; they are aimed at removing of barriers to the creation of a single European railway area. The Package can be divided into two pillars: 'technical' and 'political' ('market') pillar. The Latvian Presidency concluded work on the technical pillar of the Package, which is essential for the development of the rail market and economic growth of the industry. The railway industry, increasingly faced with the global competition, assess very positively agreements reached. Along with the enactment of the legislation, the safety certification procedures will be simplified by the transition to a single safety certificate, which will be valid throughout the European Union (for the rail carriers that intend to carry out their activities in several Member States), as well as a single authorisation system of for rail vehicles will be established. At political and expert level the Latvian Presidency also continued the work on the sensitive proposals of the political pillar of the Package. The Presidency has significantly contributed towards reaching an agreement on the proposals of the political pillar, it is reflected also in the Progress Report on the progress made during the Latvian Presidency approved by the Transport Council on 11 June. The political pillar of the Package foresees the opening of market for domestic passenger rail transport services, as well as separation of the railway infrastructure managers and rail transport carriers.
- To emphasize **the importance of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) and the core network in the EU competitiveness and growth**, the Latvian Presidency at the Transport Council on 13 March led a discussion on the

transport's role and contribution to the EU's growth, as well as to the creation of new and high-quality jobs. Ministers stressed a crucial role of an efficient, well-functioning and sustainable European transport network in the EU's overall competitiveness. It was also acknowledged that the main challenge in the development of trans-European transport network is the implementation of the missing cross-border interconnection projects, notably in the rail and inland waterways. The discussions highlighted the need to promote smart and innovative solutions in transport sector, providing opportunities for European economy, not only in terms of the infrastructure, but also for manufacturing of electrical and self-driving cars and improving the logistics services sector. The ministers acknowledged that the transport sector needs significant investments and there is a need to seek new financing mechanisms, also in the framework of the public-private partnerships.

- During the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) Days in Riga EU transport ministers, members of the European Parliament and representatives of the transport sector discussed the **development of European transport network, particularly focusing on implementation and funding of the core network corridors**. TEN-T Days took place on 22–23 June and were organised by the Latvian Presidency in collaboration with the European Commission.
- In **the aviation sector**, in the framework of the Transport Council on 13 March the Latvian Presidency led a discussion on the **strategic priorities in the aviation sector**. In terms of strengthening the internal and external competitiveness of the European aviation industry, the ministers encouraged



ANRIJS MATĪSS, MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT OF LATVIA



ANDRIS BĒRZIŅŠ, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA AND ANRIJS MATĪSS, MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT OF LATVIA

© EUROPEAN UNION

© EU2015.LV

COMPETITIVE EUROPE

to reduce the administrative burden for the sector, including provision of the State aid for airports and airlines; acknowledged that it is essential to find solutions to ensure the infrastructure capacity of EU airports and to find ways to strengthen the competitiveness of EU carriers compared to the third country carriers. The ministers agreed – in order to enhance the sector's contribution to the promotion of Europe's growth and employment, it is necessary to accelerate the introduction of new technologies through research, including deploying the Single European Sky Air Traffic Management Research, as well as stimulating investment in aviation infrastructure. The ministers also stressed that the EU's internal and external connectivity is critically important for the development of the EU aviation industry. It is important to strengthen not only the major airports in the EU but also the air-connectivity in EU's peripheral regions.

- The Latvian Presidency continued the work on the proposal on the **protection of the interests of air passengers**. It aims to ensure the minimum of passenger rights during the traffic disruption, for example, when flight is cancelled or delayed, while taking into account the financial implications for the air transport sector and ensuring that air carriers operate in accordance with the conditions in a liberalized market. At the Transport Council on 11 June the ministers approved the Progress Report on of the progress made during the Latvian Presidency by reaching a compromise on the open issues – definition of delay and cancellation, the regulation of the cabin luggage, as well as placing extraordinary circumstances of a technical nature into a separate, binding and exhaustive list. At the same time it should be noted that the progress on issues in relation with aviation sector, including the proposal on the protection of the interests of air passengers, was hampered by the Gibraltar issue.¹³
- The Latvian Presidency also continued the work on external aviation policy, by examining the agreements, such as the security agreement with **the United States of America** and the comprehensive agreement with **Brazil**, as well as working on inclusion of **Croatia** in a number of aviation agreements already concluded. The Latvian Presidency also coordinated the EU position on topical issues on the agenda of the International Civil Aviation Organization.
- In order to provide **remotely piloted aircraft services in Europe** already starting from 2016, the Latvian Presidency laid the foundation for the main principles in order to establish the regulatory framework for **remotely piloted aircraft operation** in Europe. The principles set out clear

rules for remotely piloted aircraft manufacturers and potential users, high level safety and data protection requirements, as well as remotely piloted aircraft operators' responsibility. The principles mentioned above are included in the "Riga Declaration" approved by the High-Level Conference on Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems, and it is an important contribution to the development of regulations of remotely piloted aircrafts. The conference, co-organised by the Latvian Presidency and the European Commission, was held on 5–6 March in Riga.

- **In the field of EU inland waterway transport** the Latvian Presidency reached an agreement in the Council of the European Union on a revised proposal, which establishes the common EU technical regulations for inland waterway vessels. It is as a significant step towards the improvement of regulation in this sector. The proposal foresees a common set of technical standards for vessels navigating in EU inland waterways and establishes that the inland navigation certificates of the European Union shall be valid in all European Union inland waterways. The proposal is essential in order to move towards unified and integrated EU inland waterway **system of the multi-modal transport network**.
- Regarding the shipping industry the European Union's position for the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Sub-Committees, which took place in London, was coordinated, on matters of the EU's shared competence.
- The Strategic Master Plan of the Shift2Rail Joint Undertaking, the new public-private partnership in the railway sector, was approved during the Latvian Presidency and is important for the **development and financing of research in the railway sector**. The Strategic Master Plan defines the priority research and innovation activities to drive innovations in the rail sector in the long term.
- **To strengthen the cooperation in the transport sector between Europe and Asian countries**, the Latvian Presidency organised the third European – Asia (ASEM) Transport Ministers' Meeting 'Development of Euro-Asia Multimodal Transport Connectivity – Status Quo and Blueprints for the Future', during which "Riga Declaration" was adopted, providing the Member States' commitment to strengthen the cooperation in the field of transport by creating an integrated, sustainable and efficient land transport system, including intermodal solutions between Asia and Europe. The meeting took place on 29–30 April in Riga.

¹³ Disagreements between Britain and Spain as to which country the Gibraltar Airport belongs and which country is entitled to implement EU legislation in this area.

COMPETITIVE EUROPE



ANRIJS MATĪSS, MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT OF LATVIA AND VIOLETA BULC, EUROPEAN COMMISSIONER FOR MOBILITY AND TRANSPORT



3RD ASEM TRANSPORT MINISTERS' MEETING "DEVELOPMENT OF EURO-ASIA MULTIMODAL TRANSPORT LINKAGES – STATUS QUO AND BLUEPRINTS FOR THE FUTURE"

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL POLICY

- **Employment and social aspects** play an important role in fostering competitiveness and growth in the European Union. During the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council on 9 March the Council conclusions on inclusive labour markets were endorsed, taking into account the results of the conference held on 3–4 February. The Conclusions underline **the inclusive and sustainable participation in the labour market** and set out further steps for creation of better quality jobs in the EU. The conclusions emphasize such aspects as adequacy of income, career opportunities, and a safe transition to another job as well as cooperation with the social partners.
- The Council conclusions also emphasised **the issue of long-term unemployment** and the need to offer jobseekers the access to efficient services based on individualised and evidence-based approach, as well as the need to ensure a synergy between labour market activation and services given by social protection systems.
- The Latvian Presidency reached an agreement on **Council decisions establishing the Employment Committee and the Social Protection Committee**. This will ensure that the committees' work, regarding the European Semester process, will be carried out in accordance with the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU, including the organisation of cooperation with other committees, such as the Economic and Financial Committee.
- At the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council on 18 June the Latvian Presidency reached an agreement on **the employment policy guidelines of the Member States**. The guidelines provide the priorities and objectives of the Member States' employment and social policy, covering various aspects of it (labour relations, education, social protection, pensions, job quality, reconciliation of work and family life, wages, social dialogue, health and intra-EU labour mobility). The discussions on importance of convergence of employment and social policy as well as an approach to achieve it in the context of strengthening Europe's Economic and Monetary Union were organised.
- In the field of promoting the **youth employment** the Latvian Presidency reached an agreement on regulation, which accelerates the allocation of EU funding to the EU Youth Employment Initiative. Already this year one billion euro from the Youth Employment Initiative will be available for EU Member States, intended to accelerate the start of the **guarantee measures for youth** and to reduce youth unemployment (aged under 25) in the EU countries foreseen in the framework of this initiative. In 2015 the support will be provided up to 650 000 young people. The youth unemployment rate in the EU at the beginning of this year was 20.9% compared to 22.8% last year. Latvia started the implementation of the Youth Guarantee already in January 2014, and the first results are evident by now: the youth unemployment rate in 2014 decreased/fell by 3.8% compared to a year ago. Evaluating the introduction of the Youth Guarantee at the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council of Ministers on 18 June the council conclusions on the European Court of Auditors' Report were adopted.
- The Latvian Presidency stressed **the need to strengthen the role of social dialogue in the European Union** by identifying ways to increase the effective contribution

COMPETITIVE EUROPE



PRESS CONFERENCE FOLLOWING THE INFORMAL MEETING OF THE MINISTERS FOR LABOUR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS



VALDIS DOMBROVSKIS, VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND ULDIS AUGULIS, MINISTER FOR WELFARE OF LATVIA

of the social partners in creating a fairer and more competitive Europe. During the Informal Meeting of the Ministers for Labour and Social Affairs on 21–22 April the Latvian Presidency stressed the impact of changes in the labour market on social dialogue and the necessity of social partners' contributions for structural reforms in the labour market. The social partners gave a significant contribution to actualisation of the social dialogue issue; **Latvian Employers' Confederation and Latvian Free Trade Union** organised international forum of the social partners 'Role of Social Dialogue in Ensuring the Economic Growth and Qualitative work places.' The conference 'The Role of Trade Unions in Establishing Sustainable Growth and High-Quality Jobs' organised by the Latvian Free Trade Union Confederation focused on current employment and labour market issues: creation of quality jobs, youth employment and challenges related to the free movement of labour. A special focus of the conference was devoted to the influence of the trade union movement and trade union capacity in social dialogue at European and national level.

- In the field of labour rights the Latvian Presidency reached an agreement with the European Parliament on **Directive on Seafarers** which will strengthen the rights of the maritime industry workers in order to ensure the same level of protection as for the workers working on land, and to make more attractive the jobs in commercial fleet and fisheries sectors. The Latvian Presidency started negotiations with the European Parliament on forming **European platform for the prevention of undeclared work** and handed the proposal over to the Luxembourg Presidency to reach the final agreement.
- **Undeclared work** issue was topical also at the International Labour Conference on 1–13 June, during which the recommendation on transition from the

informal to the formal economy was adopted, and discussions on labour protection and social policy issues took place. The Latvian Presidency provided coordination of the European Union's position.

- Under the Latvian Presidency the Council agreed on proposals for the Council decisions authorising the Member States to ratify, in the interest of the European Union, the Protocol of 2014 to the **Forced Labour Convention, 1930**, of the International Labour Organisation with regard to matters related to judicial cooperation in criminal matters and social policy issues.
- The Latvian Presidency focused on improvement of the health and safety at work and reducing the number of accidents in the workplace. At the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council on 9 March the Council conclusions **on the EU's strategic framework for health and safety at work** were endorsed, emphasizing the new challenges in the field of occupational health and safety posed by both introducing the modern technologies in the workplace, and aging of the society and workforce. At the same time it is necessary to improve the implementation of the legislation on occupational health and safety, especially in micro and small enterprises. A conference, devoted to labour protection, was held on 27 April in Riga.
- On 11–12 May Riga hosted a high-level meeting, which resulted in the Presidency conclusions **on the rights of persons with disabilities**, paying special emphasis on the rights of children. Continuing the debate **on high-quality social services and social inclusion** in Europe, the Latvian Presidency contributed to exchange of best practices of the Member States during the Conference on de-institutionalization, which took place on 15 June in Riga.

COMPETITIVE EUROPE

- **To facilitate the access to printed materials for persons who are blind, visually impaired, or otherwise print disabled** the General Affairs Council adopted the request to the European Commission on 19 May – to submit without delay a legislative proposal to amend the EU legal framework so that it complies with the Marrakesh Treaty. Implementation of the Marrakesh Treaty in EU Member States will improve opportunities for persons with print disabilities to participate in the cultural life, obtain education and enjoy the arts.
- In the field of gender equality the Latvian Presidency drew attention to the question of **reducing the pension gap between women and men**, adopting council conclusions on this matter at the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council of Ministers on 18 June.

EDUCATION AND YOUTH

- Taking into account the interim evaluation of the strategic framework for **European cooperation in education and training** and strengthening the issues of education and training in the framework of the Europe 2020 Strategy at the EU Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council of Ministers on 18 May the Latvian Presidency led the policy debates on the most important issues of European cooperation in education and training, such as: actuality of cooperation and objectives, forms of cooperation and the working cycle as well as promoting the investment for jobs and growth and a social cohesion within the strategic framework as a current EU agenda. EU education ministers endorsed the actuality of current strategic objectives: to **promote lifelong learning and mobility; improve the quality and efficiency of education and training; promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship; to promote innovation** at all levels of education and training, including

The conclusions highlight actions in various fields in the economically active period of life to reduce causes of the differences in pensions between women and men. Statistics show that at the moment the pension gap between men and women in the European Union amounts to 38.5%, which is more than twice the wage gap (16.5%).

- The Latvian Presidency continued to work on the proposal for **Equal treatment directive** between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. The Presidency identified the open issues and summarized the views of the Member States, and ministers took a note of a progress report on the adjustments that mainly affect the scope of the proposed directive in the field of social protection and education at the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council on 18 June

promoting entrepreneurship. In addition, the ministers supported the transition from the existing strategic framework of 3 years' cycle to 5 years' cycle as a response to current challenges and to foster social cohesion, active citizenship and employment.

- In terms of cooperation of education and employment sector, the Latvian Presidency highlighted a number of issues: **the quality of education, education in work-based environment, high-quality learning outcomes, the European Qualifications Framework**, including the international dimension and the link with other instruments, as well as future steps towards the Initiative for European area of skills and qualifications. In addition, the Latvian Presidency evaluated the enforcement of specific recommendations for the Member States in the framework of the European Semester¹⁴ process in relation to the school



FAMILY PHOTO OF THE 5TH ASEM EDUCATION MINISTERS' MEETING PARTICIPANTS

© EU2015.LV



MĀRIŅE SEILE, MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND SCIENCE OF LATVIA

© EUROPEAN UNION

¹⁴ The European Semester is a process in which the economic situation in EU Member States is assessed every year, and recommendations are offered to EU Member States for implementing and strengthening their economic policy.

COMPETITIVE EUROPE

level education, higher education and further education as well as conformity of education to the labour market needs.

- Promoting the cooperation in **vocational education and training**, quality assurance issues and other essential elements, and in order to prepare the meeting of Ministers in charge of Vocational Education and Training, the European Social Partners and the European Commission on 22 June, the Latvian Presidency organised the meetings of the Directors General for Vocational Education and Training on 20–21 April and on 21 June, where the discussions on review process of vocational education and training as well as on objectives for the period up to 2020 were held. During the meeting of Ministers in charge of Vocational Education and Training, the European Social Partners and the European Commission on 22 June 2015 **Riga Conclusions** were endorsed, providing the vocational education and training targets up to 2020, emphasizing the need to promote learning in work-based environment, development of quality assurance mechanisms, access to vocational education and training, strengthening the basic skills and teachers' education and professional development. The Latvian Presidency also contributed to the involvement of employers in vocational education and training, organising in collaboration with the **Employers' Confederation of Latvia** an international conference on 11 May in Riga: 'Competitive and Sustainable Vocational Education and Training: Achievements and New Goals.'
- In order to facilitate the discussion on current issues of general education and to prepare the Ministerial discussion and exchange of experience, held on 18 May, **on access to education and the promotion of quality of education in different regions of the EU**, taking into account socio-demographic and economic context, as well as ensuring the cost-effectiveness, on 5–6 May, the Latvian Presidency organised the Meeting of the Directors General for Schools. The access to education and resource efficiency, as well as the role of pre-school and primary school education in development of creativity, innovation and digital literacy were discussed.
- **Yerevan Ministerial Conference and the Fourth Bologna Policy Forum** were held on 14–15 May, resulting in adoption of the Yerevan Communiqué, which provides the higher education priorities for the period up to 2018. One of the main highlights in the ministerial meeting was the need for all the member states of the European Higher

Education Area to implement the structural reforms in the transition to a single degree system and quality assurance standards. The Communiqué also points out the need to seek innovations in pedagogy, a complete use of the digital potential, strengthening the cooperation with employers, student and staff mobility. The need to create more inclusive universities was also underlined, including placing more emphasis on lifelong learning. The Bologna Follow-up Group that met in Riga twice (in January and in March) under the Latvian Presidency oversees the process on a daily basis. Taking into account the Yerevan Communiqué, the Bologna Follow-up Group will establish a work plan and will oversee its implementation during the next three years.

- The Latvian Presidency also focused on the promotion of **the participation of young people in political processes**. The question of how the Member States can practically contribute to young people's participation in democratic processes was discussed at the EU Youth Conference on 23–26 March in the framework of the structured dialogue with young people. **International trade union youth forum** 'Strengthening the trade union youth participation in decision making at European and national level' organised by Latvian Free Trade Union, focused on youth participation opportunities in the European and national political processes. It presented the Latvian and foreign examples of good practice, developed recommendations for promoting the involvement of youth in workers' organisations and strengthening youth participation in decision-making processes.
- In order to **effectively address the socio-economic challenges facing young people**, the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council of Ministers on 18 May adopted the Council conclusions on **enhancing cross-sectorial policy cooperation**. Youth work and informal education can contribute to improving the situation of young people, especially those young people, who are most at risk of social exclusion and who are neither employed nor engaged in education or training.
- To emphasise the importance of youth work in relation to promotion of the personal development, social inclusion, cultural diversity and promoting the values of active citizenship, the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council of Ministers on 18 May adopted the Council conclusions on reinforcing **the youth work** to ensure cohesive societies. The European Commission is invited to develop a proposal for youth work.

CULTURE

- With a view to **encourage the crossovers of cultural and creative industries** at the EU level – a specific creative process in which the inherent knowledge and skills of

the cultural and creative sectors merge with the other sectoral knowledge and skills by creating innovative and functional solutions, the Education, Youth, Culture

COMPETITIVE EUROPE



CONFERENCE ON "CULTURAL AND CREATIVE CROSSOVERS"

© EU2015, LV



DACE MELBĀRDE, MINISTER FOR CULTURE OF LATVIA

© EUROPEAN UNION

and Sports Council of Ministers on 19 May adopted the Council conclusions in order to facilitate understanding of the potential for cooperation in various sectors and to contribute to enhancing the competitiveness of the European economy, faster growth and development of innovations. The recommendations that were drawn up in the annual creative work week "Radi!" on 11–12 March in Riga during the Presidency Conference "Cultural and Creative Crossovers" were included in the conclusions.

- The Latvian Presidency drew up the recommendations for further work to strengthen **the evidence-based culture policy and to promote the development of cultural statistics and research**, implementing the recommendations included in the EU Council conclusions of 26 November 2012 on cultural management, in order to improve the cultural management.
- During the Conference of the Latvian Presidency on 12–13 March the theme of **interaction of cultural heritage, contemporary architecture and design** was discussed. At the end of the conference the delegates issued a joint statement calling for promoting human-centred approach, implementing the innovations in the historic environment, as well as to give a greater attention to preserving the original cultural heritage, including **an invitation to the European Commission to propose the year 2018 the "European Year of Cultural Heritage."**
- To increase the use of **Europe's digital cultural heritage** in other sectors, the high-level strategy and policy planning meeting of the European digital library Europeana took place on 17–18 March. During the meeting, the recommendations were developed in order to promote the reuse of digital cultural heritage material in education and creative industries, thus improving the quality of education, strengthening the creative sector and bringing European citizens closer to the diverse European cultural heritage.
- At the European Bureau of Library Information and Documentation Associations and the National Authorities on Public Libraries in Europe (EBLIDA-NAPLE) Conference on 8 May in Riga the representatives of the European library sector met to discuss how to **promote reading in Europe**. The conference emphasised the need to continue to work actively in promoting the role of libraries in society, support for information literacy and lifelong learning processes, as well as e-lending in libraries.
- The European Board of National Archivists (EBNA) and the representatives of the European Archives Group (EAG) met on 19–20 June in Riga, emphasizing the role of **archives** in the digital era, management and statistics of archives, as well as copyright and protection of personal data, and access to archives.

HEALTH AND SPORTS



GUNTIS BELĒVIČS, MINISTER FOR HEALTH OF LATVIA



INFORMAL MEETING OF THE MINISTERS FOR EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL POLICY, HEALTH AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS

- During the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council on 19 June the Latvian Presidency reached an agreement on the proposal for **Medical Devices Regulation**. The new regulation will ensure a high level protection of European citizens' health and safety, ensure the smooth functioning of the internal market, as well as the legal framework necessary for innovations and competitiveness of the European medical device industry.
- During a meeting on 20–21 April in Riga the EU Health Ministers agreed on the need for common nutrition

and alcohol policy in the European Union. The Latvian Presidency emphasized the need to promote **healthy lifestyle**, stressing that the nutrition and food policy in the EU should be designed to protect public health and promote healthy eating on a daily basis.

- To promote the EU's public health, as well as to create a mechanism that allows to respond in an equally fast and flexible way to the emergence in the market of new psychoactive substances, the Presidency devoted its best efforts to reach as much progress as possible in the Council in area of the new legislation on the control of new psychoactive substances. We have agreed on the legal basis for legislation, which is an important step towards the Council's common position.
- The Latvian Presidency focused on **grassroots sports development**, which can serve as an effective tool in addressing socio-economic challenges.
- The Latvian Presidency paid a special attention to youth issues, at the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council of Ministers on 19 May adopting the Council conclusions on the role of grassroots sport in developing **transversal skills** – the ability to think critically, to take the initiative to solve problems and to work in collaboration – in order to promote youth employment.



PRESS CONFERENCE FOLLOWING THE EDUCATION, YOUTH, CULTURE AND SPORT COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY



INFORMAL MEETING OF ENVIRONMENT MINISTERS



PRESS CONFERENCE FOLLOWING THE ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL

- The Latvian Presidency drew attention to **resource efficiency and green growth** aspects, continuing the work on environmental dimension of the European Semester process. EU Environment Council on 6 March held a discussion on greening the European semester¹⁵ emphasizing the need to move towards a circular economy, as well as the synergy between environmental and digital areas was highlighted. The results of the discussions were included in the synthesis report, giving the Council contribution to the European Semester process. The Latvian Presidency expressed the view on the need to move towards **a more efficient use of resources and a circular economy** during a high level Conference on Circular Economy, which took place on 5 March in Brussels.
- The Latvian **Minister for Environmental Protection and Regional Development represented the Presidency** at the high-level environmental conferences. During the presentation of the European Environment Agency's 'The European environment – state and outlook 2015 report' on 4 March it was emphasized that in order to achieve the EU's common vision for 2050, 'Living Well within the Limits of Our Planet' we have to integrate environmental concerns into other policy areas.
- Since the Commission decided to withdraw the Proposal, published in July 2014 for **regulation of waste sector** (Waste Package), the Latvian Presidency could not work on the content of this proposal. However, the Presidency organised a discussion of the Member States and summarized the views on both the necessary improvements for the withdrawn Waste Package and on additional elements in the framework of the new Circular Economy Package.
- At the Informal Environment Council on 14 April, as well as at the Conference on the 'EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 – implementation' on 26–27 May and during the meeting of the EU Biodiversity and Nature Directors on 28–29 May the Latvian Presidency held the discussions on **biodiversity conservation**. The results of the discussions will contribute to the development of the mid-term review of the European Union Biodiversity Strategy.
- In the framework of **Working Group on International Environmental issues (Biodiversity)**, the Latvian Presidency ensured the preparation of answers to various requests for information by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, as well as the preparation and presentation of EU Member States' position in international meetings, such as:
 - At the Third Plenary Session of Intergovernmental biodiversity and ecosystem services science-policy platform on 12–17 January launching the assessments of a variety of thematic and ecosystem services and biodiversity assessments in all regions of the world;
 - At the Twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat on 1–9 June, approving the Strategic Plan (2016–2024) for wise use of the wetlands.
 - In terms of the **water resources' protection issues** and challenges of achieving good environmental status the Latvian Presidency represented the EU position at the 4th European Water Conference on 23–24 March in Brussels and discussed these issues within the EU Water and Marine Director's meeting on 26–27 May in Riga.

¹⁵ The 'greening' of the EU Semester draws attention to the need to further strengthening of the environmental dimension of the Europe 2020 Strategy, such as including a legally non-binding resource efficiency goal into the Europe 2020 Strategy by promoting incorporation of the circular economy principle into economic policy coordination.

COMPETITIVE EUROPE

- To improve the European Union's air quality and to reduce the negative impact on the environment and human health caused by air pollution, the Presidency reached the agreement with the European Parliament at first reading on **limitation of emissions of certain pollutants into the air from medium power combustion plants**. Directive will significantly expand the legal framework in the European Union by setting emission limit values also for the medium power combustion plants (plants which are used for different purposes, including electricity production, heating of residential buildings, the heat/steam production for industrial processes etc.) thereby reducing the air pollution across the European Union caused by the industry.
- To secure reaching the European Union's long-term air quality targets and to achieve in the future such levels of air quality in the European Union that do not have a significant negative impact and does not cause risks to human health and the environment, the Presidency actively worked on the **Proposal for a Directive on reduction of the total of the national emissions of certain atmospheric pollutants**. A significant progress in the discussions on the text of the directive was reached. The discussion at Environment Council on 15 June marked solutions for the remaining problematic issues opening the way to reaching agreement on the Council's position during the Luxembourg Presidency.
- Following the intensive work at expert level on **Regulation on requirements relating to emission limits and type-approval for internal combustion engines for non-road mobile machinery** the Latvian Presidency reached on 30 June an agreement in the Council on the proposal. Regulation aims at reducing the emissions resulting from engines for non-road mobile machinery, such as railway locomotives, quad bike, chain saw engines, thus contributing to protection of human health and the environment.
- The Latvian Presidency provided the amendment of Directive 94/62/EC with regard to validation for reduction of the consumption of lightweight plastic carrier bags. The result of this is a framework of measures aimed at reducing the consumption of lightweight plastic carrier bags and its negative impact on the environment.
- To emphasize the Presidency's contribution to **prevent the pollution from plastic** the Parliamentary Secretary of the Environmental Protection and Regional Development Ministry attended the high-level conference 'Eliminating Plastic and Microplastic Pollution – an urgent need.' The conference was organised with the aim of bringing together the current knowledge on the impact of plastic and microplastic entering the aquatic environment and to decide on effective measures to reduce this type of pollution.
- To contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the transport sector, the Latvian Presidency reached an agreement on the proposal, which addresses the issue of biofuel production process leading to **indirect land use change (ILUC Directive¹⁶)**. The directive aims to limit the support to first-generation biofuel production from food and feed crops and certain crops grown specifically for energy purposes, as well as to facilitate the transition to the next-generation biofuel production methods. The Directive provides that the Member States have to ensure by 2020 that the crops grown on agricultural land, used for production of first-generation biofuels do not exceed 7% of the total fuel consumption. The fuel producers will have to report regularly to the Member States and the Commission the greenhouse gas emissions generated in the biofuel production process. The Member States should introduce ILUC Directive by 2017 and no later than 18 months after the entry into force they will need to determine the national targets for the share of new-generation of biofuels produced from waste or residues, or seaweed in transport fuel consumption.
- At the EU Environment Council on 6 March the Latvian Presidency reached an agreement on European Union's accession to **the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora**, thus contributing to monitoring the international trade of the endangered wild species in the European Union.
- The Latvian Presidency reached an agreement with the European Parliament on **trade in seal products**. The proposal aims at clarifying the existing conditions under which placing the seal products on the market is allowed. The conditions of the World Trade Organization are taken into account, in particular with regard to equal conditions for all market participants. In accordance with the draft regulation, the Commission will conduct outreach activities to inform the public of the products the trade of which is allowed.

Representation of EU position on environmental issues in international formats:

– Latvia represented the European Union's position on 4–16 May in Geneva at the Conferences of Parties to the

Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions devoted to **safe management of chemicals and hazardous waste**.

¹⁶ Proposal for a European Parliament and a Council Directive amending the Directive 98/70/EC relating to the quality of petrol and diesel fuels and Directive 2009/28/EC on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources.

COMPETITIVE EUROPE

An international agreement was reached on circulation and registration restrictions on certain toxic chemicals to prevent adverse effects on human health and the environment, as well as guidelines for hazardous waste management.

- In close cooperation with the European Commission and other Member States' experts the work at the international level took place under the Latvian Presidency on amendments to Montreal Protocol on **Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer**, proposed by the European Union. The Council approved a two-year mandate to the European Commission to negotiate amendments to the Montreal Protocol.
- The Presidency in collaboration with the European Commission and EU Member States carried out the analysis and review of the progress of implementation of the UN Convention to **Combat Desertification on zero net land degradation**.
- The Latvian Presidency ensured the development of a common position in preparation for the fifth meeting of Working Group on Development of the Convention on **the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents** in Geneva, as well as coordinated the views in connection with the preparation for The Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM) and the Commission for

protection of the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR) meetings. The Latvian Presidency also continued preparations for the 'Environment for Europe' Ministerial Conference to be held in June 2016 in Georgia.

- The Latvian Presidency ensured the development of the EU common position and representation of it at the fourth meeting of the Working Group of the Espoo Convention on **Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context** in Geneva. On the basis of this, for example, it was possible to agree on the competencies for development of good practice recommendations for application of the Espoo Convention to nuclear energy-related activities.
- The Latvian Presidency ensured the development of a common position in preparation for the nineteenth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention **on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters** in Geneva. During the meeting, the Presidency provided the representation of the European Union's position. That gave opportunities for the Latvian Presidency to discuss on behalf of the EU and its Member States the key issues such as the financing conditions of the Convention, the next period's work programme and priorities for action.

AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES

- To ensure the competitiveness of the EU agriculture and fisheries the Latvian Presidency contributed to innovative and environmentally friendly development, strengthening the standards for animal and plant health and food safety standards, the sustainable management of the fisheries and responsible forest management.
- **Simplification of the Common Agricultural Policy** was one of the Presidency's most important issues in the field of agriculture. The EU Agriculture and Fisheries Ministers adopted the Council conclusions at the Council meeting on 11 May, stressing the need for simplification of the direct payment schemes and the conditions for granting the aid, avoiding the burdensome requirements for common market organisation related to notifications, the marketing standards for products in certain sectors, simplification of the approval process of the rural development programmes, proportionality and a risk-based approach to controls. The aim of these conclusions is to achieve clearer agricultural policy rules that are more accessible to farmers and to reduce the administrative burden.
- Although the Proposal for a Regulation on **organic production and labelling of organic products** was

included in the list of the European Commission's proposals to be withdrawn, the Latvian Presidency has worked intensively on the compromise text for the EU organic farming regulation, reaching agreement in the Council. Work that was done so far will help the Luxembourg Presidency to move towards an agreement with the European Parliament. The proposed Regulation has advanced legislation in the field of organic production, the barriers to the sustainable development of organic production in the EU have been removed, and fair competition for farmers and entrepreneurs is guaranteed, ensuring more effective internal market, increasing consumer confidence in organic products.

- The Latvian Presidency paid particular attention to the **EU dairy sector**. At the EU Agriculture and Fisheries Ministers meetings in January and March, the situation in the EU dairy sector was discussed; long-lasting and significant fall in prices, especially in some Member States, acquiring the new markets, that have been affected by Russian embargo for agricultural and food products, and abolition of milk quota system on 31 March. Following the ministerial discussions at the meeting in January additional European Commission's support for the industry was approved: the

COMPETITIVE EUROPE



INFORMAL AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES COUNCIL

© EU 2015, LV



JĀNIS DŪKLAVS, MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE OF LATVIA CHAIRS THE MEETING OF THE AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES COUNCIL

© EUROPEAN UNION

possibility to pay the fines for exceeding milk quotas in time period of three years. It is a substantial help to the dairy industry in the countries where quota has been exceeded, and it will allow the EU dairy sector remain competitive.

- To assess the impact of **the Russian embargo** of August 2014 the Latvian Presidency encouraged debates at the EU Agriculture and Fisheries Council meeting in January. The ministers focused on suggested information on the possible bilateral agreements made by several countries with Russia on resumption of exports. The Ministers agreed that such distortion of the EU unity and solidarity should not be tolerated and bilateral agreements in this situation are unacceptable. Following the addition to **the restrictions on imports of fish products originating from Latvia and Estonia** the Council meeting in June discussed potential European Commission's support for the industry.
- The Latvian Presidency of the Council of the EU reached an agreement on **setting the adjustment rate for direct payments** in respect of calendar year 2015 (the financial discipline). In the framework of financial discipline the payments to beneficiaries who receive payments over 2000 euro per year will be reduced, applying an adjustment rate of 1.393041%. The reductions are done for creation of a crisis reserve in the agricultural sector. If the crisis reserve will not be utilized in a year, the beneficiaries will get back during the next year the reductions that were applied for the calendar year 2015. This proposal allows the Member States for a timely approval of IT systems to incorporate the approved adjustment rate and already after 16 October to start payments to beneficiaries without delay in receiving the funding.
- The Latvian Presidency has made a considerable progress in development of **the Multiannual Management Plan for fish stocks in the Baltic Sea**. At the EU Agriculture and Fisheries Council in April an agreement was reached by the Member States and there have been two productive meetings with the European Parliament. The multiannual plan for the stocks of cod, herring and sprat in the Baltic

Sea is the first multi-annual management plan for certain fish species drafted by the European Commission following the approval of the new EU Common Fisheries Policy. It is the first document into which the principles of the new policy have been incorporated, such as the possibility of adopting technical rules for fishing on the basis of joint recommendations made by the countries fishing in that specific region. The new multi-annual plan is important for the EU as a whole, as it will create a precedent for other regional plans.

- The Latvian Presidency reached an agreement with the European Parliament in January and at the EU Agriculture and Fisheries Council in May regulation on **the landing obligation** was adopted. The proposal will prevent the waste of resources, namely, the fish that is caught and cannot be discarded back into the sea alive, will be landed on the shore and counted against the quota allocated to the Member States. This will stop the previous discard practices that had a negative impact on fish stocks and the marine environment.
- In March, the Presidency reached an agreement with the European Parliament on transposing of the recommendations of **the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM)** into the EU legislation. The proposal will ensure a sustainable exploitation of red coral, by-catch regulation of marine birds, cetaceans and sea turtles, as well as conservation measures in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea for sharks, rays and monk seals. The proposal provides for technical provisions and measures which the fishermen operating in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea will have to meet.
- In March and June the Latvian Presidency approved amendments to fish quota regulation laying down **the total amounts of catches in 2015 for certain fish species** in the EU waters. These amendments take into account the scientific advice and ensure sustainable management of fish stocks.

COMPETITIVE EUROPE

- Under the Latvian Presidency the Member States agreed in the Council on a Draft regulation, which **transposes the latest North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) recommendations into the EU Law**. The proposal provides for introduction of additional measures aimed at obligations of the port and flag states combating the illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing, as well as certain technical provisions which must be respected when operating in waters of this regional fisheries management organisation.
- In negotiation process with the European Parliament the position of the two parties concerning the **Novel Foods Regulation**¹⁷ was significantly brought closer. Taking into account the progress achieved, the Presidency submitted to the European Parliament a final compromise text for reaching an agreement, which received a positive vote from the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety. The regulation is designed to ensure food safety, protect the public health and ensure operation of the internal market in food sector, while supporting innovation in the food industry, as well as to simplify and streamline the food assessment and authorisation procedures, reducing the administrative burden.
- The Presidency has reached agreement with the European Parliament on proposal concerning the transmissible animal diseases (**'Animal Health Law'**). The regulation will determine a unified and clear legal framework for surveillance and monitoring of infectious diseases of animals, the roles and responsibilities of persons involved in the animal health sector, thus taking care of the animal and human health. Confirming the importance of animal health issues in the EU, the Latvian Presidency organised **'Biosecurity – Fundament for Animal Health' seminar** on 23–24 March, which discussed possible solutions for infectious animal disease control. The seminar was attended also by experts from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine.
- The Latvian Presidency made significant progress towards the **Regulation on plant health** so that the negotiations with the European Parliament could be launched during the Luxembourg Presidency. Proposal for a regulation aims at protecting agricultural and forestry sectors, biodiversity and ecosystems, preventing pests from entering and spreading within the EU.
- The Latvian Presidency made significant progress and prepared a compromise text of Proposal for a regulation on **official controls on food, feed, animal health and welfare, plant health, plant reproductive material and plant protection products**. The compromise text will serve as a good basis for the Luxembourg Presidency to receive the mandate and open negotiations with the European Parliament. The Proposal for a regulation aims to modernise and simplify the official control system, reduce administrative burdens and establish a common set of requirements for entire scope of regulation, including the border controls, controls of genetically modified organisms and controls aimed at preventing the fraudulent activities.
- The Latvian Presidency has reached an agreement at first reading on Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on caseins and caseinates¹⁸, intended for human consumption. It aims to harmonise the compositional requirements for caseins and caseinates with requirements of international food standards. These adaptations will enable food business operators to use equal competition advantages in the global market.

The representation of the EU position on agriculture and fisheries in international formats:

- The Latvian Presidency prepared and approved the Decision on **extension of the International Sugar Agreement and extension of International Grains Trade Convention**, and reached agreement on most of the problematic issue to successfully conclude the **International Agreement on Olive Oil**. The action completed so far will ensure the further successful work of international organisations, the EU representation in these organisations and development of the industries represented in these organisations.
- The Latvian Presidency prepared **the EU mandates for participation in a number of regional fisheries organisations and other international organisations**. The Presidency led **the coordination meetings** of EU

¹⁷ Novel foods are foods and food ingredients, which the EU has not been consumed in a significant amount before the current Novel Food Regulation entered into force on 15 May 1997, for example, foods and food ingredients consisting of or derived from fungi, algae, as well as foods produced by means of new technologies, fully changing the food composition and nutritional value, such as goji, palm sugar. The regulation does not apply to GMO-containing products, which are regulated by other EU rules.

¹⁸ 'Caseins' are washed and dried water-insoluble proteins that form the basic component of the milk obtained from skimmed milk by precipitation and heat treatment. 'Caseinates' are products obtained by drying casein. Skimmed milk is milk without foreign substances and the fat content of the skim milk is reduced.

COMPETITIVE EUROPE

delegations in the regional and international fisheries organisations' sessions (NASCO, NEAFC, OECD, IATTC), as well as the EU's bilateral negotiations with Greenland, Liberia and Norway. In negotiations with Greenland the agreement on the protocol was reached, according to which the cooperation in the fisheries sector will be carried out. In the context of Norwegian negotiations the Presidency reached an agreement on the EU's position on the Norwegian and Icelandic action on utilisation of the Atlantic-Scandinavian herring and blue whiting stocks and total allowable amounts of catches.

- Following the approval of the EU position at the EU Agriculture and Fisheries Council in April the Latvian Presidency successfully represented the EU at **the eleventh session of the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF11)** on 4–15 May in New York. The forum participants discussed the importance of sustainable forest management, forest multi-functionality and cross-sectoral cooperation in forest management. At the end of the session the Ministerial Declaration was adopted, confirming the commitment of the states to strengthen and improve the effectiveness of forest management and so-called Omnibus Resolution on the International Arrangement on Forests beyond 2015 was drawn up, to promote the further development of the Forum on Forests, to improve the involvement in the work of the forum of various interest groups and non-governmental organisations.
- The Latvian Presidency prepared the EU mandates

for participation in a number of international forums and organisations: G20 Agriculture Ministers meeting in Istanbul, the General Assembly of the International Organisation of Vine and Wine in Mainz etc.

- The Latvian Presidency successfully continued the discussion on division of work between the Commission, the Presidency and the Member States with regard to **the role of the European Union in the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)** after the Treaty of Lisbon. The preparation of joint statements of the EU were also provided and EU common position was represented at the 151st Session of FAO Council, which took place on 23–27 March and the 39th session of FAO Conference, which took place on 6–13 June in Rome.
- The Latvian Presidency worked on harmonisation of the Member States' point of view on international standard projects of **the World Organisation for Animal Health** in preparation for voting in the 83rd General Session of the World Organisation for Animal Health on 24–29 May in Paris. The work was also done on nomination of the candidates from the EU to the World Organisation for Animal Health Council and regional commissions. During the assembly the delegates endorsed international standards for animal health and welfare, including identifying the methods for certain diseases, as well as re-elected the members of the World Organisation for Animal Health and the regional commissions as well as members of four specialised committees.

EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA AND SPACE POLICY

- The work on formation of the European Research Area continued under the Latvian Presidency, concentrating on activities that promote cooperation **between the European Research Area, the Innovation Union and reforms to improve the investment climate**. In the context of European Semester and European Investment Plan the political debates were held during the EU Competitiveness Council in March in order to promote investment-enhancing reforms in research and innovation as well as better use of the research potential. The Council stressed the need to maintain strategic public investment in research and innovation, ensuring complementarity between the different sources of funding, the need for wider use of tax incentives and innovation and growth-oriented state aid regulation; the reforms reducing barriers to mobility of researchers should be implemented and open access to research results should be promoted.
- To secure reaching the targets of the European Research Area by establishing a single European area for cooperation in research and innovation, reducing barriers to free

movement of knowledge, technology and researchers the EU Competitiveness Council in May adopted **Conclusions on the European Research Area Roadmap 2015–2020** (the Roadmap), marking an important stage in the development of the European Research Area. In the Roadmap the Council identified eight key priorities for action that contribute to the overall competitiveness in Europe: the need to coordinate research and innovation policy at EU level; to strengthen the effectiveness and efficiency of national research systems; to coordinate international cooperation; to strengthen Europe's ability to work together on solving major societal challenges; to optimise investment in research infrastructure and e-infrastructure; to implement effectively the scientific performance-based human resource development policy in research organisations; to promote gender equality and free movement of knowledge; to provide open access to research results and data. In addition to the existing priorities the Roadmap determines the possible future courses of action for reviewing the priorities of the European Research Area.

COMPETITIVE EUROPE

- A fully functioning European Research Area will be beneficial to Latvia as it will promote openness and accessibility of research and information, improve the mobility of researchers and attractiveness of Europe for foreign researchers, as well as establish European internal market for knowledge.
- Effective governance has an important role in further development of the European Research Area. Therefore, based on results of informal discussions of the Research Ministers held during the Competitiveness Council of Ministers in March, at the EU Competitiveness Council of Ministers in May **the Council conclusions on review of the European Research Area Advisory Bodies** were adopted. The role of the European Research Area Committee was defined in the conclusions and its responsibilities to other bodies of the European Research Area, such as coordination of the work and preparation of the mandates.
- The digital technologies are rapidly changing our lives in all areas, including the way how scientific research is conducted. These issues were discussed during the EU Competitiveness Council in May, where the Ministers for Research, based on discussion paper prepared by the Presidency, **discussed the progress towards an open and outstanding European science**. The Ministers expressed strong support for development of the European Open Science Programme and emphasized the need to create the framework conditions to increase the impact of open science and society benefits from it. The European Research Area was recognised as the most suitable ecosystem to further development of open science process, at the same time calling on increase of all stakeholders' awareness.
- EU Member States have started the implementation of the Strategies **for Smart Specialisation** on regional investment. Under the Latvian Presidency – during the International Conference 'Smart Specialization Strategy: New Approaches for Partnerships among Education, Research and Industry in Regions' in February and during the 6th edition of the Week of Innovative Regions in Europe (WIRE 2015) Conference in June, the issues, such as coordination of national and European policies and financial instruments, importance of mobility and international cooperation as well as the challenges related to open access to scientific publications and research data were highlighted.
- Riga hosted the largest **nanotechnology event** in Europe – 'EuroNanoForum 2015' international conference which brought together more than 1200 participants from 50 countries. In the framework of 15 thematic sessions the scientists, industry representatives and policy-makers discussed the effective use of nanotechnology for Europe's competitiveness. The participants stressed the importance of continuous cooperation platform to promote closer links and a request-offer approach for innovations between various levels of industry, small and medium-sized enterprises, regional policy makers and investors.
- The Baltic Sea Science Congress (BSSC), held on 15–17 June in Riga, focused on effective dialogue and cooperation between science, policy-makers, industry and society, to promote better management of the seas and a sustainable management. In this context, the Congress also contributed to a better understanding of the European Blue Growth concept. To achieve a better environmental situation in the seas and oceans in Europe by 2020, both – better governance and effective international cooperation are very important in the context of regional seas in Europe. Therefore, a significant part of the congress themes was devoted to cooperation with research institutions outside the Baltic Sea region in order to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and debate in a wider dimension – research in European seas.
- The examination of the Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the dissemination of Earth observation satellite data for commercial purposes was continued further. The Draft directive provides for a single procedure in the Member States in order to facilitate and accelerate the entrepreneurs' access to high-resolution satellite images and stimulate innovation. In order to introduce the Latvian public, policy-makers, scientists and industry with the opportunities offered by the European Union's space programmes (Copernicus, Galileo GNSS) for the development of European regions, in May Riga hosted the exhibition 'European Space Expo' and international workshop 'Satellite applications: opportunities for the Baltics.' Within the framework of the exhibitions and the workshop the Latvian representatives presented the audience with Latvian space industry's potential for participating in EU programmes and initiatives.

COMPETITIVE EUROPE

EUROPEAN SEMESTER



PRESS CONFERENCE FOLLOWING THE INFORMAL MEETING OF MINISTERS FOR ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS



JĀNIS REIRS, MINISTER FOR FINANCE OF LATVIA, CHAIRS THE INFORMAL MEETING OF MINISTERS FOR ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

- In the framework of **the European Semester** the Latvian Presidency led discussions on the European Commission's Annual Growth Survey. The three European Union's economic policy priorities – promoting investment, structural reforms and responsible fiscal policy – were adopted. The Presidency particularly highlighted the potential of the digital economy for Europe's growth and high quality job creation. The Alert Mechanism Report (AMR) was also reviewed, which is the starting point of the procedure for prevention of the macroeconomic imbalances. Its objective is the prevention and correction of excessive macroeconomic imbalances that threaten the sustainability of public finances. The achievements of the Member States in prevention of external and internal imbalances (such as the budget deficit and external debt reduction) were reflected in the Report. Due Diligence Reports In-depth reviews were carried out on 16 Member States, aiming to further explore the kind of imbalances identified, namely, whether it is excessive and whether there is a need for decisive policy action.
- In the framework of the European Semester the EU Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council conclusions on the Annual Growth Survey and Joint Employment Report: Political guidance on employment and social policies as well as the Economic and Finance Ministers Council conclusions on the Annual Growth Survey, Alert Mechanism Report, and in-depth reviews were adopted.
- In June the Latvian Presidency led discussions in the Council **on the European Commission's Proposal for Council Recommendations for the economic policies of the Member States of the European Union** (the recommendations were based on the economic policy priorities of the European Union: investment promotion, structural reforms and implementation of a responsible fiscal policy). The European Council in June endorsed the recommendations adopted by the Council.

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND MONETARY UNION

- At the end of June the discussions on strengthening the Economic and Monetary Union were held, based on the so-called Five Presidents' Report¹⁹ on the next steps for better economic governance in the euro zone. The report includes guidelines on how to further develop the Economic and Monetary Union for it to be more capable to resist future crises, to increase well-being and social equity, and be managed in a better way.
- The review of the economic and fiscal management legislation (the so-called six-pack and two-pack) was done under the Latvian Presidency. It was concluded that the new provisions have significantly strengthened the framework of the EU's economic and fiscal governance. However, despite the positive assessment, possibility for further improvement of the framework was suggested.

¹⁹ The presidents of the European Commission, the European Council, the European Central Bank, the Eurogroup and the European Parliament.

COMPETITIVE EUROPE



© EU2015, LV
VALDIS DOMBROVSKIS, VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AT THE EUROGROUP MEETING



© EU2015, LV
EUROGROUP IN RIGA

BUDGET OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

- **The life-cycle of the European Union's budget for 2016** started under the Latvian Presidency. The Latvian Presidency provided the necessary budgetary procedures within the Council (Council guidelines for the EU budget 2016 were approved; political trialogue with the European Parliament and the Commission on priorities of next year's EU budget was held, and the debate on the 2016 draft EU budget was launched in the Council, which the Commission presented on 27 May). It is essential for the Council that a budgetary discipline is maintained in the EU budget, while striking the right balance with adequate investment for growth, promotion of employment, creation of new jobs and strengthening EU cohesion.
- To reduce the amount of outstanding bills mainly for cohesion, accumulated from the previous years²⁰ (at the end of 2014 the backlog amounted to 24.7 billion euro), on 19 May the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission reached an agreement on a joint declaration on the payment plan. In the declaration the parties agreed to reduce the amount of outstanding bills and to provide a sufficient payment amount in the EU budget for 2016. It was agreed also to establish an early warning system to reduce the risk of recurrence of such circumstances in the future. The joint declaration was approved by the Council on 19 June, while voting in the European Parliament is scheduled for July.
- On 21 April the Council unanimously adopted **amendments to Regulation laying down the Multiannual Financial Framework for the years 2014–2020**, with the aim to transfer the unused budget amounts provided for 2014 to the next years' budgets and to carry out the subsequent adjustment in the annual budget ceiling set in the Multiannual Financial Framework. The amendments were necessary because in 2014 not all programmes of the Member States, mainly for structural and investment funds, have been approved (approximately 50% by the end of 2014)²¹ and therefore the funds provided for these programmes could not be used. In parallel with the adoption of amendments to the regulation amendments to the EU budget No 2 for the year 2015 were also approved, so that the funding could be planned and used already this year.
- The Latvian Presidency has ensured that in a short period of time the Council had considered and approved a number of significant amendments to the EU budget for 2015. In a very short time, the Council has discussed and on 19 June approved amendments to the EU budget No 5, which provides for an immediate increase in EU budgetary resources for the management of migration and refugee flows in the Southern Mediterranean. The timely decision will enable the European Parliament to vote on this budget amendment before the summer holidays (during the plenary session in July). On 19 June agreement was

²⁰ During the previous multi-annual programming period (2007 - 2013) also due to the economic crisis in the EU budget there has accumulated outstanding commitments (or unpaid bills) particularly in cohesion (by the end of 2014 amounting to 24.7 billion euro). The reason for this was that on one hand at the beginning of this programming period the funds were limited and on the other hand - the demand for investments from the EU budget increased.

²¹ By the end of 2014 Latvia has obtained the approval for all its operational programmes of the European Structural Funds, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund. Latvian national programmes of the Asylum and Migration Fund and the Internal Security Fund (a total of two) are still in the process of approval, because prior to the adoption of amendments to the Multiannual Financial Framework Regulation, the Commission could not continue the process of approval of the Member States national programmes.

COMPETITIVE EUROPE

reached on amendments to the EU budget No 4, which provides for funding from the Solidarity Fund for flood relief in three EU Member States (Bulgaria, Italy and Romania). On 26 June amendments to the EU budget No 1 for the year 2015 were adopted, that will make operational the European Fund for Strategic Investments.

- The Latvian Presidency has ensured a smooth continuation of the annual EU budgetary procedure – development and approval of the Council Recommendation on **discharge to be given to the Commission in connection with the implementation of the European Union's budget for the financial year 2013**. The discharge of the Commission for implementation of the budget of corresponding financial year proves that the EU budget is managed properly and it is possible to conclude the accounts of the financial year. The discharge is done by the European Parliament on the basis of the recommendations of the Council. Following

the presentation of the Council Recommendation at the European Parliament's Budgetary Control Committee and following the discussions at the plenary session of the Parliament in April, on 29 April the European Parliament voted on the Commission's discharge.

- Agreement on the Council position on **amendments to the Financial Regulation** setting out the EU budget formation and execution procedures, was reached in mid-April. Amendments to the Regulation aim to harmonise it with the Public Procurement Directive and Directive on the award of concession contracts, approved in 2014. Following the several dialogues with the European Parliament, the Latvian Presidency managed to reach a political agreement on the amendments to the Financial Regulation. Agreement in the Council was approved by unanimity at ambassadorial level at the meeting on 29 June.

COHESION AND REGIONAL POLICY

- At various levels and formats the Presidency organised discussions on the challenges in connection with implementing **the programmes for 2014–2020** time period, aiming to ensure that the cohesion policy funds available for the time period of 2014–2020 would be used with the best possible return and making full use of the potential of the reformed policy. These discussions led to endorsement of the Council conclusions in the General Affairs Council on 23 June. The conclusions assessed positively that in the planning documents the Member States have introduced a results-oriented approach. At the same time **the need for broader use of financial instruments** is also highlighted – to increase the impact of cohesion policy. It is also necessary **to ensure adequate administrative capacity** at all levels, so that the funds would be spent in a timely and efficient manner.

The conclusions also call on the European Commission, in cooperation with the Member States to build a unified and solid understanding of implementing the EU funding regulations in order to reduce the risks related to implementation of the funds and allow the Member States to take full advantage of the reformed policy options. The conclusions also open the discussion on simplification of the implementation of EU funds and calls on the parties to reduce the administrative burden for beneficiaries and institutions implementing the funds. The Luxembourg Presidency will continue this discussion.

- **On territorial cohesion and urban growth issues the Riga Declaration 'Towards the EU Urban Agenda' was developed**, the agreement on which was reached on 10 June 2015 in Riga, during the informal meeting



INFORMAL MEETING OF MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR COHESION POLICY, TERRITORIAL COHESION AND URBAN MATTERS

© EU2015.LV



PRESS CONFERENCE FOLLOWING THE INFORMAL MEETING OF MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR COHESION POLICY, TERRITORIAL COHESION AND URBAN MATTERS

© EU2015.LV

COMPETITIVE EUROPE

of Ministers responsible for Cohesion policy, Territorial Cohesion and Urban Growth. The Declaration identifies the key elements and principles for development of EU Urban Agenda, it identifies also the desired action at different levels of government in order to promote sustainable urban development. The declaration also recognises the substantial role of the small and medium-sized cities in the context of overall regional development, which is a specific priority of the Latvian Presidency. In this context, an analytical report on the specific challenges of these areas, potential and development opportunities was drawn up, which was used as one of the sources for development of the Declaration. The declaration will serve as a guideline for future work on development of EU Urban Agenda during the coming presidencies.

- The Latvian Presidency, participating in **the European**

TAXATION

- The Latvian Presidency moved forward discussions related to **the fight against tax evasion and aggressive tax planning**. The Presidency drew up a road map with immediate, medium and long term measures for combating the tax base erosion and profit-shifting (BEPS²²). The Latvian Presidency focused on further development of immediate measures; taking into account and according to the immediate measures set out in the road map, a proposal on amendments to the Interest and Royalties Directive by supplementing the directive with a 'de minimis' anti-abuse clause was moved forward; the guidelines on hybrid mismatch in cases of permanent representatives were drawn up; the discussions on Commission's proposal of 18 March **for mandatory automatic exchange of information on tax rulings**²³ were launched and furthered in the Council (the new Commission's proposal generally met with broad support of finance ministers during the Economic and Financial Affairs Council on 19 June and at the informal meeting of the Economic and Financial Affairs Council on 24–25 April in Riga). In the medium and long-term measures of the road map the Latvian Presidency has included the issues on which the discussions are necessary, for example, transfer pricing issues, issue of real owners of fiscally non-transparent entities, provisions for tax extradition rules and minimum effective tax rate. The road map elaborated by the

CITIES Forum 2015, presented the vision on development of EU Urban Agenda emphasizing, inter alia, the crucial role of small and medium-sized cities.

- The debates on reaching objectives of **the EU's territorial cohesion**, assessing the progress made to date, shortcomings and possible improvements in the future were launched under the Latvian Presidency. Discussion on the matter will be concluded during the Luxembourg Presidency.
- The Latvian Presidency led the strategic discussions on European Territorial Cooperation Programmes for the period 2014–2020 (URBACT III, INTERREG-Europe, INTERACT III and ESPON) to ensure successful start of implementation of the EU-level programmes of total funding for more than 480 million euros.

Presidency contributed to preparation of the Commission's Action Plan for Fair and Efficient Corporate Taxation in the EU. The Commission's Action Plan was published on 17 June, and the Presidency has enabled the Commission to present it during the Economic and Financial Affairs Council on 19 June.

- The Latvian Presidency approved the final agreement on amendments to **the Directive on a common framework**



SIGNATURE OF EU-SWITZERLAND AGREEMENT ON THE AUTOMATIC EXCHANGE OF FINANCIAL ACCOUNT INFORMATION

© EUROPEAN UNION

²² BEPS – base erosion and profit shifting happens when different tax systems exist, and the taxpayers can choose which tax system they would like to use for paying their taxes. If the revenue earned in one country is channeled to those jurisdictions where little amount of taxes or no taxes are paid, their own country's legitimate tax base is reduced, as well as unfair tax competition takes place between the countries and companies.

²³ The tax rulings are documents issued by the tax administration to a taxpayer (the company), which guarantees that tax legislation is interpreted and applied in respect of the company in question in a certain way. Although it is legal and promotes entrepreneurship, in some cases tax rulings include the conditions that are essentially favorable to one company, compared to the conditions according to which the other companies are running. Thus it creates unfair competition between both – companies and countries, as the tax base is artificially diverted from the place where an economic activity actually takes place to jurisdictions that offer tax rulings on more favorable terms.

COMPETITIVE EUROPE

for the taxation of parent companies and subsidiaries of different Member States by supplementing it with minimum tax anti-abuse rules (from now on all companies will be taxable on the basis of the profits obtained in the Member State concerned and no company will be able to avoid taxation through gaps in the legislation that in cross-border situations arise from hybrid financial instruments).

- On 27 May the Latvian Presidency signed on behalf of the European Union **an agreement with Switzerland on comprehensive automatic exchange of financial account information**, which will significantly improve the fight against tax evasion in the EU and globally. The agreement provides that starting from 2018 the parties will carry out an annual automatic exchange of information on financial accounts of legal and natural persons, including aspects such as income from savings in the form of interest payments, account balances, income from insurance etc. The Commission continues to negotiate with other third countries (Andorra, Liechtenstein, Monaco and San Marino) on signing of a similar agreement. Automatic exchange of information is one of the most effective instruments to combat tax evasion, because it provides national tax administrations with the relevant information on their residents' foreign income, thus making it possible to calculate and collect the appropriate income tax amount.

FINANCIAL SERVICES

- The Latvian Presidency reached a final agreement with the European Parliament on **Regulation on interchange fees for card-based payment**. The regulation aims to set the interchange fees on debit and credit card payments within a maximum limit, as well as to contribute to development of the internal market for card, internet and mobile payments. Since interchange fees account for a large part of the charges levied by card payment accepting service providers (banks) to dealers for each transaction, while dealers include the charges for card payments in the total cost for goods and services, setting the maximum limits of interchange fees (0.2 % of the transaction value for transactions with debit cards and 0.3% of the transaction value for transactions with credit cards) will reduce costs for both consumers and retailers, and will promote efficient use of payment instruments and e-commerce.
- The Latvian Presidency approved the final agreement with the European Parliament on **Regulation on European long-term investment funds (ELTIFs)** with the aim to help increase the pool of capital available for long-term investment funds (bringing together the long-term investment funds of EU Member States in a single EU long-term investment fund), prevent the regulatory fragmentation of long-term investment funds in the EU, hindering the large-scale and

- The Latvian Presidency continued intensive work on a proposal **for implementation of a standard value added tax (VAT) declaration**. The proposal aims to reduce the administrative burden and costs for companies (according to Commission estimates – up to 12 billion euro per year) and to facilitate cross-border activities. The Latvian Presidency also launched a debate on VAT fraud detection capabilities at EU level, taking into account the development of IT technology and cooperation between the Member States in order to coordinate the position on implementation of various VAT fraud-fighting projects.
- As regards **the application of VAT rules** – if the goods or services are purchased using a voucher – the Latvian Presidency has continued discussions on the proposal, focusing on three main aspects: clear definition of vouchers, determining the exact time when VAT is applied and the VAT taxable amount. The amendments are necessary to clarify the meaning of voucher for VAT purposes, and which vouchers are subject to VAT at the moment of issuance, but which – only at the time of usage. This will reduce the risk of double taxation of VAT and prevent the possibility of VAT evasion by means of vouchers.

long-term capital commitments (since there is differing national legislation in the Member States) and to facilitate the efficiency of the financing mechanism, ensuring that all economic projects that need such funding can obtain it. Long-term investments provide a long-term capital needed for funding the public benefit projects, such as projects aimed for development of energy, transport and communications infrastructure, tackling climate change and supporting eco-innovation technologies as well as investments in education, research and development.

- The Latvian Presidency approved the final agreement with the European Parliament on the anti-money laundering package, which consists of directive (which aims **to prevent the use of the financial system for the purpose of money laundering and terrorist financing**) and regulation (**on information accompanying transfers of funds**). The package is designed to protect the financial system and proper functioning of the internal market, as well as to incorporate into EU legal system the international standards/recommendations developed and approved in February 2012 by a working group of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).
- The Latvian Presidency reached an agreement on **amendments to the Payment Services Directive**. The

COMPETITIVE EUROPE

amendments are aimed at improving the protection of consumers against fraud, allegedly fraudulent misuse of the payment accounts and incidents in relation to payments, such as allegedly unauthorised or incorrectly executed payment transactions. The amendments will also ensure that all payment service providers in the EU will be subject to high regulatory and supervisory standards and stringent safety requirements will be introduced.

FINANCIAL MARKETS

- To promote the stability of financial markets, enhance the integrity and honesty of financial market, provide the consumer and investor protection and restore their confidence in the financial markets following the global financial crisis of 2008, the Latvian Presidency worked on several proposals ensuring the further development:
 - On 19 June the Council agreed on a **Regulation on structural measures improving the resilience of EU credit institutions**. The regulation is aimed at improving the resilience of EU credit institutions, reducing the bankruptcy risk for such banks that are too big for a probability of bankruptcy to be allowed, and reducing the risk that taxpayers must intervene to rescue the failing banks. The regulation provides the separation of credit institutions' trading on their own account (use of own or borrowed money to buy or sell the financial instruments or products with the aim of making a profit for that credit institution), and separation of other too risky trading activities (other than on their own account) forming a separate unit for these activities. The regulation will apply to those EU credit institutions and their EU parent companies, subsidiaries, and affiliates, which are identified as systemically important, their total assets of three consecutive years amount to at least 30 billion euro and their trading activities constitute at least 70 billion euro or 10% of their total assets.
 - On 13 February the Council reached a general approach on **Regulation on indices used as benchmarks²⁴ in financial instruments and financial contracts**. On 2 June a political dialogue with the European Parliament and the Commission was launched and it was continued on 22 June. The regulation aims to promote the reference index stability and reliability to ensure that sufficient and accurate data are used in benchmarking process, and to detect and prevent tampering with them (for example,

The Directive will also introduce a legal framework for so-called payment initiation services that take place between traders' and buyer's bank, allowing the electronic payments without the use of a credit card. This will contribute to new market entrants entering the payment services market and further development of innovative mobile and internet payments in the EU, which in turn will contribute to the EU's competitiveness.

- a conflict of interest), improving the management and control of the benchmarking process.
- The political agreement with the European Parliament on **Regulation on reporting and transparency of securities financing transactions** was reached on 17 June. The regulation aims to provide transparency and accounting of securities financing transactions, rehypothecation of collateral and other financing operations. Thus the financial market regulation and supervision outside of the traditional banking sector will be broadened, extending it to such systemically important financial markets in which non-bank lending operations take place (so-called shadow banking system). The agreement was approved in the Council on 29 June.
- A political agreement with the European Parliament on **Insurance Mediation Directive** was reached on 30 June. The directive aims to effectively improve the legal framework for private insurance market. It aims to ensuring a level-playing field between all participants involved in the insurance services market and to strengthen policyholder protection. The main objectives for the revision of the directive were consumer protection and market integration. The Latvian Presidency made significant progress with regard to protection of the interests of the Council during the dialogues with the European Parliament. The scope of the directive, inter alia, was expanded, covering all the product distribution channels in accordance with the principle of proportionality; the agreement has been reached regarding the market participants' registration, professional qualifications and raising the standards for reputation requirements, harmonisation of the level of sanctions, the rules for trading the insurance products together with other products, as well as the requirement for insurance investment products alignment with provision of the Markets in Financial Instruments Directive (MiFID II).

²⁴ The index is a price or volume unit of measurement, determined from time to time using a representative set of data. If the index is used as a reference price for a financial instrument or a financial contract, it becomes a benchmark. Example of a benchmark is London Interbank Offered Rate (LIBOR) or Euro Interbank Offered Rate (EURIBOR), which serves as the interest rates on loans and deposits. In order to determine the prices of many financial instruments such as interest rates for commercial and non-commercial contracts (supply contracts, loans, mortgages) both the accuracy of the used data and reliability of benchmarking are very important.

COMPETITIVE EUROPE

FINANCIAL INTERESTS

- The Latvian Presidency continued dialogues with the European Parliament on the **Directive on fight against fraud to the Union's financial interests by means of criminal law**. The Directive envisages measures in fighting against fraud by means of criminal law, i.e., by defining criminal offences, imposing sanctions to legal persons and criminal penalties to natural persons. This proposal is closely linked to the proposal for a Regulation on the establishment of a European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) – the criminal offences defined in the Directive will be in the competence of the EPPO. Latvia worked hard on the **Regulation on the establishment of a European Public Prosecutor's Office** throughout the entire Presidency. Discussions were held on the establishment of the EPPO, its tasks, the operation

framework, status, structure and organisation. The EPPO will have the authority to investigate, prosecute and maintain charges in the court on criminal offences affecting the Union's financial interests.

- The Latvian Presidency reviewed the **European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF)** Supervisory Committee's annual report 2014 and the OLAF report 2014. OLAF is encouraged to facilitate cooperation with the Supervisory Committee which is one of the instruments for the strengthening of OLAF's independence in order to ensure proper implementation of OLAF competences and effective protection of the EU's financial interests.

INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

- The Latvian Presidency has facilitated a better and more effective cooperation among the EU institutions, including the strengthening of the EU Council's role in developing the Commission's annual working programme. During the Presidency, the Council made significant contribution to the upcoming negotiations on the Commission's proposal for a new Interinstitutional Agreement to improve **institutional**

balance among the Council, the Commission and the Parliament. Several discussions were held at the General Affairs Councils on the elements important to the Council within the context of interinstitutional negotiations. The interinstitutional negotiations were launched during the Presidency to discuss the Commission's proposal for the new agreement.

PROCEDURAL LAW

- To strengthen the procedural law, the Latvian Presidency started dialogue negotiations with the European Parliament on the **Directive on procedural safeguards for children** suspected or accused in criminal proceedings guaranteeing their rights for legal assistance, and the **Directive on the strengthening of certain aspects of the presumption of innocence** and the right to be present at a trial in criminal proceedings which will strengthen the principles of presumption of innocence and introduce minimum

standards for the right to be present at a trial in criminal proceedings. During the Justice and Home Affairs Council in March the Latvian Presidency reached an agreement on **Legal Aid Directive** which will set common minimum standards for the rights to legal aid in criminal proceedings of suspects or accused persons deprived of liberty and legal aid to persons who are in European arrest warrant proceedings.

COOPERATION IN SCHENGEN AREA

- As regards to the **Smart Borders Package**, the Latvian Presidency, in accordance with the guidelines on further work on this package approved in 2014, organised expert discussions on certain topics, i.e., access of law enforcement agencies to the system data, application procedure of the Registered traveller programme, the impact of stamping cancellation in travelling documents, and possible solutions to system errors. These discussions will contribute to further work of the Luxembourg Presidency and the Commission once it will have prepared the new legislative proposals. The Latvian Presidency also continued cooperation with

the European Parliament in order to build a common understanding in the context of smart borders among the three institutions.

- During the Presidency, the EU signed **visa waiver agreements** with the United Arab Emirates and several African, Caribbean and Pacific Group (ACP) countries (East Timor, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Trinidad and Tobago, and Vanuatu), and started the provisional application of these agreements. An agreement was also reached on the guidelines [mandate]

COMPETITIVE EUROPE

for the Commission to start the visa waiver negotiations with Colombia and Peru. The negotiations with both of these countries concluded at the EU-CELAC²⁵ Summit on 10–11 June and agreements with both of them were initialled.

- In February, the Council approved the changes proposed by the Latvian Presidency regarding the schedule for the roll-out of the **Visa Information System** in the regions where this system is not yet functioning. According to the reached agreement, the implementation of the Visa Information System should be completed worldwide by 20 November 2015. The Visa Information System aims to improve the implementation of the common visa policy and the consular cooperation and consultations between central visa authorities by facilitating the exchange of data between Member States regarding visas.

STATISTICS

- During the Latvian Presidency the amendments of the Regulation on European Statistics were approved which will strengthen the governance of the European Statistical System and the professional independence of the official statistical institutions. The amendments apply also to

STANDARDISATION

- With the European Standardisation Summit organised on 3–5 May in Riga, the Presidency raised society's awareness about the concept of standardisation and how to improve competitiveness. The Summit mainly focused on the construction sector trying to seek answers on how standardisation can contribute to the transition to a cleaner

INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATION IN ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL POLICY (G20)

- By representing the EU in different international formats of economic and financial policy, the Latvian Presidency took an active part in the **G20 Finance Ministers**, Central Bank Governors and Central Bank Deputies meetings and their preparation to ensure the representation of EU's common interests. While Latvia was holding the Presidency of the EU Council, the G20 was lead by the Turkish Presidency, and five G20 format meetings took place during this time. The Latvian Presidency in cooperation with the Commission and the European Central Bank provided a significant

- On 20 April, the Foreign Affairs Council adopted the Directive on the coordination and cooperation measures to facilitate **consular protection** for unrepresented citizens of the Union in **third countries**. The Directive was adopted in order to facilitate consular protection for EU citizens in difficulty (for instance, lost travel documents) or in emergency situations (for instance, natural disasters) in countries with no embassy or consulate of their respective Member State, who can seek help to a representation of other EU Member State. The Directive lays down concrete procedures on how the consular offices from the country of the citizen and the Member State providing the assistance cooperate to provide consular help as quickly and as effective as possible. In addition, the Directive determines ways how the European External Action Service and the European Union delegations support Member States in their consular work with unrepresented citizens of the Union.

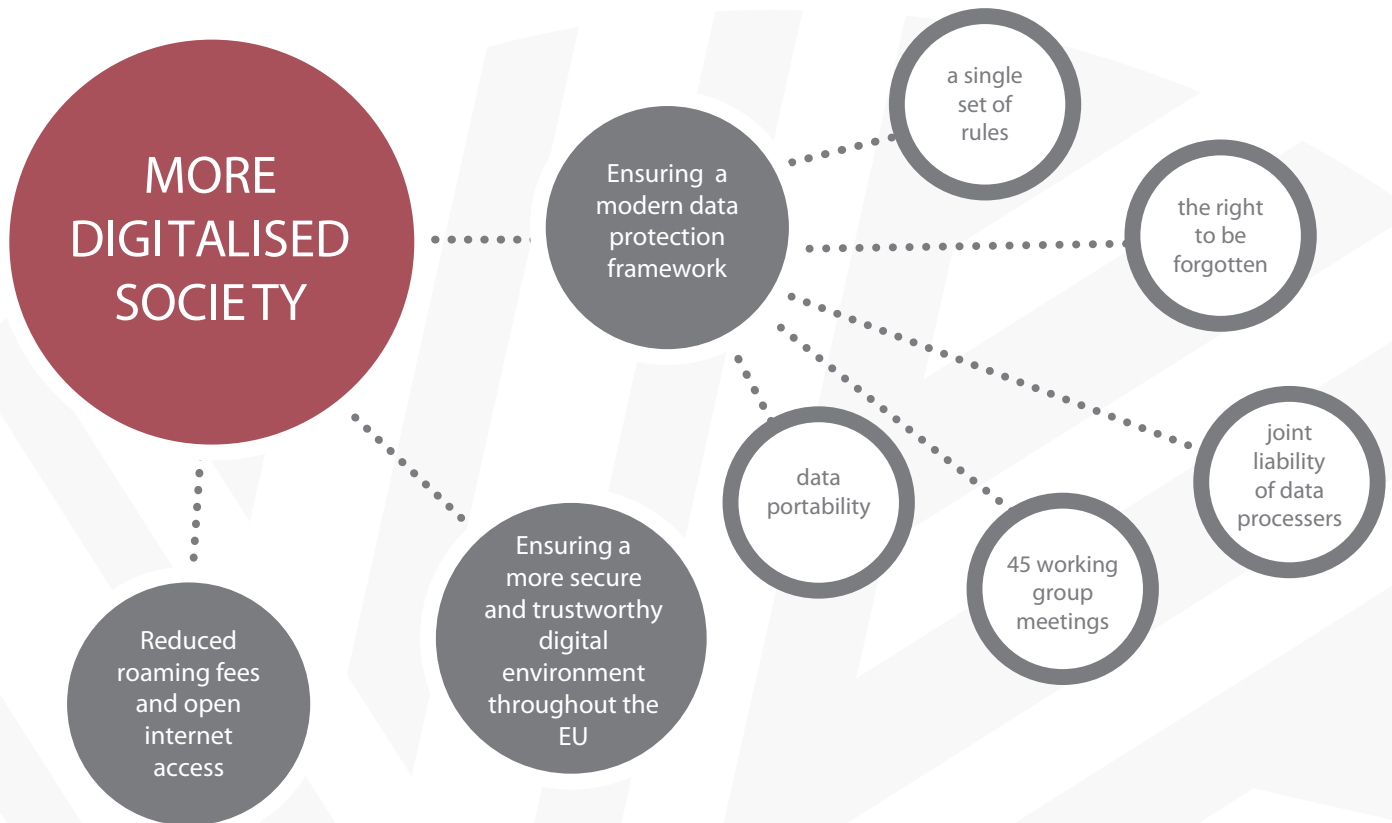
the improving of statistical quality and the reducing of respondent burden by extending statistical institution rights to engage in the formation and application of administrative data sources.

and smarter economy. Considering that the construction has a high economic value in the EU, including Latvia, the Summit paid attention to issues, such as sustainable construction, energy efficient buildings, development of smart cities, design and management of buildings.

contribution to the development of EU's common position, facilitated the coordination of the position and successfully defended it at the G20 meetings, incorporating these interests in *G20 Communiqué* in fields such as the development and risks of global economy, promotion of investment and growth, finance market regulation, international tax policy issues, International Monetary Fund quota and governance reform, climate change and related financial issues, and others.

²⁵ The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States

DIGITAL ECONOMY



- To contribute to the Digital Single Market Strategy, within the framework of the European Semester²⁶, the Latvian Presidency chaired different Council configurations that **discussed the utilising of digital economy potential in the EU's competitiveness, growth and employment.**

– Particularly notable is the work on the conclusions of the EU Single Market Policy proposed by the Latvian Presidency and adopted by the Competitiveness Council on 2 March²⁷. Within the Digital Single Market Strategy, the Member States encourage the European Commission to evaluate whether the **Single Market framework is fit for the digital age** and propose concrete measures with set deadlines for dealing with obstacles and drawbacks. The Member States asked the Commission to address issues such as cross-border geographical discrimination in the provision of products and services; the role of internet platforms (for example, social networks, e-commerce platforms) and the need for its regulation at EU level; online consumer protection; uninterrupted e-commerce; copyright rules appropriate for the digital age; an

efficient parcel delivery system; data protection; physical establishment requirements for digital entrepreneurs; transition towards e-procurement; online registration of companies, and open data. The Member States also stressed the need for a regulatory framework and related activities to be “digital by default” to ensure that all new legislation is made fit for the “digital age” and reduce the burden for citizens and businesses. The European Commission is invited to introduce a digital dimension in the impact assessment of legislation by the end of 2015.

– In the Competitiveness Council, the Latvian Presidency lead the discussion on **industrial digitalisation opportunities, benefits for the development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and start-ups and on boosting competitiveness.** The Ministers outlined several courses of action for the widest possible use of digital potential, for example, the need to develop digital skills for the labour force, access to funding for introducing new technologies and the availability of a proper infrastructure at EU level for cross-border

²⁶ See Page 35.

²⁷ For more information, see Single Market Section.

DIGITAL EUROPE



INFORMAL MEETING OF COMPETITIVENESS MINISTERS



DANA REIZNIECE-OZOLA, MINISTER FOR ECONOMIC AFFAIRS OF LATVIA, AND GÜNTHER OETTINGER, EUROPEAN COMMISSIONER FOR DIGITAL ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

© EUROPEAN UNION

transactions. Digitalisation of industry was discussed also at the Informal Meeting of Competitiveness Ministers on 26–27 March in Riga.

- When discussing the **unlocking Europe’s digital network potential**, the Ministers responsible for Research stressed the benefits from open, networked and data-intensive research. The benefits – creation of new jobs, greater and more free access to information in research, increased work efficiency of scientists and better quality of scientific results. Latvia’s potential benefits from open, networked and data-intensive research are the creation of new jobs, greater and more free access to information in research, increased work efficiency of scientists and better quality of scientific results.
- Whereas the Environment Council on 6 March invited to include **resource efficiency aspects** in the Digital Single Market Strategy, which means to develop digital opportunities in urban environment (transport, logistics and lighting systems), waste management, spatial planning and information dissemination, thus facilitating environmentally-friendly growth.

DIGITAL SINGLE MARKET

- On 6 May, the European Commission published the Digital Single Market Strategy. In the Strategy, the Commission proposes number of initiatives to remove obstacles for developing a fully-functioning Digital Single Market. Some of the important initiatives are the following: review of the current telecommunication framework; regulatory environment applicable to cross-border transactions; measures concerning parcel delivery; review of the E-Privacy Directive; modernising copyright regulatory

- The Member States in the framework of the Telecommunication Council identified areas crucial for the **completion of the Digital Single Market** which are a priority or still require further work. These fields include the deployment of high-speed broadband networks; facilitation of e-commerce by removing barriers to cross-border online trade and services; building consumer confidence and enhancing cyber-security for digital services, with progress required in particular in data protection, privacy and information security; investment in the Information and Communication Technology research and digital innovations; support to start-ups and SMEs, notably in reducing the administrative burden, and others. In addition, Member States underlined the “digital by default” principle to be implemented as the horizontal policy principle when carrying out impact assessments of every new initiative.

- The main conclusions of the discussions at these Council configurations the Latvian Presidency included in the so called Synthesis Report, thus contributing to the **Digital Single Market Strategy** published on 6 May by the European Commission.

framework; initiatives like “Once-Only”, “free flow of data”, European Cloud; work towards the “Single Digital Gateway”; sectoral interoperability, information and communication technology standards and e-signatures.

- With the publishing of the **Digital Single Market Strategy**, to contribute to the preparation for the meeting of the EU Heads of State and Government on 25–26 June, the Latvian Presidency lead discussions at the Council

configurations on the following aspects of the Digital Single Market Strategy:

- With the adoption of the Council conclusions on the role of early childhood education and primary education in fostering creativity, innovation and **digital competence**, the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council on 18–19 May emphasised the need to ensure effective learning of digital skills and their application in learning process, and the importance of practical and creative activities in fostering pupils' creativity, innovation and digital competence.
- On 19 May, the Ministers responsible for the Audiovisual Sector proposed to review the **Audiovisual Media Services Directive** as soon as possible to ensure quality audiovisual services and content in the Digital Single Market. Rapid technological and market changes and geopolitical situation has left an impact on this sector. The Ministers emphasised the need to strengthen the EU audiovisual space by developing effective mechanisms that would stop the spread of hate speech, propaganda and disinformation campaigns in the European media. This also calls for more effective implementation of the provisions in the existing directive and the strengthening of the independent regulatory agencies' ability to quickly respond to emergency situations and to mutually cooperate in situations when fundamental values and rights are violated or national security, social cohesions and stability is seriously threatened. In response to the European Commission's Digital Single Market Strategy, the Ministers shared their vision about the future development of the audiovisual regulatory framework and stressed the need to improve the protection of minors, media literacy and the dissemination of European works.
- As regards to the **modernisation of the EU copyright regulatory framework** which plays a significant role in improving the Digital Single Market, the Ministers underlined the necessity to promote quality content creation providing adequate remuneration of authors and other right holders and facilitating cultural diversity. Ministers also acknowledged the need to prevent unjustified geo-blocking so that the consumers would have an easier access to the content.
- In order to emphasise the **industrial priorities** of the Digital Single Market Strategy, the Competitiveness Council adopted conclusions on the digital transformation of European industry on 28–29 May. The European Commission will be able to use these conclusions as guidelines to strengthen the digital dimension of

industrial competitiveness. The conclusions highlight the following issues important to industrial growth: the digital transformation potential of industry and entrepreneurship to boosting EU competitiveness and creating new jobs; the need for a simple and predictable EU regulatory framework that boosts the digitalisation of industry, business operation in the digital environment and cross-border e-commerce; closer cooperation among the EU Member States and exchange of best practices; interoperability of digital technologies and solutions, including common standards; creation of start-ups and their further development in the EU, including access to funding; development of appropriate skills and the availability of specific, demanded information and communication technology professionals; unlocking the research and innovation potential to study, implement and introduce digital solutions; balance between digital data use and protection, and the confidence in the digital environment solutions. The Ministers responsible for Research discussed²⁸ *the move towards an **open and excellent European science** and the impact of digital technologies on scientific research.*

- In the Competitiveness Council conclusions on **open, data-intensive and networked research** as a driver for faster and wider innovation, the Member States reaffirmed the political support for better framework conditions for data-driven innovation taking into account research needs. The Ministers acknowledged the importance of data as fuel for entrepreneurship, digital transformation of industry and the development of new business models, ideas and innovative start-ups. Taking into consideration the growing support for a wide access to publicly-funded research publications and underlying data, the Ministers stressed the need for adequate sharing, use, re-use and interoperability of data, based on common standards. At the same time, they recognised the need for a reflection on current science metrics, as well as incentives for researchers to publish articles and data through open access and stressed the need for development of data skills for EU research community. When underlining the importance of research and innovation in the Digital Single Market Strategy, the Ministers acknowledged the need to increase investment in research and innovation in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT).
- On 12 June, the Telecommunication Council held political discussions on the proposed Digital Single Market Strategy measures in telecommunications, cyber security and e-governance and among the issues important to the completion of the Digital Single Market, the Ministers emphasised the **need to support**

²⁸ More discussion results are included in the European Research Area and Space Policy Section.



INFORMAL MEETING OF COMPETITIVENESS MINISTERS



COMPETITIVENESS MINISTERS GETTING ACQUAINTED WITH THE LATVIAN DIGITAL ACHIEVEMENTS

start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises and offer them the opportunity to scale up and benefit from the Single Market; **investment in infrastructure** which is a precondition for effective functioning of the market; **the importance of digital skills development and fostering of digital inclusion**. The Ministers also underlined issues such as the need for review of telecoms rules, the promotion of e-governance and consumer protection, parcel delivery, big data, cloud computing, standards and interoperability, and cybersecurity. The Ministers agreed that the issues of geo-blocking and copyrights should be addressed.

- In order to contribute to the preparation for the European Council on 25–26 June and get guidance for further work towards the Digital Single Market Strategy, the Latvian Presidency summarized the main elements of the Digital Single Market Strategy identified at the political discussions

and conclusions drawn at the Council configurations in the Presidency's letter to the President of the European Council.

- The EU Heads of State and Government agreed that further work to the implementation of the Digital Single Strategy should be targeted towards: removing the remaining barriers to the free circulation of goods and services online and to tackle unjustified discrimination on the grounds of geographic location; guarantee the portability and facilitate cross-border access to online material protected by copyright; ensuring effective investment instruments and improving the innovation environment, in particular for small and medium-sized enterprises and start-ups; identify and deliver on the key Information and Communication Technology standardisation priorities; ensuring the free flow of data; assessing the role of online platforms and intermediaries; improving digital skills and e-Government.

LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS FOR THE DIGITAL SINGLE MARKET

- The Latvian Presidency continued the work started by the previous presidencies on a number of legislative proposals crucial for the creation of the **Digital Single Market**. The Presidency worked intensively on the priority and at the same time sensitive proposals for the Telecoms Single Market Regulation, the Data Protection Regulation, and the Directive on Network and Information Security.
- **The Data Protection Reform Package** was one of the Latvian Presidency's priorities. This package consists of a regulation and directive proposals. The directive will ensure the protection of rights of persons if their personal data are processed for the purposes of investigation of criminal offences or the execution of criminal penalties. Whereas the regulation will harmonise the regulatory framework

on personal data protection, strengthen the rights to privacy online and stimulate European digital economy. For individuals, the new European data protection regulation will raise the level of personal data protection: persons will have the rights to transfer their data from one controller to another, have the "right to be forgotten", have the right to find out about the processing of their personal data from the controller, thus have more control over their data. The new Data Protection Regulation will give individuals more control of their own data which is very important in today's world when the need for data processing increases through receiving different services and communicating online. Greater rights for data subject to control their data processing means greater administrative burden for businesses which initially will require financial resources. At

the same time, common interpretation of the application of data protection rules will be ensured. The one-stop-shop mechanism will ensure that a single supervisory authority of the Member State will deal with a violation and the decision taken will apply to all its subsidiaries, including the ones in other Member States. Operators in the same sector will be able to draw up codes of conduct that determine data processing rules, thus ensuring common rules for all operators in data processing. In addition, the operators will have the opportunity to receive a certificate stating that the operator complies with the data protection rules. After over three years of discussions, the Justice and Home Affairs Council led by the Latvian Presidency agreed on the text of the General Data Protection Regulation at the meeting in June making a decisive step towards the adoption of the new regulation. This agreement gave the Latvian Presidency the opportunity to start negotiations with the European Parliament at the end of June.

- The Latvian Presidency gave new impetus for the work on **the Telecom Single Market Regulation** proposal and devoted all its efforts to reach an agreement with the European Parliament on abolishing roaming surcharges and on the first EU-wide open internet rules. The agreement reached on 30 June envisages complete abolition of roaming surcharges in the EU as of 15 June 2017. This will allow consumers when travelling in the EU to use mobile phone services without paying extra on top of the domestic fee. An agreement was also reached on a considerable reduction of roaming fees already as of 30 April 2016 that, for example, for Latvian consumers will reduce the roaming fees up to four times. In order to prevent the increase in domestic mobile service fees due to the abolition of roaming surcharges, the Latvian Presidency worked on balanced and gradual solutions for abolishing the roaming surcharges. For instance, the Latvian Presidency took into consideration the fact that over one third of EU citizens do not travel and that domestic mobile service charges in the Member States differ on average up to seven times. In turn, the open internet rules state that all operators will have to treat all traffic equally when providing internet access services. At the same time, reasonable day-to-day traffic management is allowed also in the future. Blocking and throttling of traffic will be allowed only in exceptional cases, for example, to prevent cyber attacks or network congestion.
- The Latvian Presidency has worked on several **issues regarding European Union cyber security policy**. Cyber security is a comprehensive issue, and the cyber security policy challenges and possible solutions have been discussed in a number of European Union Council working groups (Working Party on Telecommunications and Information Society, Friends of the Presidency Group on

Cyber Issues, the Politico-Military Group), thus increasing the awareness of decision-makers on cyber security and helping to promote a higher overall level of security. Among the most important achievements are the work on the Network and Information Security Directive and the approved Council Conclusions on Cyber Diplomacy.

- During the Latvian Presidency, an agreement was reached on a unified EU and Member States' approach to digital issues at a global scale, covering aspects such as national norms of behaviour, internet management, cyber skills capacity-building and development, respect for rights and freedoms in the virtual environment, etc. The General Affairs Council approved the unified approach on 10 February by adopting the Council Conclusions on **Cyber Diplomacy**.
- The Latvian Presidency also worked on external dimension of digital issues – Council conclusion on the transfer of the stewardship of the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA) functions to the multi-stakeholder community were drawn up and adopted. The upcoming transfer is one of the most important internet governance related processes in 2015. During the Presidency, a draft position was also drawn up and adopted to guide the EU and its Member States in the preparatory process of the World Summit on the Information Society +10 ("WSIS+10") Review Process.
- To strengthen cyber security, the Latvian Presidency set the work on the **Network and Information Security Directive** as a priority and **reached a political agreement with the European Parliament on the proposal's key elements** – the scope of the Directive, operational and strategic cooperation, and internet services. The reached agreement will pave the way for the conclusion of work on the proposal during the Luxembourg Presidency. This will be the first piece of legislation that will set the basis for network and information security standards in the EU. The proposal will set a unified approach for the critical infrastructure (energy, transport, banks) companies and public administration institutions in the EU to report about cyber attacks (incidents and their impact on critical infrastructure services) that affect cyber security in one or more Member States. It will build confidence in the virtual environment – technologies, services and systems, and create new cooperation mechanisms for information exchange at strategic and operational level among the Member States.
- To facilitate electronic cross-border and cross-sector cooperation among the European public administrations and among public administrations, citizens and businesses, the Council during the Latvian Presidency reached an agreement on a Decision establishing a programme on interoperability solutions for European public

administrations, businesses and citizens (ISA2). Within the framework of the current ISA programme, the Internal Market Information System initiative was implemented that, for instance, enables to check information about a foreign company or a person who wants to provide a service in any Member State; check whether the specialists who want to work in any Member State have the proper qualification, etc.

- In order to facilitate the access to government websites, including to people with disabilities, the Latvian Presidency continued the work on the **Directive on the accessibility of the public sector bodies' websites**. The Telecommunication Council on 12 June in its Progress Report on the Latvian Presidency's achievements affirmed that the progress made during the Latvian Presidency is a considerable contribution towards reaching an agreement.

OTHER ISSUES OF THE DIGITAL SINGLE MARKET

- In order to emphasise the importance of the Digital Single Market and its opportunities as well as challenges related to the development of the Digital Single Market, the Latvian Presidency organised number of discussions covering current issues such as building consumer confidence in the digital environment, copyright regulation, the role of the Information and Communication Technology in modernising public administration, and the promotion of digital skills:
- **The development of the Digital Single Market and such important issues as trust, ensuring access and connectivity, building of digital economy for businesses and consumers, promoting of e-society, and digital skills** were discussed on 17–18 June at the Digital Assembly 2015 – *One Europe, One Digital Single Market*. As the main challenges in the implementation of the strategy business associations emphasised, for example, the introduction of “Only Once” principle in public administration; high



KASPARS GERHARDS, MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF LATVIA, AT THE DIGITAL ASSEMBLY IN RIGA

© EU2015.LV



INSPIRATIONAL SPEECHES DURING THE DIGITAL ASSEMBLY

© EU2015.LV



DIGITAL ASSEMBLY IN RIGA

© EU2015.LV



WORKSHOPS DURING THE DIGITAL ASSEMBLY

© EU2015.LV

common level of network and information security across the EU; the need for a coherent national legislation and internet opportunities across the EU. While among the most important possible solutions they mentioned efficient promotion of competitiveness in the infrastructure sector and the need for a legislation that is flexible enough. The highlighted issues and common conclusions from the discussions will be used in the implementation of the Digital Single Market Strategy, for example, when drawing up new EU policy documents or legislative proposals. The Digital Assembly also provided an opportunity for Latvia to showcase its digital achievements: internet speed, large network of free internet (Wi-Fi), access to public services in the digital environment, and others. The Digital Assembly 2015 was the first event during which officials and industry representatives had an opportunity to discuss from different aspects and provide recommendations for the implementation of the Digital Single Market Strategy published by the European Commission on 6 May 2015.

- The discussions on the **promotion of consumer confidence and trust in cross-border transactions in the Single Market** and the **elimination of the existing barriers** commenced during the Latvian Presidency served as the basis for further discussions on consumer protection and its future prospects at the European Consumer Summit in June. The European Consumer Protection Conference on protection of consumers' rights in the digital age took place on 23–24 April.
- During the international conference on **"Strengthening the European Audiovisual Media Market for the Development of the European Identity"** that took place on 9–10 March in Riga, the EU experts agreed that there is a need to improve media literacy and the protection of minors, promote European on-demand audiovisual media services and strengthen regulatory independence. Also, during the political discussions at the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council on 19 May, the need for more effective ways how to implement and improve the existing regulation on the so-called country of origin principle in situations where hate speech containing third-country programmes in one EU Member State jurisdiction are retransmitted in other Member States was emphasised. A common EU action is essential for safeguarding the European Information Space and common European values.
- To provide a strong strategic framework for the creation of a **Multilingual Digital Single Market**, the participants of the Riga Summit on Multilingual Digital Single Market on 27–29 April in Riga encouraged to conclude the work on the strategic agenda for the Multilingual Digital Single Market. The draft strategic plan encompasses specific language technology solutions which could help overcome language barriers in Europe, thus creating a

truly integrated Digital Single Market. The Summit also discussed the challenges of the Multilingual Digital Single Market that need to be addressed to ensure equal digital opportunities in all EU languages.

- **The role of the Information and Communication Technology in improving efficiency of public administration**, including within the context of cross-border services, and in promoting public engagement by using new technologies was emphasised during the European Public Administration Network (EUPAN) meeting on 19–20 March in Riga.
- The opportunities provided by the Information and Communication Technologies to **modernise public administration**, including how information management systems can help public administration to reduce costs and improve public services through their digitalisation were discussed, for instance, at the SEMIC and CONTACT Riga 2015 conferences on 5–6 May in Riga. Latvia's experience and achievements in modernising public administration were welcomed at the public debates devoted to the Digital Single Market Strategy also in other EU Member States – Denmark, France, the United Kingdom, Poland and Sweden.
- A vital role in patient-oriented healthcare and in raising citizens' involvement in the maintenance of their own health play **eHealth** and **mHealth (mobile health)** both of which were emphasised at the international high-level conference entitled "Me and my Health – Transcending Borders". The conference underlined the need to introduce innovative and sustainable eHealth funding and payment mechanisms and to provide systematic training and other support mechanisms for medical personnel to promote efficiency and safe transition to an eHealth-based integrated healthcare model. The conference participants also stressed the need to improve citizens' digital skills and knowledge about health in order for them to use eHealth solutions in the communication between the citizens and healthcare professionals, and to promote research in eHealth. Taking into consideration the results of the European Commission Public Consultation on the Green Paper on Mobile Health the conference also discussed further steps for promoting wider use and implementation of mHealth at EU, national and regional level. The conference took place on 11–13 May under the "eHealth Week 2015" which is the largest annual eHealth event in Europe.
- Stimulating investment, the **acquisition of digital skills** and the creation of new jobs to promote European economic growth were the aspects highlighted in the Riga Declaration adopted at the conference on "e-Skills for Jobs 2015" on 13 March. To meet the growing demand for Information and Communication Technology specialists

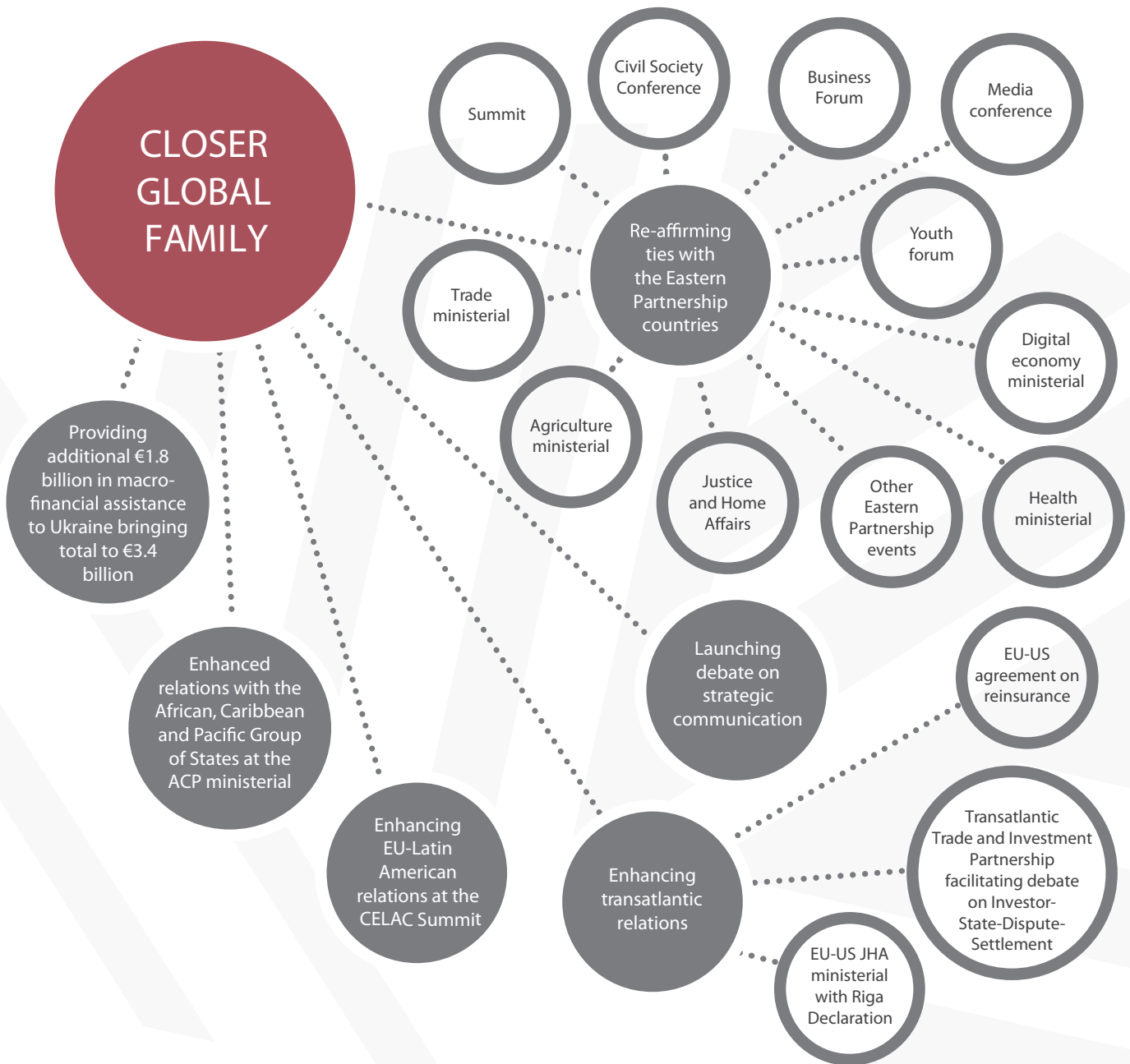
in Europe, the European Commission and the Latvian Presidency launched the informative “e-Skills for Jobs 2015” campaign.

- **The use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in the learning process making the information more accessible, including for people with special needs** was highlighted in the guidelines presented at the international conference on ICT for Information Accessibility in Learning (ICT4IAL) on 27–28 May.
- Proposals for **open data and “open policy” solution planning** were drawn up at the conference on “Open Europe: Open Data for Open Society” on 18–19 February to contribute, for example, to the development of the European Citizens’ Initiative.
- **Open science, open access to scientific data** and further development of European policy in global context (Research Data Alliance) were discussed at the international seminar of the e-Infrastructure Reflection Group (e-IRG) on 3 June in Riga. The seminar brought together EU Member State experts, representatives from the European Commission and internationally distinguished scholars to discuss how the EU Member States with the support of the Commission should continue the practical work on invigorating the open access to scientific data.
- The modernising of the EU copyright regulatory framework by adjusting it to the current level of digital development is one of the most important elements for the improving of the Digital Single Market. Given that the European Commission has announced its intention to come up with a legislative proposal for the review of the existing EU copyright regulatory framework at the end of 2015, a seminar on **“Copyright Exceptions and Limitations within the Scope of the Review of the EU Copyright Framework”** took place on 26–27 March in Riga. The seminar brought together EU Member State experts, representatives from the European Commission and internationally distinguished scholars to

discuss how the functioning of the EU Single Market can be affected by different copyright limitations and exceptions, for example, the right to use copyrighted work without the author’s consent or reward for museums or research purposes. The participants also discussed the necessary level of harmonisation of the limitations and exceptions across the EU and the need to revise the existing list of these exceptions and limitations taking into consideration digital technology development, for example, to include in the list the option to share images online for non-commercial purposes.

- **Reliable and safe services** are prerequisites for individuals and businesses to use opportunities provided by the digital environment. To guarantee security and the rule of law in this environment, a comprehensive cyber security framework is required. Therefore, on 13 May a seminar was organised to assess national strategies of different EU Member States and share best practices. Raising awareness in society and cooperation with the private sector are important issues, but the Latvian Presidency called on states to introduce different best practice initiatives, for instance, responsible incident detection policy.
- **Cloud services** offer wide-ranging opportunities for businesses and public administration, but at the same time doubts and uncertainty exist due to their legal and compliance issues and technical security gaps. These issues were addressed at the international high-level event – EU28 Cloud Security Conference bringing together representatives from the European Commissions, industry and academia. Cloud service security was discussed in relation to the current EU legislative initiatives, such as the data protection reform, the Network and Information Security Directive, the strategy for “Unleashing the potential of cloud computing in Europe” and the Digital Single Market Strategy. The conference concluded that additional actions at policy level must be taken in order to promote cloud services as a reliable and safe way to use services.

ENGAGED EUROPE



THE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM AND SECURITY IN EUROPE

- The Latvian Presidency reacted immediately to the terrorist attacks²⁹ that took place in the beginning of this year. The Latvian Minister for the Interior took part in the extraordinary international meeting of Home Affairs Ministers on 11 January in Paris to discuss the security situation in Europe. At the same day, the Latvian Prime Minister and the Minister for the Interior also took part in a unity march in Paris, which was directed against extremism.
- Following the proposal of the Latvian Minister for Culture and France, the **EU Ministers for Culture** issued a joint statement on 11 January, thus defending freedom of expression and vow to protect the rights of artists to create freely.
- The EU Finance Ministers also made a contribution on 27 January during the **Economic and Financial Affairs**

²⁹ Terrorist attacks on Charlie Hebdo newspaper in Paris on 7 January this year, planned major attacks in Belgium that were stopped at the very last moment and attacks at the free speech event and at a synagogue on 14 February in Copenhagen.

ENGAGED EUROPE

Council by agreeing to speed up the introduction of new regulations on preventing money laundering and terrorist financing in the Member States, and by strengthening the cooperation between the Member States' intelligence units. During a meeting on 20 April, the Council adopted its position in the first reading on the new regulations, while the European Parliament adopted these legislative acts on 20 May.

- Taking into account the tragic events and the operations in the fight against terrorism in several Member States, in-depth discussions among the Home Affairs Ministers on fight against terrorism took place on 29 and 30 January during the informal meeting of Justice and Home Affairs Ministers, while the Ministers for Justice addressed the legal aspects of terrorism. As the result of this discussion, the **Riga Joint Statement** was adopted, which can be regarded as the contribution of the Justice and Home Affairs Ministers to the informal meeting of the Heads of State and Government, which took place on 12 February.
- The fight against terrorism was an issue consistently on the agenda of the meetings of Foreign Ministers. On 9 February, the **EU Foreign Ministers** agreed on the implementation of external counter-terrorism efforts: strengthen cooperation with third countries, combat radicalisation and violent extremism, promote international cooperation and address the ongoing crisis and conflicts in third countries.
- During the informal meeting on 12 February, the EU **Heads of State and Government** emphasised their commitment to step up the efforts in fight against terrorism and its posed threats. The Members of the European Council agreed on the following courses of action as priorities: ensuring the security of citizens, preventing radicalisation and safeguarding values, and cooperating with international partners. The Council had to report on the detailed implementation of these orientations at the June European Council.
- In response to the Statement by the Members of the European Council of 12 February and the Justice and Home Affairs Ministers' Riga Joint Statement of 29 January, the EU Justice and Home Affairs Council on 12–13 March identified four areas with a **number of specific counter-terrorism measures** that could be implemented taking definite actions and thus achieve considerable results by the end of the Latvian Presidency, such as:
 - Fully use the existing Schengen framework to **reinforce and modernise external borders' control**. On 12 March the Council agreed to enhanced and systematic checks of travel documents and persons who enjoy the right of free movement under the EU law, on the grounds of common risk indicators (comparing the data to the Schengen Information System and the Interpol's Stolen and Lost

Travel Documents (SLTD) database, as well as through maximum use of the Advance Passenger Information (API) data). The Commission issued the common risk indicators in the middle of June. These measures will help to detect the travel of foreign terrorist fighters. Furthermore, targeted sea and land border controls have been enhanced along with the strengthening of Member States' technical capability to carry out these controls.

- **Address issues regarding internet content promoting terrorism or extremism**. The Council agreed that Europol has to establish a European Union Internet Referral Unit (EU IRU). This unit was launched on 1 July 2015 with a six-month pilot phase which will be followed by the second phase on 1 January 2016 reaching full operational capacity on 1 July 2016. The Council also proposed setting up an EU Counter-Terrorism Centre (ECTC) within the existing organisational structure of Europol to facilitate better exchange of information and criminal intelligence. It will be launched on 1 July 2016. In addition, it should be noted that since January, the Member States have been providing more information on foreign terrorist fighters to Europol Information System and Europol's Focal Point *Travellers*;
- Taking into account the activity of the terrorists, **increase cooperation and information exchange in the fight against illicit trafficking of firearms** and set the addressing of decommissioning and deactivation of firearms as priority issues. While discussing this issue, the Standing Committee on Operational Cooperation on Internal Security (COSI) emphasised the need to continue work on enhancing the information exchange, limiting the access to illicit firearms, and to focus on decommissioning and deactivation of firearms and on cooperation with third countries. Europol has already proposed ways to increase the exchange of information on firearms. The work continues, and in 2016, the Commission will present a proposal on the review of the existing firearms legislation.
- **Step up information sharing and operational cooperation**, including through Europol and Eurojust; In March, Europol and Eurojust made proposals on how to better use the existing platforms and services of these agencies, thus enhancing the information sharing and operational cooperation. In addition, the Latvian Presidency called on intelligence and security agencies to continue to provide information on the counter-terrorism situation on regular basis and share the strategic intelligence data with the relevant EU institutions, in particular with the EU Intelligence Analysis Centre (EU INT-CEN) as the intermediary.
- On 12–13 March, the Council agreed to continue to engage actively with the European Parliament in order to achieve

ENGAGED EUROPE

decisive progress in the coming months on a strong and effective **European Passenger Name Records** (EU PNR)³⁰ Directive with solid data protection safeguards. The Latvian Presidency made every effort to work together with the European Parliament in order to ensure progress on this – one of the central instruments in the fight against terrorism. During the Presidency, the European Parliament Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) continued intensive work on this matter. Once the European Parliament has approved a mandate for negotiations with the Council, the negotiations between the two co-legislators will be launched in order to reach an agreement on the EU PNR by the end of this year.

- At the **Council Working Party on the International Aspects of Terrorism** (COTER) the Presidency drew up suggested priorities calling for closer synergies between external and internal aspects of counter-terrorism, increased coordination among different EU institutions and Council working groups, enhanced Member State engagement, etc.
- In accordance with the decisions of February European Council, the Latvian Presidency focused on **preventing radicalisation and safeguarding values**. The EU Education Ministers at the informal meeting on 17 March adopted a declaration promoting the role of education in disseminating and strengthening the EU values – respect to one another, freedom (freedom of expression in particular), democracy, equality, rule of law and respect for human rights. Whereas on 18 May, the Council discussed further steps for achieving the goals set out in the declaration adopted during the informal meeting of EU Education Ministers. At the General Affairs Council of 21 April, the Ministers discussed possible implementation of the communication strategy measures with the aim to promote tolerance, non-discrimination, fundamental freedoms and dialogue between different religions and communities. The Ministers focused on factors that contribute to radicalisation, shared examples of best practice and a number of initiatives. A particular emphasis was placed on preventing radicalisation and combating antisemitism. The Ministers also underlined the role of internet in the promotion of terrorism and how important are initiatives in education. Although the promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination, the guarantee of fundamental values and the fight against factors that contribute to radicalisation are within the Member States' national competence, the Ministers agreed on close cooperation. At the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council on 19 May, the Ministers discussed the Audiovisual Media Services Directive emphasising that the freedoms guaranteed in this Directive must not be misused to spread hate speech, propaganda

and disinformation. The Ministers acknowledged that this might provide some additional exceptions in cases when serious threats are posed to fundamental values, freedoms and democracy or to public order objectives in security, social cohesion or stability.

- As regards to **judicial response to terrorism**, on 13 March, the EU Justice Ministers shared their experience on incorporating legal aspects in counter-radicalisation and rehabilitation strategies. Within this context, the Ministers emphasised the role of the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) and the RAN Centre of Excellence. To focus on factors that contribute to radicalisation, the EU Education Ministers discussed the prevention of radicalisation at the informal meeting on 17 March in Paris. As a result of this meeting, a declaration was adopted promoting the role of education in disseminating and strengthening the EU values – respect to one another, freedom (freedom of expression in particular), democracy, equality, rule of law and respect for human rights to promote citizenship and common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discriminatory values through education. While on 18 May, the Ministers discussed further steps for achieving the goals set out in the Declaration adopted during the informal meeting of EU Education Ministers.
- Process of reinforcing the EU counter-terrorism dialogues with priority countries (starting with the Middle East and North Africa Region), developing counter-terrorism plans with priority countries, deploying security/ counter-terrorism experts in a number of key EU delegations, as well as developing new projects on regional capacity building and other activities to facilitate information exchange and enhance counter-terrorism capabilities in the region, was launched during the Latvian Presidency, thus fulfilling the priority course of action, to **cooperate with the international partners**, set at the informal meeting of Heads of State and Government on 12 February.
- Within the context of internal security, we have identified three major threats that we need to respond to – terrorism and radicalisation, organised crime, and cybercrimes. On 16 June, the EU Home Affairs Ministers approved the Council conclusions on the **renewed European Union Internal Security Strategy (2015–2020)** emphasising that the strategy should be regarded as an element on the common agenda of the EU institutions – the Council, the Commission and the Parliament. The renewed EU Internal Security Strategy underlines a swift, flexible and intelligence-led approach that would allow the EU to respond to the new threats, including hybrid threats and

³⁰ Under the Directive, it would be possible to use the flight passenger data processing for the purpose of fighting terrorism and serious crimes, in particular to detect foreign terrorist fighters, among whom are also EU citizens.

ENGAGED EUROPE



PRESS CONFERENCE FOLLOWING THE JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS COUNCIL



JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS COUNCIL

other challenges that the EU's internal security faces, in a comprehensive and coordinated manner.

- Taking into consideration the Commission statement of 28 April on the European Agenda on Security and the Council conclusions of 16 June on the renewed EU Internal Security Strategy (2015–2020), the European Council on 25–26 June underlined that further work will continue on the implementation of this strategy. The European Council particularly emphasised the priority to fully implement counter-terrorism courses of action that were agreed upon at the informal meeting of the Heads of State and Government on 12 February.
- During the six months of the Latvian Presidency, an agreement was reached on the procedure regarding the operation of mechanisms for **politically coherent response to crisis**. This mechanism aims to enhance readiness of EU institutions and Member States to politically respond to different cross-sectoral crises in a quick and efficient manner. To ensure this, officials and experts from the EU institutions and Member States improved their understanding about this mechanism.
- In addition to counter-terrorism efforts and the renewed EU Internal Security Strategy (2015–2020), the Latvian Presidency devoted special attention to the new legal basis

for **Europol and the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL)**. The Latvian Presidency continued dialogue with the European Parliament on a proposal for a regulation of Europol, dealing with a number of sensitive issues. The new legal basis of Europol will improve its governance providing support to national law enforcement agencies and their mutual cooperation in preventing and combating organised crime and terrorism. Also, during the Presidency, the Council reached an agreement and concluded negotiations with the Parliament on the proposal for a regulation establishing CEPOL. The updated legal basis of CEPOL will provide a new training approach for the EU law enforcement officers and improved governance of this agency.

- The Justice and Home Affairs Council in March reached an agreement on a **regulation to reform Eurojust**. Eurojust coordinates investigations and cooperation in relation to serious and organised crime. The new regulation aims to increase the operational efficiency of Eurojust by establishing new governance model. The main changes concern the distinction between the operational and management functions of the College; the setting up of an Executive Board; new provisions on annual and multi-annual programming; the representation of the Commission in the Executive Board; and a detailed description of the responsibilities and tasks of the Administrative Director.

SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

- On 25–26 June, the European Council discussed the **European security and defence issues** for the second time since the Lisbon Treaty. Together with the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the NATO Secretary-General, the EU Heads of State and Government reviewed the progress made since

the European Council in December 2013 and decided on new goals for the EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). Among the major achievements were the decision of the European Council on 25–26 June to **initiate the review of the European Security Strategy** by drafting the first EU global strategy on foreign and security policy

ENGAGED EUROPE



INFORMAL MEETING OF MINISTERS FOR DEFENCE



PRESS CONFERENCE FOLLOWING THE INFORMAL MEETING OF MINISTERS FOR DEFENCE

by June 2016, and the task of mobilising all EU instruments to help counter hybrid threats, including by intensifying cooperation between the EU and NATO.

- The Presidency contributed to the European Council's work by stressing the need to discuss the strategic challenges of European security and the solutions to overcome them. In preparation for the European Council, a **high-level round table discussion** was organised on 10 April in Riga, during which the review of the European Security Strategy and the possible priorities of the new strategy were discussed. On 23–24 April, the informal meeting of the EU Security Policy Directors was held in Riga, during which the members had a consensus on the need to revise the European Security Strategy, strengthen the EU's resistance to hybrid threats, and establish a closer cooperation between the EU and NATO.
- During the Presidency special attention was paid to the need to develop capability to enhance **resistance to hybrid threats** (propaganda, cyber-attacks, foreign-funded rebels, infrastructure security, EU external border security, and more) **of EU Member States and partner countries**. The Presidency organised several events in Riga to promote unity among the Member States on this issue. While the EU Defence Policy Directors discussed the threats of hybrid warfare in January, the Defence Ministers did so in February. In March, this issue was addressed during the Inter-Parliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CFSP/CSDP) in Riga. On 25–26 March, Latvian and German Defence Ministers discussed **cyber defence** in Europe during a jointly organised conference in Berlin. In May, the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs organised a seminar on the US and Baltic States critical energy infrastructure and cyber security in order to strengthen the cooperation among these countries on this issue. The discussions helped in the preparation for the meeting of the EU Foreign and Defence Ministers on 18 May and the European Council discussions

in June on security, emphasising the hybrid threats and necessary responses important to Latvia.

- On 18 May, the joint meeting of the EU Foreign and Defence Ministers supported the initiation of the **review of the European Security Strategy** that would lead to the development of the first **EU global strategy on foreign and security policy**. The Council agreed on the development of a **joint EU policy framework on countering hybrid threats** by the end of 2015. Such a Council mandate to the Commission, in cooperation with the European External Action Service (EEAS), the European Defence Agency, the EU Member States and NATO, will provide the opportunity to take joint effective action aimed at responding against hybrid threats, thus ensuring better security of EU Member States and partners. These are considered as the most important decisions taken in the strengthening of external security during the Latvian Presidency, thus adapting Europe to the new geopolitical situation and international security environment and its challenges.
- The Presidency ensured that the European Union would strengthen **strategic communication** and provide support to independent media in the region. Both the Foreign Affairs Council in January and the European Council in March set out specific steps. [In order to counter the Russian disinformation campaigns, the EU High Representative, in cooperation with Member States and EU institutions, submitted an Action Plan for Strategic Communication at the June European Council.] A special communications team has been established. During the informal meeting of the EU Defence Ministers in February, they agreed on closer EU–NATO cooperation in the field of strategic communications. The NATO Strategic Communication Centre of Excellence is one of the tools for enhancing such cooperation. On 16–17 June, the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in cooperation with the US Embassy in Latvia, the Atlantic Council and the Centre for East European Policy Studies organised a seminar on Russian

ENGAGED EUROPE

disinformation, reflecting the Russian military presence in Ukraine. This contributed to the Latvian and EU's strategic communications capability development.

- At the same time, the Presidency also worked on the **strengthening of the EU-US cooperation** in security and defence. On 13 February, a seminar was organised in Washington, USA, to discuss the challenges of transatlantic cooperation and opportunities for further cooperation in security and defence matters. In addition, solutions were sought in other smaller-scale informal events which brought together representatives from EU Member States, EU institutions and the US government, as well as academia from Europe and the US.
- On 3 June, the EU-US Justice and Home Affairs Ministerial Meeting took place in Riga bringing together representatives from the European Commission, the US, Latvia as the country holding the Presidency and Luxembourg as the next Presidency, Eurojust, FRONTEX and Europol. At the end of the meeting, the participants reached an agreement on the Riga Statement on enhancing transatlantic cooperation in the area of Freedom, Security and Justice. The Riga Statement outlines particular actions of cooperation for the coming five years in the following fields: personal data protection, counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism, migration and border control, tracing of firearms and explosives, money laundering and terrorism financing, cybercrime, drugs and information exchange. In the area

MIGRATION

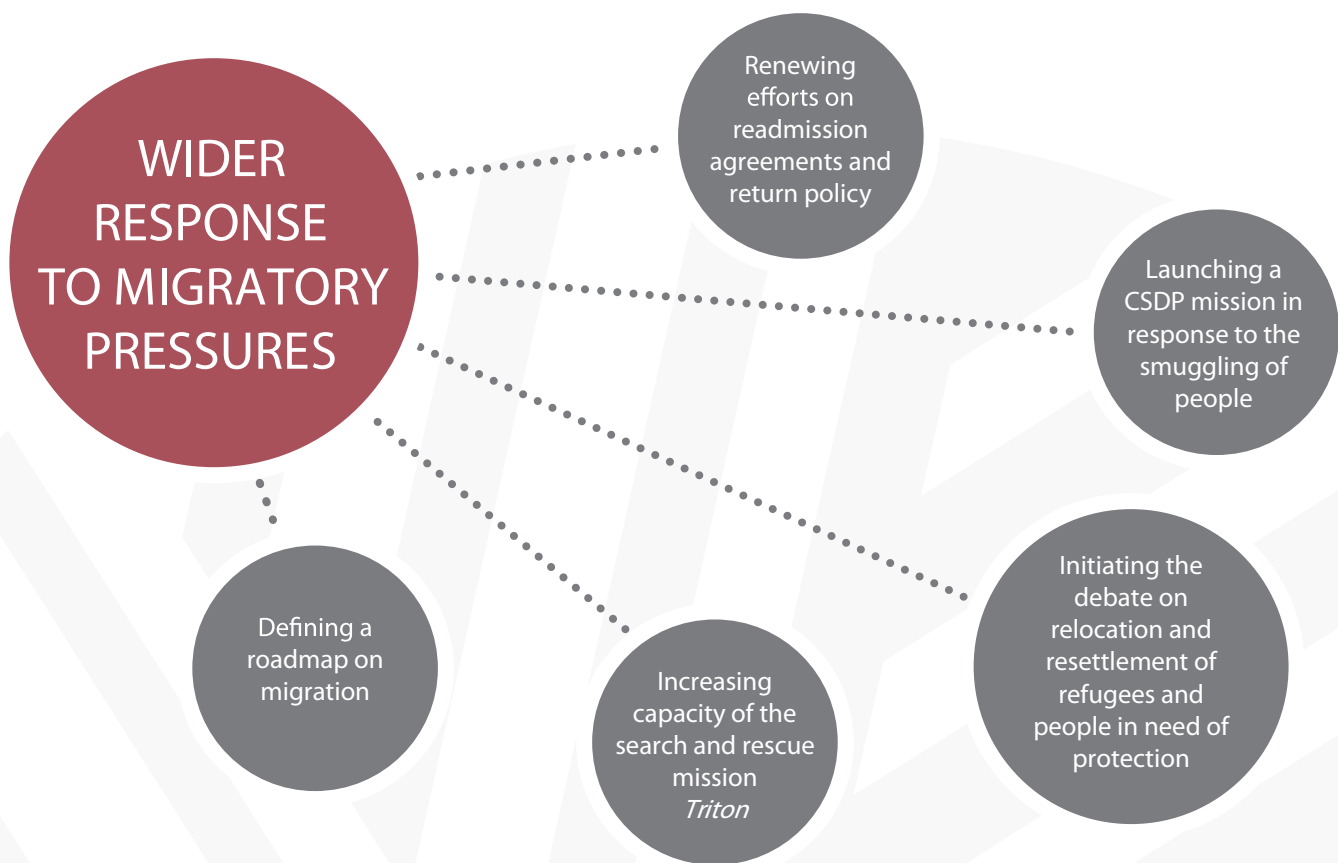
- One of the main challenges for the European Union still is migratory flows. The Latvian Presidency included the management of migratory flows on every EU Justice and Home Affairs Council's agenda. On 12 March, the EU **Home Affairs Ministers** agreed on securing effective management of EU external borders, strengthening FRONTEX's operational capabilities and resources, fighting against human trafficking and smuggling and enhancing the cooperation with third countries.
- On 16 March, the EU **Foreign Ministers** discussed external dimension of asylum and migration policy. The Ministers agreed that it is necessary to have an integrated and comprehensive solution to challenges posed by migratory flows, especially focusing on addressing the issue of illegal migratory flows in close cooperation with migrant's countries of origin and transit.
- In response to the tragic events in the Mediterranean on 19 April when near the Libyan coast a boat capsized with around 700 immigrants out of whom only few survived, within 24 hours the Latvian Presidency together with

of justice, progress regarding the EU and US so-called Data Protection Umbrella Agreement and Safe Harbour Framework was discussed. Attention was also paid to the improving of judicial cooperation efficiency in criminal and civil matters.

- To better coordinate and round up Member States' positions on **dual-use items control**, especially regarding chemical and biological materials, the Dual-Use Working Group chaired by the Presidency agreed that in the future views will be exchanged also with other international export control regimes – the Wassenaar Arrangement, the Australia Group and the Nuclear Suppliers Group in which EU Member States and third countries participate in. The working group started its work on the assessment and reviewing of the Council Regulation setting up a Community regime for the control of exports, transfer, brokering and transit of dual-use items which will then be carried on by the Luxembourg Presidency.
- The Presidency worked on the implementation of the **EU Maritime Security Strategy**. The strategy aims to strengthen the link between internal and external security aspects, enhance civil and military cooperation and capability development and improve coordination. The Presidency chaired the Friends of the Presidency Group to launch the implementation process of the EU Maritime Security Strategy Action Plan.

the EU High Representative called for an **extraordinary joint meeting of Foreign and Home Affairs Ministers**. Following this, the agenda for the **General Affairs Council** of 21 April was also immediately changed to discuss urgent measures for addressing this situation.

- On 20–21 April, the EU **Health Ministers** immediately addressed this issue during their meeting in Riga. The Ministers agreed that efforts should be devoted to the tackling of its causes while taking into account health aspects, including the treatment of patients with acute conditions. This issue was discussed also during the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council on 19 June.
- The Latvian Presidency contributed to the preparation for the **special meeting of the European Council** on 23 April. The Heads of State and Government agreed to: strengthen the EU presence at sea, fight human traffickers, prevent illegal migratory flows and reinforce internal solidarity and responsibility. To implement the decisions made by the April European Council, the Latvian Presidency together



with the EEAS prepared a **comprehensive roadmap** that covers all four areas identified by the European Council.

- The short-term priority was the measures to prevent such tragedies from happening again. On 23 April, the Heads of State and Government agreed to **strengthen FRONTEX** presence in the Mediterranean by tripling its resources and providing additional technical and human resources. The proposal for allocating additional funds to FRONTEX was approved by the EU Finance Ministers on 19 June.
- Particular attention was devoted to actions to prevent migrant deaths and to destroy the networks of human traffickers and smugglers. On 18 May, at the joint meeting of the Foreign Affairs and Defence Ministers, a new Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) operation – **EUNAVFOR MED** was established. On 22 June, the EU Foreign Affairs Council approved the Council Decision on the launch of this operation. The operation will be implemented in several phases. Currently, the first phase has been launched during which intelligence of migration networks in the Mediterranean will be gathered and shared.
- The Latvian Presidency also focused on the implementation of measures to stop illegal migratory flows and **tackle the root causes of these flows**. Preventive and comprehensive

cooperation with migrant countries of origin and transit, development cooperation and the strengthening of EU delegations in third countries are issues of particular importance. On 26 May, the EU Development Ministers emphasised the significance of development cooperation and agreed on the need for a comprehensive approach and specific actions, especially to tackle the root causes of migration.

- Migration issues are high on the European Commission's agenda too. On 13 May, the European Commission published the **European Agenda on Migration**. The first exchange of views on the implementation of the April European Council orientations and the European Agenda on Migration took place during the **General Affairs Council** on 19 May. On 27 May, the Commission adopted the first proposals for **improving the management of migration**: Emergency response mechanism to assist Italy and Greece; Recommendation on a European Resettlement scheme of persons from third countries who need international protection; EU Action Plan against migrant smuggling; Guidelines for fingerprinting.
- The new proposals encompass immediate and long-term responses to the migration challenges that Europe faces. We have devoted all efforts to raise awareness on further

ENGAGED EUROPE



PRESS CONFERENCE FOLLOWING THE INFORMAL MEETING OF MINISTERS FOR JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

© EU2015 LV



EXTRAORDINARY JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS COUNCIL MEETING

© EUROPEAN UNION

steps and measures to be taken by chairing discussions at working groups and Council configurations. **On 16 June, the EU Home Affairs Ministers** unanimously supported the Commission's Action Plan against migrant smuggling and guidelines for fingerprinting. The Ministers also reinforced a common understanding about the need to provide common support to those Member States which are affected by migratory pressure the most. The Home Affairs Ministers also discussed the migrant return and readmission issues, agreeing to strengthen this area.

- The **June European Council** (25–26 June) agreed on relocation and resettlement of 60,000 asylum seekers from Italy and Greece and from third countries in the next two years, a return policy for migrants, and an enhanced cooperation with the migrant countries of origin and transit. An agreement was reached that the relocation of asylum seekers from Greece and Italy to other Member States will be carried out on a voluntary basis with participation of all Member States. Intensive work still continues in July to agree on specific number of persons that each Member State would take in and practical aspects of the relocation of migrants. The EU leaders also were in support of the priorities on strengthening the effectiveness of migrant return and readmission, including the reinforcing of FRONTEX role to help Member States to return illegal migrants. At the same time, they shared a common understanding on long-term measures to decrease the causes of illegal migratory flows in close cooperation with migrant countries of origin and transit.
- Active work was carried out regarding **legal migration** which is an important instrument for the management of migratory flows to reach an agreement on a single Directive on Students and Researchers. On certain issues Latvia managed to achieve some progress in trialogues with the European Parliament, but intensive work will still need to continue under the Luxembourg Presidency.
- On 19–20 March, the Latvian Presidency organised a

conference entitled "Attracting and Retaining Talent in Europe" in Riga. One of the main conclusions of the conference was that it is necessary to include foreign dimension into the EU migration policy, envisaging cooperation with third countries and creating synergies in policy areas such as migration, employment and social sector. On 11–12 May in Riga, a conference was held on diverse aspects of intra-EU mobility and the freedom of movement of persons, and the role of European diasporas, while looking at the new challenges confronting EU Member States.

- One of the EU priorities is to provide protection to those persons in need. Especially important is to **ensure protection for unaccompanied minors**. The Presidency has achieved significant progress regarding the proposal to amend the Dublin Regulation by approving the Council compromise in February. The approved mandate allowed the Presidency to enter trialogue negotiations with the European Parliament. The proposal establishes a specific mechanism for determining the Member State responsible for examining the asylum application where the applicant is an unaccompanied minor.
- Within the **external dimension of migration**, the Latvian Presidency has worked in accordance with the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility, which serves as a comprehensive framework for cooperation with third countries on migration and mobility. On 12 March, the Presidency on behalf of EU Member States signed the Joint Declaration on a Common Agenda on Migration and Mobility between the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the European Union and its Member States. The main goal of such cooperation is the capacity building of the specific third countries regarding the management and maintenance of migration, border controls and asylum systems as well as the transfer of EU Member States' experience and best practice. The Latvian Presidency achieved the approval of guidelines for Commission's negotiations with China on migration and mobility and reached an agreement on the next steps for the EU–China cooperation on migration and mobility issues.

EASTERN PARTNERSHIP



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP SUMMIT: PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL DONALD TUSK, PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION JEAN-CLAUDE JUNCKER AND PRIME MINISTER OF LATVIA LAIMDOTA STRAUJUMA

© EU2015.LV



PRESS CONFERENCE FOLLOWING THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP SUMMIT

© EUROPEAN UNION



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP SUMMIT IN RIGA

© EUROPEAN UNION

Eastern Partnership aims to create common democracy, prosperity, stability and cooperation environment in the region, and this policy is not directed against anyone.

- The Summit underlined **four further priority cooperation areas** in the Eastern Partnership format: strengthening of institutions and good governance; promotion of mobility and people-to-people contacts; further development of economic cooperation and regional energy and transport infrastructure in the partner countries.
 - Since the Summit in Vilnius, a significant progress was made with **Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine** regarding political association and economic integration, reaffirming strong support to these countries also in the future. By the start of the Riga Summit, the most EU Member States had ratified the Association Agreements and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area between the EU and Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Other Member States were encouraged to ratify the agreements as soon as possible.
 - Relations with the other three partners – **Belarus, Armenia and Azerbaijan** – will be further developed on the basis of individual approach and in line with each country's level of interest to cooperate with the EU.
 - As regards to **mobility**, the Summit gave a clear message to Georgia and Ukraine that the report on the implementation of the Visa Liberalisation Action Plan will be prepared at the end of 2015 and if the remaining criteria on the Visa Liberalisation Action Plan will be fulfilled, the European Commission will recommend the European Parliament and the Council to lift visa requirements for the citizens of Georgia and Moldova for travel to the EU.
- The Latvian Presidency carried out active work within the context of Eastern Partnership. It promoted a coherent opinion among EU Member States on the Eastern Partnership and the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) as a whole and contributed to further work on ENP review preparation and the organisation of the Eastern Partnership Summit.
 - On 21–22 May, the fourth **Eastern Partnership Summit** took place in Riga. The Summit reaffirmed that Eastern Partnership is a strategic and ambitious EU policy that continues to develop. The Eastern Partnership Summit outlined a clear vision of this policy's future up until the next Summit in 2017, and the Summit Declaration reflected the EU's vision on further development of the cooperation among the partner countries. The Summit affirmed the Eastern Partnership's aim to develop individual approach to partners on a single platform by promoting this policy's inclusive format. The Summit also confirmed that the

ENGAGED EUROPE



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP SUMMIT: PETRO POROSHENKO, PRESIDENT OF UKRAINE AND VALDIS DOMBROVSKIS, VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION SIGNS A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

© EU2015.LV



LATVIAN PRIME MINISTER LAIMDOTA STRAUJUMA PRESENTS PRESIDENCY SOUVENIRS – CERAMIC WHISTLES TO THE HEADS OF DELEGATIONS OF EASTERN PARTNERSHIP COUNTRIES

© EU2015.LV



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP SUMMIT: PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA ANDRIS BĒRZIŅŠ AND PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA NICOLAE TIMOFTI

© EU2015.LV



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP SUMMIT: PRIME MINISTER OF GEORGIA IRAKLI GARIBASHVILI GIVES A SPEECH

© EU2015.LV

- As the Eastern Partnership was one of the major issues on the Latvian Presidency agenda regarding the EU external policy, besides the Riga Summit, several other important discussions took place:

- The 1st Eastern Partnership Media Conference entitled “Role of Media in the Eastern Partnership” took place on 19–20 May in Riga. The conference brought together media experts, representatives from the media community, academia and political parties, civil society, non-governmental organisations and think-tanks that deal with media issues, media advocacy groups and agencies that regulate the media from the Eastern Partnership countries, as well as representatives from the EU institutions and Member States. The conference emphasised that media freedom plays a decisive role in the preservation and advancement of the Eastern Partnership’s shared values, goals and ideals. The conference also assessed the media environment and media integrity in the Eastern Partnership countries. The experts discussed challenges and risks related to the

media’s susceptibility to outside influence, and the role of the media in ensuring free flow of unbiased information even under difficult conditions. The conference outlined ways of increasing EU action to improve the overall media environment in the Eastern Partnership countries.



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP MEDIA CONFERENCE “ROLE OF MEDIA IN THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP”

© EU2015.LV

ENGAGED EUROPE

- On 20–21 May, the Eastern Partnership **Civil Society Conference** took place in Riga. The conference provided a platform for representatives of civil society, non-governmental organisations and think-tanks to debate Eastern Partnership issues. The experts emphasised the important role of civil society in the reform processes of the Eastern partners by reinforcing progress towards democratic society and defending European values.



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP CIVIL SOCIETY CONFERENCE

- With the support of the Employers' Confederation of Latvia and BUSINESSEUROPE, the 3rd Eastern Partnership **Business Forum** entitled "Cooperation across Borders: Eastern Partnership and Beyond" took place on 21 May in Riga. The forum recommendations emphasised the need to build economically integrated and coherent trade and investment area in the EU that would help to develop trade and transport infrastructure within the context of the European Partnership.

- The Latvian Presidency promoted EU cooperation with the Eastern Partnership countries in a number of **sectoral policies**:

- On 26 January, the 2nd Joint EU and Eastern Partnership Justice and Home Affairs Ministerial Meeting took place in Riga which reaffirmed the importance of cooperation in **justice and home affairs** between the EU and the Eastern Partnership countries. The Ministers discussed the progress made in areas of legal system and law enforcement, both of the issues examining within the context of anti-corruption. During the meeting, the need to promote structural reforms in legal system and law enforcement of the Eastern Partnership countries was emphasised. The EU affirmed its commitment to continue to support legal reform process.

- The Eastern Partnership ministerial conference on **tuberculosis** and its multi-drug resistance on 30–31 March brought together EU Member States, candidate countries

and potential candidates, Ministers from the European Economic Area (EEA) and the Eastern Partnership, officials and high-level representatives from international and non-governmental organisations. The conference emphasised the need to eliminate tuberculosis through sustained action by health systems and with the involvement of all stakeholders, and to support tuberculosis prevention and control globally. The conference approved the Riga Declaration which expressed the commitment to eliminate tuberculosis as a public health issue in the conference participants' countries.

- On 7 May, the Eastern Partnership **Ministerial Meeting on Trade** was organised in Latvia in cooperation with the European Commission. The EU Trade Ministers met with their colleagues from the Eastern Partnership countries to discuss the progress in trade and the opportunities and challenges to further development of a successful trade dimension. The participants stressed the importance of trade as part of the Eastern Partnership policy and underlined the need to strive for inclusive and sustainable economic development

- On 11 June, the first Eastern Partnership **ministerial meeting on digital economy** took place in Luxembourg. The participants agreed on the need to work on the Harmonisation of Digital Market between the EU and the Eastern Partnership countries through activating cooperation in a number of digital economy issues and focusing on a single telecommunications regulation and internet governance principles.

- On 10–11 February, the 2nd Eastern Partnership **Youth Forum** took place in Riga. During the forum, discussion on topical issues of youth education and employment were held with the Eastern Partnership countries.

- In order to strengthen the cooperation in the EU Common **Security and Defence** Policy (CSDP) with the Eastern Partnership countries, ensure visibility in security



3RD EASTERN PARTNERSHIP BUSINESS FORUM

ENGAGED EUROPE

and defence policy and attract partners to the EU crisis management missions and operations, the Latvian Presidency organised a seminar entitled "CSDP missions and operations for the reforms of security sector" on 19 March in Brussels.

- On 16 April, the international conference on **"Rural and Agricultural Advisory Systems: Best Practices and Experiences in the Eastern Partnership"** took place in Riga. The Eastern Partnership Ministers (Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine), and Vice-Ministers (Armenia, Belarus) signed a Joint Declaration with the aim to strengthen rural and agricultural advisory systems (RAAS) and establish closer cooperation with the EU Member States in this field.
- On 25–26 June, the Latvian Presidency in cooperation with the European Commission organised a seminar and parallel bilateral negotiations with the representatives from the Eastern Partnership countries (at negotiator and director level) on the progress made in the **international climate change negotiations towards a new international agreement on limiting climate change after 2020**. The meeting also achieved consensus on several problematic issues regarding international climate negotiations and identified further joint actions in order to ensure a successful outcome of the Paris Conference and to strengthen bilateral relations. Participants praised the EU for its leadership in international climate negotiations and expressed desire for even closer cooperation, and introduced with their national climate policy and current issues.
- On 23 April, the Conference of the **Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership (CORLEAP)** took place in Brussels³¹. The conference participants recalled the significant role of local democracy and citizens' participation in pursuing the goals of the Eastern Partnership. The participants also called the European Commission to draft specific programmes to provide direct and accessible support to Eastern Partnership local and regional authorities in the multi-stakeholder approach. They emphasised decentralisation reforms, including institutional and capacity building measures, in order to ensure an even closer cooperation with local and regional authorities in those countries who want to get closer to the EU.
- On 6–7 May, Latvia co-organised the Eastern Partnership Panel on Migration and Asylum devoted to **legal labour**

migration issues discussing the practices in legal migrant admission and control in Minsk, Belarus.

- On 16 June, the expert meeting of the Eastern Partnership **Integrated Border Management** Panel was organised in Riga. The panel discussions focused attention on recent issues: the challenges of irregular migration, border security, customs matters, transit procedures and the Eastern partners' transport networks.
- On 19 June, the seminar entitled "Efficient mechanism of consultations and negotiations between national governments and local and regional governments" took place within the framework of the Panel on **Public Administration Reform** under the Eastern Partnership Multilateral Platform 1. During the meeting, the experts provided insight into the mechanisms of consultations and negotiations in Western and Eastern Europe and methods to define common local and regional government policy. Discussions took place on the role of negotiations and consultations in policy documents and the drafting of legislation, as well as on cooperation between local government associations and employers and employees' organisations. The aim of the discussions was to establish a common policy that can influence the ongoing fiscal and administrative decentralisation reforms.
- The Latvian Presidency made efforts to achieve progress in the EU's bilateral relations with Belarus in the area of migration and mobility. An agreement on the **establishment of the Mobility Partnership with Belarus** was reached and on 15 June, the Justice and Home Affairs Council approved the Joint Declaration on a Mobility Partnership between the Republic of Belarus and the European Union and its participating Member States, thus ensuring its preparation for signing. During the Latvian Presidency an agreement was also reached about the Readmission Agreement with Belarus which is ready to be initialled. Progress was made in the negotiations on the Visa Facilitation Agreement between the EU and Belarus, confirming the amendments of the guidelines for the Commission's negotiations with this country and with the possibility to negotiate the abolition of the visa requirement for holders of diplomatic passports.
- On 20 January, on behalf of the EU High Representative, the Latvian Foreign Minister chaired the Cooperation Council between the EU and Armenia and on 16 March – the Association Council between the EU and Moldova.

³¹ CORLEAP – Conference of the Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership.

ENGAGED EUROPE

UKRAINE

- During the Latvian Presidency, the work on searching for solutions to the conflict in the eastern Ukraine continued by approving the package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk Agreements under the Normandy format. As an achievement should be noted the EU's ability to maintain a **common position on the situation in eastern Ukraine** and the implemented policy towards Russia.
- In response to the escalation of the situation in eastern Ukraine in January 2015, the Foreign Affairs Council met in an extraordinary meeting on 29 January to agree on **restrictive measures** targeting persons and organisations that were responsible for such escalation of violence. At the same time, the Foreign Affairs Council agreed to extend the restrictive measures targeting persons and entities for threatening or undermining Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, adopted in March 2014 and subsequently updated, until September 2015.
- On the basis of the decision by the March European Council to link the complete implementation of the Minsk Agreements and the duration of restrictive measures against Russia, on 22 June, the Member State Foreign Ministers extended the **economic sanctions** set in July 2014 until 31 January 2016. Also, taking into consideration the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol by Russia, the EU extended the **restrictions on economic relations** with Crimea and Sevastopol for one year.
- In February, the Council agreed on a new 1.8 billion euro **macro-financial assistance** to Ukraine which, in addition to the earlier aid programme of 1.6 billion euros granted in 2014 and the beginning of 2015, amounts to the largest allotment of financial aid ever allocated by the EU to a third country.
- On 20 March, the **Horizon 2020 Association Agreement with Ukraine** was signed in Kiev. The agreement will foster the integration of Ukrainian researchers in the European Research Area and provide new opportunities for cooperation among Latvian and Ukrainian scientists.

RELATIONS BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND CENTRAL ASIAN REGION COUNTRIES

- During the Presidency, Latvia in cooperation with the EU Member States, the EEAS and the European Economic and Social Committee worked to achieve closer cooperation between the **EU and Central Asian Region**. Latvia had set the following priorities: The review of the EU–Central Asia Strategy, the re-establishment of the post of EU Special Representative for Central Asia; the enhancing of cooperation in security and border controls, justice, economic relations, infrastructure and education.
- During the Latvian Presidency, the review of the **EU Strategy for Central Asia** took place and the conclusions were approved at the Foreign Affairs Council in June. The main objectives and priority areas of the 2007 EU Strategy for Central Asia remain pertinent, but at the same time countries' individual differences and needs must be taken into account. The Council called for strengthening trade and energy links between the EU and Central Asian countries and reinforcing cooperation on security and



5TH ASEM EDUCATION MINISTERS' MEETING: MĀRĪTE SEILE, MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND SCIENCE OF THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA, WOO-YEA HWANG, MINISTER FOR EDUCATION OF KOREA AND IDRIS JUSOH, MINISTER FOR EDUCATION OF MALAYSIA



5TH ASEM EDUCATION MINISTERS' MEETING

ENGAGED EUROPE

stability, including sustainable management of natural resources. It emphasised the fundamental importance of democratisation, respect for human rights and the rule of law, all of which are essential elements of the Strategy. Especially positive is the fact that during the Presidency, the **EU High Representative** made a decision to re-establish the post of the EU Special Representative for Central Asia. The Latvian Presidency worked together with the European Economic and Social Committee which prepared an exploratory opinion on **“Civil society contribution to the review of the EU–Central Asia Strategy”**. On behalf of the EU High Representative, the Latvian Foreign Minister chaired the Cooperation Council between the EU and Kazakhstan on 3 March and on 18 May – between the EU and Uzbekistan. During the Latvian Presidency, the 2nd High-Level Security Dialogue between the European Union and Central Asia took place on 11 March in Tajikistan. On 17 June, Latvia chaired the EU–Central Asia dialogue on drugs in Brussels.

- For the first time within the framework of the EU and Central Asia cooperation, a **meeting of the EU and Central Asian Education Ministers** organised by the Latvian Presidency in cooperation with the EEAS and the European Commission took place on 25–26 June in Riga. The Ministers agreed on a Joint Communiqué for the EU and Central Asian cooperation and on the "Indicative Roadmap of Activities under the *Central Asia Education Platform (2015–2018)*" that encompass specific cooperation measures for higher education and professional education among the Central Asian countries and between the EU and Central Asia.
- The Latvian Presidency organised the **EU–Central Asia seminar on counter-terrorism** on 25 March in Brussels. This was the first EU seminar of this type held together with Central Asia that enhanced closer cooperation between the EU and Central Asia on counter-terrorism issues. On 17 June, the Latvian Presidency chaired the **EU–Central Asia dialogue on drugs in Brussels**.
- On 29 April, the **3rd ASEM Transport Ministers' Meeting** took place in Riga. At the meeting, ASEM Transport Ministers, representatives from the European Commission and other EU institutions, international institutions, non-governmental sector, businesses, logistics companies and major freight carriers discussed the development of land transport between Asia and Europe, current weaknesses and harmonised cooperation between all institutions on this matter.
- On 27–28 April, the 5th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting took place in Riga, during which the Ministers emphasised the need for specific EU–Asia cooperation results within the framework of the ASEM education priorities: quality assurance and recognition; engaging business and industry in education; balanced mobility; and lifelong learning in technical and vocational education and training.
- The Latvian Presidency was entitled to lead the EU Member State consortium in the European Commission's **Border Management Programme in Central Asia**³². Currently, the preparation for the launch of the project takes place in order to start its implementation in the second half of the year.
- The Latvian Presidency has organised and supported different-level events in Brussels, Riga, capitals of Central Asian countries and EU Member States in order to enhance the visibility of EU–Central Asia cooperation and to promote cooperation in the fields of justice, economy, agriculture, environmental protection, green technology development, energy efficiency, and security. Some of the events were: the Green Bridge Forum 2015 on "Building the Bridge to Clean Technologies between the EU and Central Asian Countries"; the conference entitled "Rural and Agricultural Advisory Systems (RAAS): Best Practices and Experiences in the Eastern Partnership"; the regional seminar on strengthening the rule of law in Central Asia, and others.
- **To support Latvian businesses**, the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs together with the Employers' Confederation of Latvia organised a round-table discussion on *"EU's economic cooperation with Central Asian countries: perspectives and obstacles"* on 11 February. Latvian businesses shared their experience in cooperation with the Central Asian countries and gave recommendations on the strengthening of the EU relations with Central Asia. On 5 June, the Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Eurochambres) Plenary Assembly took place in Riga bringing together the Heads of the Chambers of Commerce and Industry from Central Asian countries. Under the Latvian Presidency, the Latvian Embassies in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan organised seminars, among other things, on transport, transit, agriculture, education and energy efficiency with the aim to strengthen the EU–Central Asian cooperation and provide support to Latvian businesses in Central Asian markets.

³² BOMCA9 – Border Management Programme for Central Asia.

EUROPEAN UNION SOUTHERN NEIGHBOURHOOD



EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY REVIEW MEETING

© EUROPEAN UNION

- To discuss the European Neighbourhood Policy from Southern neighbours' perspective, the Latvian Foreign Minister together with the EU High Representative, the Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations and Spanish Foreign Minister organised the **Informal Ministerial Meeting on the future of European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)** on 13 April in Barcelona. On 24 June, the Latvian Foreign Minister took part in the conference in Beirut organised by the Lebanon Foreign Ministry which was as a follow-up for the discussions on Southern Neighbourhood in Barcelona. Special focus of the conference was paid to the issues of migration and the combat of terrorism.

ENLARGEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

- As regards to the **enlargement of the EU**, the Latvian Presidency continued active dialogue with candidate countries and potential candidates. Work continued on several chapters of accession negotiations with **Montenegro, Serbia** and **Turkey**. The Presidency also prepared Council's joint response to the Government of **Iceland** answering to the Foreign Minister of Iceland's letter on further development of relations with the EU.
- The Latvian Foreign Minister visited **Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia** and **Kosovo** during the Latvian Presidency of the EU Council. The aim of the visits were to underline the importance of enlargement issues during the Latvian Presidency and reaffirm the EU's support to these Western Balkan countries in the EU integration efforts, discuss the progress of the EU integration process and encourage them to effectively implement further reforms.
- On behalf of the EU Council, the Foreign Ministry's Parliamentary State Secretary took part in a number of European Parliament debates during which the European Parliament Resolutions on the Progress Report on **Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo** and **Macedonia** [the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia] were adopted expressing support for their European integration efforts.
- The Latvian Presidency reached an agreement to open two chapters (chapter 16 on taxation and chapter 30 on external relations) for negotiations at the **EU–Montenegro** Intergovernmental Conference on 30 March. Another two chapters (chapter 9 on financial services and chapter 21 on trans-European networks) were opened at the Intergovernmental Conference on 22 June.
- Regarding **Turkey's** EU accession negotiations, the Latvian Presidency started work on EU's common position in view of chapter 17 on economic and monetary policy.
- By enhancing the development of inter-parliamentary dimension between the EU and candidate countries, Latvia represented the EU Council at the **EU–Turkey** Joint Parliamentary Committee in Ankara, the **EU–Serbia** Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee in Belgrade, the **EU–Montenegro** Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee in Budva, and the **EU–Iceland** Joint Parliamentary Committee in Strasbourg. During these meetings, discussions were held on respective countries' political and economical aspects of European integration efforts, the progress of accession negotiations and the challenges ahead, and increased cooperation aspects of the EU and respective countries.



EU AND ICELAND SIGN AGREEMENT FOR JOINT FULFILMENT OF SECOND PHASE OF KYOTO PROTOCOL

© EUROPEAN UNION

ENGAGED EUROPE

- The Latvian Presidency provided the preparation of the EU's position for the **EU–Turkey** Association Council on 18 May and the **EU–Montenegro** Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee on 22 June.
- On behalf of the EU High Representative, the Latvian Foreign Minister chaired the **EU–Turkey** Association Council and the

EU–Albania Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee on 18 May, and the **EU–Montenegro** Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee on 22 June. The progress made regarding Montenegro, Turkey and Albania's EU integration and reform implementation, as well as the challenges ahead were discussed during these meetings.



EU-TURKEY ASSOCIATION COUNCIL



SEVENTH MEETING OF THE STABILISATION AND ASSOCIATION COUNCIL BETWEEN ALBANIA AND THE EU

EXTERNAL TRADE

- A significant progress on the comprehensive and mutually beneficial **Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)** agreement between the EU and the US was made during the Presidency. Two rounds of negotiations took place in February and April during which discussions were held on essential aspects of the agreement, including regulatory cooperation framework, support to small and medium-sized enterprises, energy issues and others.
- Thanks to the public's interest taken in the TTIP's negotiations, significant changes have been made regarding negotiation transparency. The EU has made the negotiation mandate and documents public. This is the first time when so many negotiation documents within the context of the EU international trade negotiations have been made available to the public.
- Discussions have been launched on the reform of the Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS). Discussions on the solutions for the implementation of the reform of the Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) took place at ministerial level on 25 March at the informal meeting of the EU Trade Ministers in Riga and the EU Foreign Affairs Council (Trade) on 7 May in Brussels during which the Member States agreed to the need for a reform and to the uphold of Member States' rights to regulate in the public interest.
- A significant progress has been achieved in the negotiations with **Japan and Vietnam** on the Free Trade Agreements, and most parts of the Agreements' text are completed. It is planned to conclude the negotiations by the end of the year. The Free Trade Agreements with Japan and Vietnam will also cover investment conditions and protection, non-tariff barriers, intellectual property rights, public procurement and other interrelated aspects important to open trade that will achieve a progressive and reciprocal liberalisation of trade.
- In order to strengthen the multilateral trading system, the Presidency focused on the EU's common position with the aim to conclude the Doha Development Round. At the informal meeting of the EU Trade Ministers in Riga on 24–25 March and the EU Foreign Affairs Council on trade policy issues on 7 May in Brussels the EU Trade Ministers expressed support to the development of the World Trade Organization (WTO) work programme and the implementation of the Bali Package to contribute to successful conclusion of the Doha Round of multilateral trade negotiations at the 10th WTO Ministerial Conference in Nairobi (Kenya) at the end of 2015. After the publishing of the proposal for a Council Decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the European Union, of the Protocol Amending the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization, on 17 March, the Council sent a draft decision to request the consent of the European Parliament. The

ENGAGED EUROPE

ratification process for the Trade Facilitation Agreement will be completed in the EU by the start of the WTO Ministerial Conference in Nairobi in December. The Presidency also supported candidate countries in their negotiations for joining the WTO. We are pleased that the negotiations on Kazakhstan's accession to the WTO have been concluded which will allow Kazakhstan to complete its accession process before the ministerial conference in Nairobi.

- Intensive discussions continued on the proposal for a regulation on an **EU system for due diligence self-certification of supply of minerals originating in conflict-affected and high-risk areas** (conflict materials). The Council's Working Party on Trade Questions (WPTQ) and Commission's expert group assessed the main aspects of the regulation, while the Parliament voted for launching the informal triilogue in order to reach an agreement at the plenary session on 20 May.

- Significant progress was made towards the Member States' negotiations on the proposal for the improvement of control system for **goods that can be used for torture or capital punishment**. The Latvian Presidency has prepared two compromise proposals, which made significant additions to the Commission's initial proposal.
- The Presidency continued to monitor effective implementation of the EU's Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP), in particular with regard to the GSP+. The Commission's delegated regulation on changes to vulnerability threshold was supported³³. *In addition, following the Presidency's initiative at the GSP Working Party, for the first time GSP+ beneficiary countries (Georgia and Peru) shared their experience regarding this regime providing an insight into their trade relations with the EU.*

EUROPEAN UNION DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION POLICY

- In



- During the Latvian Presidency, the **United Nations intergovernmental negotiations on financing for development and the new post-2015 agenda, consisting of a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** took place. These goals, which will be adopted in September 2015, will serve as the basis for facilitating growth and welfare at global level.

order to ensure a coordinated and united EU engagement in the United Nations intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 agenda, the Presidency ensured that the EU's lines to take were approved in Brussels and then transmitted to NY colleagues for each negotiation session (these take place every month from January to July at the UN in New York).

³³ Published on 17 April 2015, the Commission Delegated Regulation entered into force on 1 January 2015 amending Regulation (EU) No 978/2012 of the European Parliament and the Council as regards the vulnerability threshold defined in point 1(b) of Annex VII to that Regulation.

ENGAGED EUROPE

- The EU position on the financing for development intergovernmental negotiations of the new goals was adopted under the Latvian Presidency at the Meeting of the Development Ministers of the Foreign Affairs Council on 26 May. The Ministers reached a consensus on the EU position on financial and non-financial means of implementation to support development, including a collective re-commitment to the ODA (Official Development Assistance) within the time frame of next 15 years. The common EU position provided the basis for the EU's participation in the UN Third International Conference on Financing for Development. The conference was held in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) from 13 to 16 July 2015.
- **Gender equality** is one of the priorities of the Latvian Presidency in the field of development policy. Achievements of the Presidency:
 - The Latvian Presidency prepared and adopted Council conclusions on Gender in Development. Two of the major achievements of the Council conclusions were the agreement on a more progressive language on sexual and reproductive health and rights; and the inclusion of language that calls for further discussions that will take place during the Luxembourg and Netherlands Presidency.
 - The Presidency prepared practical proposals on promoting women economic empowerment in developing countries. The proposals were drawn up from the conclusions of the international conference on “Women’s Economic Empowerment and Sustainable Development – the Synthesis for Success” organised by the Latvian Presidency on 2 March in Riga, with the objective to contribute to the UN negotiations on the new SDGs. The Presidency was actively involved in the 59th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women on Women and Girls. The Presidency organised a side event that focused on creating opportunities for

women and girls in the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math. The Presidency also coordinated the EU position on the Political Declaration regarding the 20 years of the Beijing Platform for Action.

- During the European Development Days (3–4 June), the Presidency organised an interactive session on promoting gender quality in Central Asia (a priority region of Latvia’s development cooperation policy).
- The Presidency started preparations for the Third UN-HABITAT³⁴ (HABITAT III) International Conference to be held in 2016. The Presidency coordinated the **EU positions** for the HABITAT III second preparatory committee and the **UN-HABITAT** 25th Session of the Governing Council (both took place in April 2015 in Nairobi).
- On 9 January, the Latvian Presidency organised the opening event for the **European Year for Development**. Special focus was devoted to the role of the rule of law and good governance as a key for sustainable development, especially within the context of the current UN negotiations on the SDGs. The main conclusions from the thematic sessions of the opening event were also included in the Council conclusions on the EU position on the Financing for Development Along with the opening event in Riga, a broad public information and engagement campaign was launched in the EU Member States which will take place throughout the whole year.
- The Presidency made a significant contribution to the World Summit on the Information Society+10 (“WSIS+10”) Review Process: by the Presidency’s initiative in early June, the EU agreed on the priorities for the UN General Assembly WSIS+10 high-level event in New York on 14–15 December 2015. The aim of the WSIS+10 is to ensure the use of opportunities provided by the Information and Communication Technologies for efficient implementation of the SDGs.



OPENING EVENT OF THE EUROPEAN YEAR FOR DEVELOPMENT 2015



OPENING EVENT OF THE EUROPEAN YEAR FOR DEVELOPMENT 2015

³⁴ United Nations Human Settlements Programme.

ENGAGED EUROPE

- In June, the Presidency organised a study trip to Tajikistan for the CODEV (development cooperation) Council working group. The main objective of the trip was to draw Member States' attention to the region, which is one of the geographic priorities for the Latvian foreign policy and development cooperation. The working group had meetings with Tajik

Ministries and agencies, NGOs, international organisations (for instance OSCE) and diplomatic missions accredited in Dushanbe. The group also visited development project sites, including the Tajikistan–Afghanistan border to see the implemented EU border control projects, where the next implementation phase will be led by Latvia.

COOPERATION WITH WESTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES THAT ARE NOT MEMBERS OF THE UNION

- To underline the significance of a wider market and enhanced partnership between the EU and Western European countries that are not Members of the Union, the Presidency continued to work on the strengthening of relations with the **European Economic Area/European Free Trade Association** (EEA/EFTA) countries in the fields of common interests and in order to ensure homogeneity of the internal market.
- On 3 February, negotiations on further liberalisation of trade in agricultural goods under the Article 19 of the EEA Agreement (unprocessed agricultural products) were launched.
- In order to expand the Single Market, the EU launched negotiations with Andorra, Monaco and San Marino on one or more association agreement(s) on 18 March in Brussels.
- On 18 May, the EEA Council adopted the European Council conclusions that mark political guidelines for the next six months. The EEA Council emphasised that the European

countries should show responsibility and solidarity in order to overcome the social and economic difficulties caused by economic crisis. The EEA Council expressed concern about the persistently high level of youth unemployment in some of the EEA Member States.

- Discussions continued also regarding the financial contributions of Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein towards the reduction of economic and social disparities in the EEA. To stimulate these discussions, the Presidency organised two informal meetings with beneficiary countries to talk over the negotiation progress between the EEAS and the donor countries (Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein) and the modality of both instruments.
- In close cooperation with the EEAS a particular attention was paid to the EU relations with Switzerland, especially regarding institutional framework, possible limitations to free movement of persons and Switzerland's participation in the EU power market.

EUROPEAN UNION HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY IN THE WORLD

- The Latvian Presidency worked on the new Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy for the period 2015–2019 which now is ready for adoption at the July Foreign

Affairs Council. The new Action Plan will advance the implementation of the EU Human Rights Policy in line with the EU Strategic Framework on Human Rights and



WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY 2015: REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA ANDRIS BĒRZIŅŠ AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE



WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY 2015: JOURNALIST PETER GRETE (AL JAZEERA MEDIA NETWORK) MEETS MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES

© EU2015.LV

© EU2015.LV

ENGAGED EUROPE



WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY 2015

© EU2015.LV



WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY 2015

© EU2015.LV

Democracy with particular emphasis on certain priorities, such as freedom of expression, freedom of religion or belief, gender equality, children's rights, anti-discrimination.

- Under the Latvian Presidency, on 2–4 May, Riga hosted one of the largest international events by the United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organisation (UNESCO) – the **World Press Freedom Day**. A conference, a parallel session to the media in Russian and the Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize Ceremony took place during this event. The Riga Declaration adopted at the conference underlined the importance of the media, media literacy and gender equality in the implementation of human rights

within the context of sustainable development.

- On 10 February, the General Affairs Council adopted the Council Conclusions on Cyber Diplomacy, and one of the document's strategic goals is the promotion of human rights and cyber security. It stressed the need to promote the rule of law in cyberspace, to strengthen international obligations of countries in terms of human rights enforcement, and to encourage wide and equal access to the Internet. The EU and the Member States are encouraged to advocate the position expressed in the conclusions in other international organisations, global forums and in relations with other countries, particularly in developing regions.

NUCLEAR SECURITY

- In preparation for the Diplomatic Conference on the Convention on Nuclear Safety on 9 February, the Latvian Presidency worked on a common EU position and its representation in the international negotiations. The Diplomatic Conference adopted the Vienna Declaration on Nuclear Safety. The Declaration contains a political commitment to adhere to a series of principles in order to prevent accidents and mitigate radiological consequences. The Declaration is an important step towards strengthening nuclear safety to prevent nuclear accidents similar to the one in Fukushima-Daiichi nuclear plant in Japan.
- The Latvian Presidency also prepared an EU position for the Fifth Review Meeting of the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive

Waste Management on 11–22 May in Vienna. The Review Meeting concluded that high level of safety in spent fuel and radioactive waste management has been achieved, while further improvements are possible, especially in the evaluation (peer review) process and public involvement.

- During the Presidency, Latvia actively engaged in shaping the EU position on arms control issues and promoted compromise in discussions in the EU. Latvia collaborated with the EEAS in order to represent the EU at the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference in New York in April and May which was the most significant event in the field of arms control this year. During the conference, Latvia and the EEAS co-hosted a discussion "EU as a global actor in the field of nuclear safety and security".

EUROPEAN UNION HUMANITARIAN AID

- The Latvian Presidency ensured the exchange of information and coordination between the European Commission and Member States on the current humanitarian crises. During the Presidency it was agreed on several common

EU position papers, namely on **Syria, Iraq, Nigeria/Boko Haram threats**, and the **Sudan, Yemen and Libyan crises** to advance the EU humanitarian advocacy vis-à-vis third countries and international organisations.

ENGAGED EUROPE

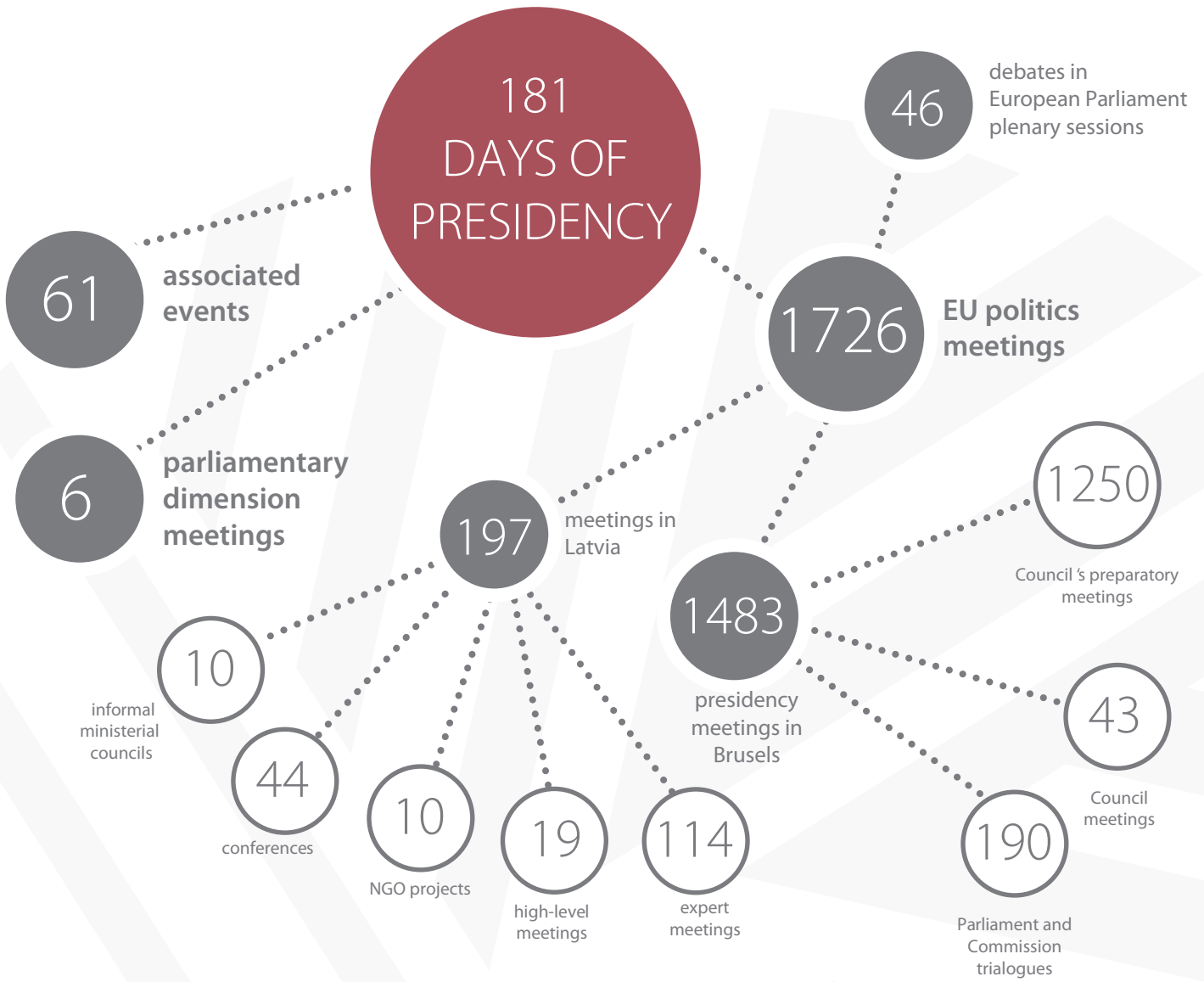


EU SIGNS VISA WAIVER AGREEMENTS WITH 7 ACP COUNTRIES

© EUROPEAN UNION

- In order to enhance the visibility of the humanitarian aid in the EU Council's work, the Presidency helped in preparation of the Council conclusions on the Nigeria/Boko Haram terrorist threats, the common strategy for Syria and Iraq, and the situation in Burundi.
- The humanitarian crisis in Ukraine was regularly included on the Latvian Presidency agenda supporting the EU's efforts to increase the visibility of the EU's humanitarian aid presence and improve the aid effectiveness in **Ukraine**. To raise awareness of Latvian society, an informative seminar for the Latvian society on humanitarian aid and the international humanitarian law through the example of humanitarian crisis in Ukraine was organised in Riga.
- The Presidency coordinated the EU's participation in the Third International **Humanitarian Pledging Conference for Syria** (Kuwait, 31 March) and prepared the Joint EU Statement for the participation in the conference. The EU and its Member States pledged €1.1 billion euros to the victims of the Syrian crisis which is 50% more than at the Pledging Conference of 2014.
- **During the Presidency, the Council adopted conclusions on multi-purpose cash-based assistance.** These conclusions serve as EU's contribution to the preparation process for the World Humanitarian Summit which aims to find new and innovative solutions to improve the delivery of humanitarian aid.

CONDUCT OF THE PRESIDENCY



Numbers updated on 26 June 2015

CONDUCT OF THE PRESIDENCY

PRESIDENCY EVENTS CALENDAR

CALENDAR OF EVENTS AND HIGH-LEVEL VISITS IN LATVIA

NOVEMBER

Date	Event	Institution
10–11 November	1 st Senior Officials' Meeting for the 5 th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting	MES
13–14 November	Visit of the President of the European Economic and Social Committee	LPESPS
21 November	Meeting of Directors General for Industrial Relations	MW
28 November	Visit of the Director – General of the European Commission and Head of Cabinet of the European Commission President	LPESPS
28 November	Informal Meeting of the State Secretaries for EU Ministries of Foreign Affairs	MOF

DECEMBER

Date	Event	Institution
4 December	Visit of Conference of Presidents of the European Parliament	LPESPS
4–5 December	Trans European Policy Studies Association's (TEPSA) Pre-Presidency Conference	MOF
9 December	Visit of Secretary – General of the Council of the European Union	LPESPS
17–18 December	High Level Group on Education and Training	MES

JANUARY

Date	Event	Institution
8 January	Meeting between the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia and the European Commission	LPESPS
8 January	Visit of the President of the European Council	LPESPS
9 January	Opening event of the European Year for Development 2015	MOF
12–13 January	Workshop on "Needs of persons with disabilities throughout disaster management cycle"	MI
13 January	Informal Meeting of EU Directors-General	MOF
15–16 January	Informal Meeting of EU Political Directors	MOF
19–20 January	High level seminar on "Building Consensus towards the June 2015 European Council – next steps?"	MD
20–21 January	Informal Meeting of the EU Defence Policy Directors	MD
21–22 January	Informal Meeting on Climate Change	MEPRD
22–23 January	Meeting of the High-level group on Gender Mainstreaming	MW
26–27 January	Meeting of the Bologna Follow-up Group 1	MES
29–30 January	Informal Meeting of Ministers for Justice and Home Affairs	MJ/MI

CONDUCT OF THE PRESIDENCY

FEBRUARY

Date	Event	Institution
2–3 February	Informal Meeting of the Social Protection Committee (SPC)	MW
3–4 February	Meeting of EU-US Justice and Home Affairs Senior Officials	MJ/MI
3–4 February	Employment Committee (EMCO) and Social Protection Committee (SPC) Conference on Inclusive Labour Markets in Europe: role of better work quality and inclusion	MW
3–5 February	Meeting of the Heads of Medicines Agencies (HMA)	MH/MA
4–5 February	Informal Meeting of the Employment Committee (EMCO)	MW
5–6 February	Informal Meeting of Rural Development Directors	MA
6 February	The Energy Union Conference of the EU Energy Ministers	MEA
10–11 February	2 nd Eastern Partnership Youth Forum	MES
11–12 February	International Conference on “Entrepreneurship in the Regions to Strengthen EU Competitiveness”	LDDK
12–13 February	Conference “Smart Specialization Strategies: New Approaches for Partnerships among Education, Research and Industry in Regions”	MES
16 February	International conference “Sport and physical activity for development of the human capital”	MES
16–17 February	Visit of the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO) of the European Parliament	LPESPS
16–18 February	Visit of the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) of the European Parliament	LPESPS/MW
17 February	EU Sport directors’ meeting	MES
18–19 February	Informal meeting of Ministers for Defence	MD
18–19 February	Conference “Open Europe: Open Data for Open Society”	LATA
21 February	Conference “Information and Communication Technologies to improve the quality of life for persons with disabilities”	SUSTENTO
23–24 February	High Level Conference “Healthy lifestyles: nutrition and physical activity for children and young people at schools”	MH
24–25 February	Meeting of Competent Authorities for Medical Devices (CAMD)	MH
26–27 February	International Trade Union Conference “Trade union role in promotion of sustainable growth and quality job creation”	LBAS

MARCH

Date	Event	Institution
2 March	Conference “Women’s Economic Empowerment and Sustainable Development – the Synthesis for Success”	MOF
2–3 March	NGO Forum – Riga 2015	SIF
3 March	International workshop “Prevention of Violence – Precondition for Women’s Economic Empowerment”	Marta
3–4 March	European Crime Prevention network (EUCPN) First Board meeting	MI
3–4 March	Conference “Intellectual Property and Beyond”	MJ

CONDUCT OF THE PRESIDENCY

5–6 March	Conference on Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS)	MT
6–7 March	Informal Meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs (Gymnich)	MOF
9–10 March	Conference on “Strengthening the European Audiovisual Media Market for the Development of the European Identity”	MC/NEPLP
9–10 March	European Defence Agency National Armaments Directors’ meeting	MD
10–11 March	Joint Meeting of the Network of Territorial Cohesion Contact Points (NTCCP) and the Urban Development Group (UDG)	MEPRD
11–12 March	Conference on “Cultural and Creative Crossovers”	MC
12–13 March	Working Party on Competitiveness and Growth	MEA
12–13 March	Meeting of the Directors General for Higher Education	MES
12–13 March	Conference on “Cultural Heritage, Contemporary Architecture and Design in Interaction”	VKPAI/MC
12–13 March	Informal Meeting of the Trade Policy Committee (Services and Investment)	MOF
13 March	Conference on “e-Skills for Jobs 2015”	MEPRD
17–18 March	Europeana Strategy Meeting	MC/LNB
17–18 March	Extraordinary Committee of the Regions’ Bureau	LALRG/COR
18–20 March	Visit of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs (AFCO) of the European Parliament	LPESPS
19–20 March	European Migration Network (EMN) Annual Conference	MI
19–20 March	International Conference “Chronic Diseases Pose a Challenge to 21 st Century Europe: Patient’s Perspective and Economic Activity”	Dzīvības koks
19–20 March	Meeting of the Network of EU Contact Points for Tackling Cross-Border Vehicle Crime (CARPOL) within the Law Enforcement Working Party (LEWP)	MI
19–20 March	Meeting of the Innovative Public Services Group (IPSG) and Human Resources Working Group (HRWG) of the European Public Administration Network (EUPAN)	SC
23–26 March	EU Youth Conference	MES
23–24 March	Seminar on “Biosecurity – Fundament for Animal Health”	MA
24–25 March	Informal Meeting of Trade Ministers	MOF
24–25 March	Meeting of the Bologna Follow-up Group 2	MES
25–26 March	Informal Meeting of Chief Veterinary Officers (CVO)	MA
25 March	European Economic and Social Committee : group III extraordinary meeting / conference “Economic growth and social development in urban and rural areas”	EESC/ SUSTENTO
25–27 March	European Police College (CEPOL) Conference “Cybercrime – Strategic level”	MI
26–27 March	Informal Meeting of Competitiveness Ministers	MEA/MES/MJ
26–27 March	Seminar on “Copyright Exceptions and Limitations within the Scope of the Review of the EU Copyright Framework” and informal meeting of the Copyright Working Party	MC
26–27 March	Meeting of the Directors General for Youth Affairs	MES
26–27 March	Informal Meeting of the Working Party on General Affairs (GAG)	MOF
30 March	Working Party on Hate Crime	MJ
30–31 March	Eastern Partnership ministerial conference on tuberculosis and its multi-drug resistance (MDR)	MH
30–31 March	Meeting of Directors General responsible for Cohesion Policy	MF
31 March	Forum “The role of social dialogue in facilitating quality jobs”	LBAS/LDDK

CONDUCT OF THE PRESIDENCY

APRIL

Date	Event	Institution
1 April	Extraordinary meeting of Workers' Group (Gr II) of European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) "For a social investment plan in Europe – contribution of the Latvian Presidency"	EESC/LBAS
7–9 April	Joint Meeting of the Chief Medical, Chief Nursing and Chief Dental Officers	MH
8–9 April	Informal Meeting of the Trade Policy Committee (Full Members)	MOF
8–10 April	Conference "Today's Education for Development of Future Society"	LDCYSF
14–16 April	Informal Meeting of Environment and Energy Ministers	MEPRD/MEA
15–16 April	Conference on "Rural and Agricultural Advisory Systems (RAAS): Best Practices and Experiences in the Eastern Partnership"	MA
15–17 April	Meeting of the Network of Competent Authorities for Pricing and Reimbursement	MH
15 April / 18–20 May	Discussion "Participation of Non-Governmental Organisations in the Resocialisation Process"	Prison Fellowship Latvia
15–18 April	Green Bridge Forum on "Building the bridge to clean technologies between the EU and Central Asian countries"	MOF/MEPRD
16–17 April	26 th Plenary Meeting of the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC) and the Research Working Party Meeting	MES
16–17 April	Informal Meeting of the Working Party on the Environment	MEPRD
16 April	Meeting of the National Coordinators for Drugs	MI
17–18 April	Informal Meeting of the Energy Working Party	MEA
17 April	Meeting of the Expert Group on Climate Policy Further Actions (EGFA)	MEPRD
20–21 April	Meeting of the Directors General for Vocational Education and Training	MES
20–22 April	Informal Meeting of the Ministers for Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs	MW/MH
21–23 April	Road Safety Seminar organised by the European Traffic Police Network (TISPOL) and TISPOL Council meeting	MI
21–22 April	Informal Meeting of the Working Party on Public Health	MH
21–22 April	Informal meeting of the Working Party on Human Rights (COHOM)	MOF
22 April	Meeting of the Working Party on Financial Services	MF
22 April	Meeting of the Working Party on Social Questions	MW
22 April	Meeting of the European Traffic Police Network (TISPOL) Operational Working Group	MI
23–24 April	European Consumer Protection Conference	MEA
23–24 April	Meeting of the Commission Group of Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment National Experts	MEPRD
24–25 April	Informal Meeting of Ministers for Economic and Financial Affairs (ECOFIN)	MF/Bank of Latvia (Latvijas Banka)
24 April	Informal Meeting of EU Security Policy Directors	MOF
26 April	2 nd Senior Officials' Meeting for the 5 th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEM ME5)	MES
27–28 April	5 th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEMME5)	MES

CONDUCT OF THE PRESIDENCY

27–28 April	Presidency Conference on Occupational Safety and Health “From the strategic framework towards effective implementation – OSH can be simple and entertaining”	MW
27–28 April	ATHENA Special Committee Away Day	MD
27–28 April	Informal Meeting of Directors General and Attachees for Fisheries	MA
28–29 April	Conference on the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights	MJ
29–30 April	34 th Meeting of the Directors General for Civil Protection	MI
29–30 April	3 rd ASEM Transport Ministers’ Meeting “Development of Euro-Asia Multimodal Transport Linkages – Status Quo and Blueprints for the Future”	MT

MAY

Date	Event	Institution
3–4 May	World Press Freedom Day 2015	MOF
4–5 May	Informal Meeting of the Working Party of Foreign Relations Counsellors (RELEX)	MOF
4–5 May	EU Military Committee (EUMC) Away Day	MD
5–6 May	Meeting of the MISSOC (Mutual Information System on Social Protection) Correspondents	MW
5–6 May	Conferences “SEMIC & CONTACT Riga 2015”	MEPRD
5–6 May	Meeting of the Directors General for Schools	MES
5 May	Meeting of the Expert Group on Means of Implementation (EGI)	MEPRD
6 May	Informal Meeting of Directors General responsible for Territorial Cohesion and Urban Development	MEPRD
6 May	Meeting of the Expert Group on Adaptation (EGA)	MEPRD
6–7 May	EU-US-Canada Expert Meeting on Critical Infrastructure Protection	MI
6–7 May	Meeting of Standing Committee on operational cooperation on internal security (COSI)	MI
6–8 May	Informal Meeting of the Budget Committee	MF
7 May	European Competition Day	MEA
7–8 May	High-level Seminar on Customs Matters	MF
7–8 May	37 th Conference of the Directors of EU Paying Agencies	MA
8 May	EBLIDA-NAPLE Conference	MC/LNB
8 May	Meeting of the Agents of the Court of Justice of the European Union	MJ
11–12 May	High-level Meeting on Disability “From inclusive education to inclusive employment for people with disabilities”	MW
11 May	Meeting of the Expert Group on Mitigation (EGMIT)	MEPRD
11–13 May	High-level Conference on eHealth	MH
11–12 May	Conference “How to improve intra-European mobility and circular migration? Fostering Diaspora Engagement”	MOF
12 May	7 th Meeting of the eHealth Network	MH
12 May	Seminar of the EU Council Working Group on Consular Affairs (COCON)	MOF
12 May	Plenary and Conference of the Permanent Committee on Cadastre in the European Union	MJ
14–15 May	European Banking Federation Executive Committee and Board Meeting	FCMF

CONDUCT OF THE PRESIDENCY

14–16 May	Discussion "Active for the Future"	LAD
19–20 May	Meeting of the European Police College (CEPOL) Governing Board	MI
20–21 May	Eastern Partnership Civil Society Conference	MOF
20 May	Eastern Partnership Media Conference	MOF
21 May	Eastern Partnership Business Forum	MOF
21–22 May	Eastern Partnership Summit	MOF
26–27 May	Meeting of the Senior Labour Inspectors' Committee (SLIC)	MW
26–27 May	Conference on the "EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 – implementation"	MEPRD / Latvian Fund for Nature
26–27 May	EU Water and Marine Directors' meeting	MEPRD
27–28 May	International Conference on ICT for Information Accessibility in Learning	MES
27–28 May	Informal Meeting of the Chief Plant Health Officers	MA
28–29 May	Meeting of EU Biodiversity and Nature Directors	MEPRD
28–30 May	Informal Trip CORREPER II	MOF

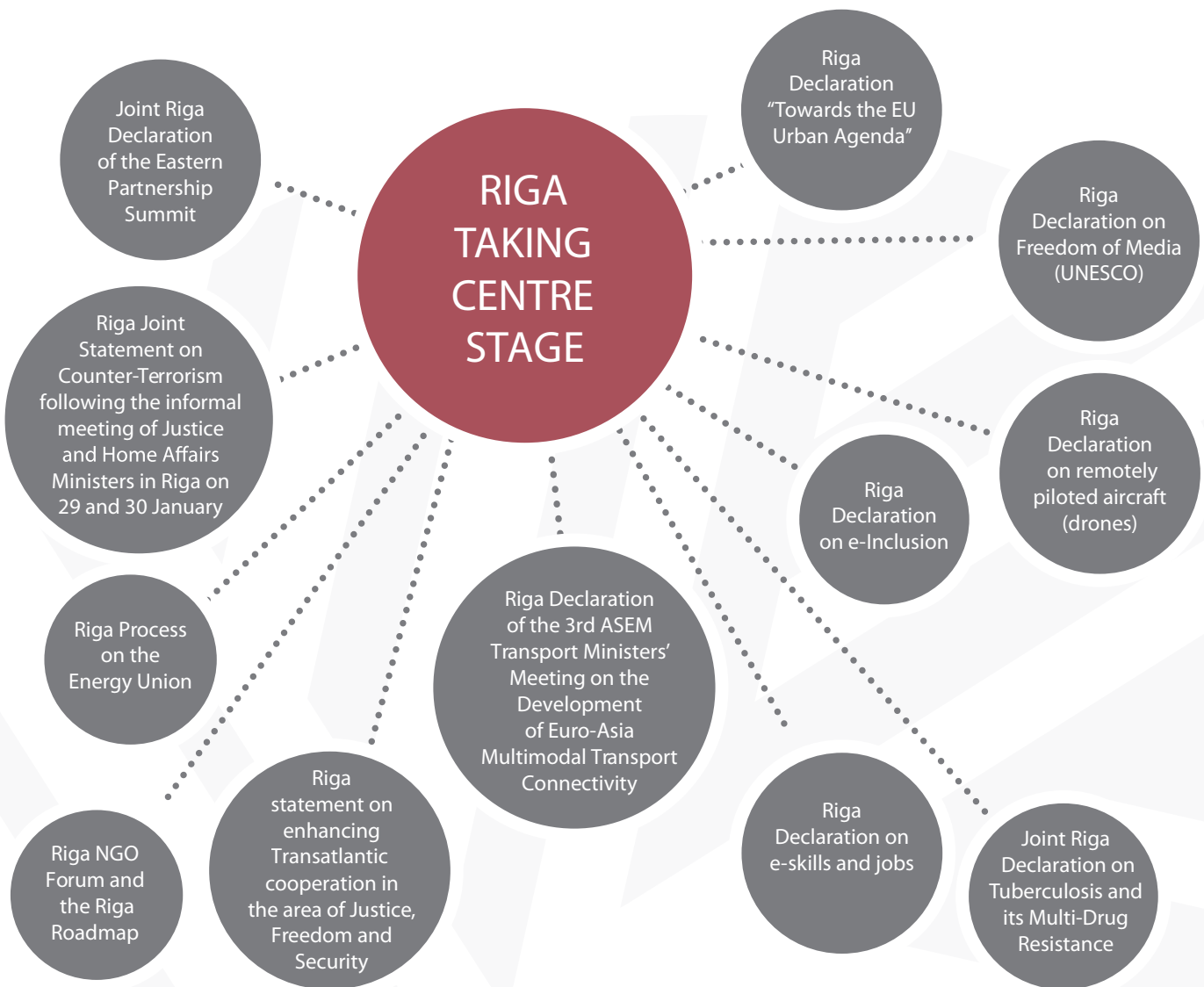
JUNE

Date	Event	Institution
1–2 June	Informal Agriculture and Fisheries Council	MA
1–2 June	Meeting of the Special Committee on Agriculture	MA
1–2 June	Meeting of the European Spatial Planning Observation Network (ESPON) Monitoring Committee	MEPRD
1–3 June	Meeting of the Technical Working Group and Committee of the European Social Fund (ESF)	MF/LDDK
2–3 June	EU-US Justice and Home Affairs Ministerial Meeting	MJ/MI
3–5 June	European Standardization Summit	MEA
3–4 June	European Spatial Planning Observation Network (ESPON) Seminar	MEPRD
3–5 June	Rural Communities Parliament "Creation of precondition for development of small towns and rural areas"	Latvian Rural forum
4–6 June	Informal Trip CORREPER I	MOF
4–5 June	Meeting of the Working Party on Customs Union	MF
4–5 June	Informal Politico – Military Group Away Day	MD
4 June	Meeting of the Committee for Civilian Aspects of Crisis Management (CIVCOM)	MOF
4–5 June	Meeting of the Directors of Institutes and Schools of Public Administration (DISPA) as part of the European Public Administration Network (EUPAN)	SC
8–9 June	Discussion "Global education – striving for engagement, development, sustainability"	EDC
9–10 June	Informal Meeting of Ministers responsible for Cohesion policy, territorial cohesion and urban matters	MF/MEPRD
9–11 June	Meeting of the European Medical and Psychological Experts' Network for Law Enforcement (EMPEN) within the framework of the Law Enforcement Working Group (LEWP)	MI

CONDUCT OF THE PRESIDENCY

10–12 June	PSC/ Nicolaidis informal trip	MOF/ MD
10–12 June	Meeting of the heads of European Seed Certification Agencies	MA
11–12 June	Informal Meeting of the Structural Actions Working Party	MF
11–12 June	European network of Public Employment Services Board meeting	MW
11–12 June	9 th European Organic Congress: "Designing our Future"	MA
11–12 June	Meeting of European Public Administration Network (EUPAN) Directors General and Trade Unions' National and European Administration Delegation (TUNED)	SC
15 June	Conference on Deinstitutionalisation and the Further Development of Social Care Policy in Europe	MW
15–16 June	VI Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region	MOF
15–17 June	General Assembly of the European Judicial Training Network	MJ
15–16 June	Informal meeting of the Working Group on Ageing Populations and Sustainability of public finances	MF
15–16 June	High Level Working Group on Competitiveness and Growth	MEA
15–17 June	Discussion "Riga's report on the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea region, progress in implementing"	CAL
16 June	12 th Meeting of the Eastern Partnership Integrated Border Management Panel	MI
17–18 June	Digital Assembly	MEPRD
17–19 June	Informal Meeting of the Telecom Attachés	MT
18–19 June	Informal Meeting of EU Forest Directors	MA
18–19 June	Heads of SIRENE Bureau meeting	MI
18–19 June	Meeting of the Contact Committee of the Heads of the Supreme Audit Institutions of the European Union and the European Court of Auditors	State Audit Office
18–19 June	Informal Meeting of the Transport Attachés	MT
19–20 June	Meeting of the European Board of National Archivists (EBNA) and Meeting of the European Archives Group (EAG)	MC
19 June	Expert meeting of the Eastern Partnership Panel on Public Administration Reform	LALRG
21 June	Meeting of the Directors General for Vocational Education	MES
22 June	Meeting of Ministers in charge of Vocational Education and Training, the European Social Partners and the European Commission	MES
22–23 June	Informal Meeting of the Working Party on Development Cooperation (CODEV)	MOF
22–23 June	TEN-T Days 2015	MT
25–26 June	First Meeting of EU and Central Asian Ministers for Education	MOF/MES
25–26 June	Informal Meeting of the Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA)	MOF
29–30 June	European Crime Prevention Network (EUCPN) Second Board meeting	MI
29–30 June	Plenary meeting of the European Judicial Network in Criminal Matters	MJ

CONDUCT OF THE PRESIDENCY



CONDUCT OF THE PRESIDENCY

PARLIAMENTARY DIMENSION

FEBRUARY

Date	Event	Institution
1–2 February	Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC	Saeima (Latvian Parliament)
3–4 February	Interparliamentary Conference under Article 13 of the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union	Saeima (Latvian Parliament), in Brussels
22–23 February	Meeting of the Chairpersons of the Committees on Employment and Social Affairs	Saeima (Latvian Parliament)

MARCH

Date	Event	Institution
4–6 March	Interparliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)	Saeima (Latvian Parliament)

APRIL

Date	Event	Institution
19–20 April	Meeting of the Chairpersons of the Committees on the Economic and Digital Affairs	Saeima (Latvian Parliament)

MAY/JUNE

Date	Event	Institution
31 May – 2 June	Plenary meeting of the LIII COSAC	Saeima (Latvian Parliament)

CONDUCT OF THE PRESIDENCY

ASSOCIATED EVENTS

Date	Event	Institution
11 December, 2014	16 th annual LIKTA Conference on the Digital priority under the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union	LIKTA
4–6 February	Second EU Cohesion Policy Conference “Challenges for the New Cohesion Policy in 2014–2020: an Academic and Policy Debate”	MF
6 February	High Level Symposium on EU–Japan Cooperation: Common Challenges and Perspectives”	MOF
11–12 February	International Conference on “Entrepreneurship in the Regions to Strengthen EU Competitiveness”	LDDK
24 February	Transporting goods from Asia to the EU – What role for intermodality?	CER
26–27 February	International Trade Union Conference “Trade union role in promotion of sustainable growth and quality job creation”	LBAS
3–5 March	Joint 17 th ELGPN Plenary	MES
9–10 March	URBACT II Monitoring Committee meeting	MEPRD
9–10 March	1 st URBACT III Monitoring Committee meeting	MEPRD
25–26 March	Conference “Cyber Defence in Europe”	MD
26 March	Single Market Forum	MEA
26 March	VOLONTEUROPE SEMINAR	MES/MW
27 March	RURAL ISOLATION OF CITIZENS IN EUROPE: EVIDENCE FROM THE BALTIC STATES	MES/MW
31 March	VOLONTEUROPE CONFERENCE: A VISION OF THE COMMON GOOD FOR EUROPE	LDDK, LBAS
8–9 April	Informal Meeting of “Europe for Citizens” Contact Points	MC
16 April	International Lifelong Learning Conference	LAPM
16–17 April	Conference on “Natural disasters and 'One Health'. Are we prepared?”	MA
22–23 April	Expert Group of Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Uses (AFOLU)	MA
22–24 April	Eurofi	MF
22–24 April	Meeting of BUSINESSEUROPE Council of Presidents	LDDK
23–24 April	Conference “Insolvency law in Europe: current trends and future perspectives”	MJ
27–29 April	Riga Summit 2015 on the Multilingual Digital Single Market	Tilde Company
29 April	High-level Round Table Discussion on Healthcare Solutions to Improve Work Capacity	MH
6–7 May	European Securities and Markets Authority's Board of Supervisors meeting	FKTK
6–7 May	The Co-ordination group for Mutual recognition and Decentralised procedures – human (CMDh)	SAMLV
6–7 May	The European Medicines Agencies Cooperation on Legal Issues (EMACOLEX)	SAMLV
6–8 May	URBACT City Festival	MEPRD
11 May	Conference “Competitive and Sustainable Vocational Education and Training: Achievements and New Goals”	LDDK
12 May	Conference “European Union contribution to infectious disease research”	MH
12–13 May	COTER commission meeting and conference	Riga City Council
13 May	16 th European Corporate Governance Conference	MJ

CONDUCT OF THE PRESIDENCY

13 May	"Corporate Governance – a tool to increase competitiveness in the digital era"	MD
13–15 May	2 nd ENISA National Cyber Security Strategies workshop	MH
18–20 May	Baltic Conference "Immunological Modelling: Theory and Practice"	ALTER-Net
19 May	Urban by Nature – Nature Based Solutions to Societal Challenges	VHTP
26 May	Satellite Applications: Opportunities for the Baltics. benefits for people, enterprises and public administration	MD
26–28 May	Implementing the EU Maritime Security Strategy: the Case of the Baltic Sea Region	MOF
26–28 May	European Diplomatic Programme/ Training Directors' Meeting	FEE
29 May	My Baltic Sea 2015 campaign*	MEA
1–3 June	High-Level Seminar on Statistics for Eastern European, Caucasian and Central Asian Countries	CSB
2–3 June	HMA Working Group of Quality Managers (WGQM)	SAMLV
3–5 June	Development Forum	LAPAS
4–5 June	Week of Innovative Regions in Europe (WIRE 2015)	MES
4–5 June	Eurochambres Plenary Assembly & Forum "Economic Cooperation Opportunities between Europe and Central Asia"	LCCI
5–7 June	International trade union youth forum "Strengthening the trade union youth participation in decision making at European and national level"	LBAS
10–12 June	EuroNanoForum 2015	UL/MES
11–12 June	56 th meeting of the EFSA Advisory Forum	EFSA/BIOR
11–12 June	Working Group of Communication Professionals (WGCP)	SAMLV
13 June	Nature Concert Hall*	Nature Conservation Agency
15–17 June	EU Latvian Presidency Conference "First Innovative Enterprise week "Access to Finance for Research, Innovation and SMEs 2015""	MEA
15–19 June	10 th Baltic Sea Science Congress	HEI/MES
16 June	"EU28 Cloud Security Conference: Reaching the Cloud Era in the European Union"	MD
16–17 June	The Clinical trials facilitation group (CTFG)	SAMLV
16–17 June	1 st INTERREG EUROPE Monitoring Committee's Meeting	MEPRD
16–17 June	DLM Forum	MC/The National Archives of Latvia
16–18 June	25 th Congress of the Nordic Association of Agriculture Scientists „Nordic View to Sustainable Rural Development"	LUA/MA
17–18 June	6 th European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) Annual Forum	MES
25 June	International Conference on Evaluation of the IAS Regulation	MF
26 June	Informal meeting of statutory auditor supervisors and audit policy-makers from the Baltic States	MF
29 June	European Structural and Investment Funds: creating new dual-use opportunities (European Defence Agency's Workshop in cooperation with the Latvian Ministry of Defence)	MD
29 June	Conference "Universal health: Investing in Health and Wellbeing for All"	MH

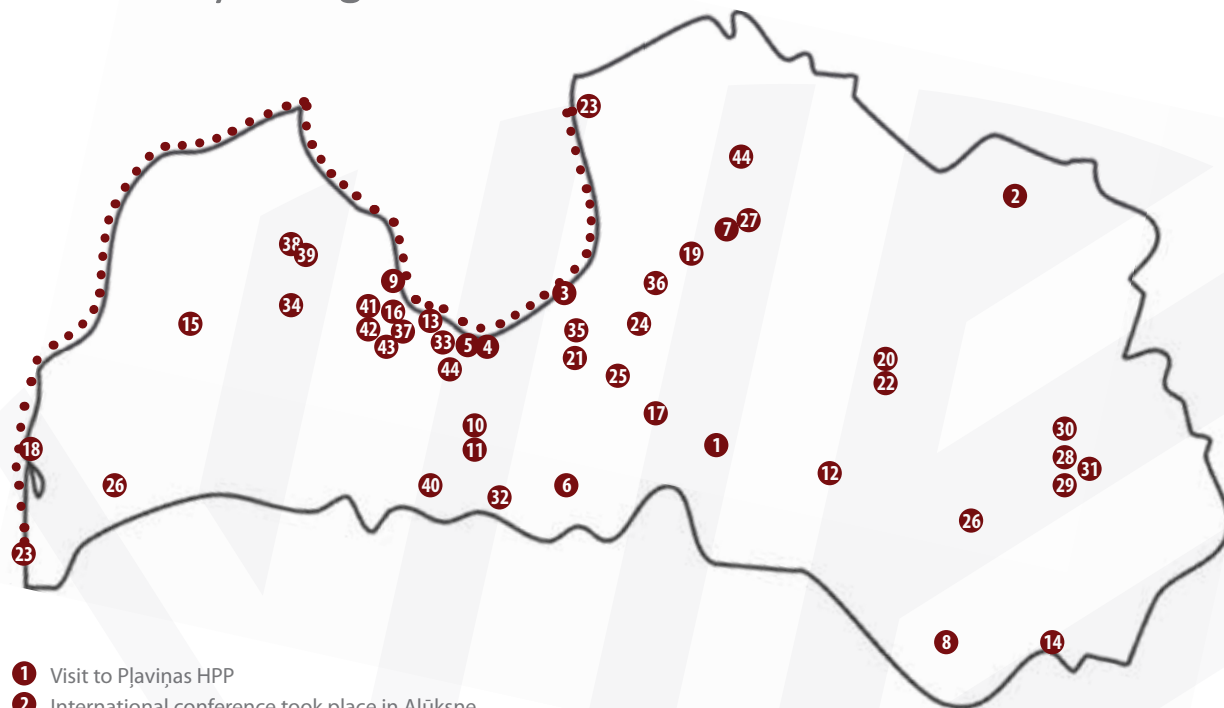
CONDUCT OF THE PRESIDENCY

ABBREVIATIONS

ALTER–Net – ALTER–Net scientific network	LPESPS – Secretariat of the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union
BIOR – Institute of Food Safety, Animal Health and Environment	LUA – Latvia University of Agriculture
CAL – Association Civic Alliance–Latvia	MA – Ministry of Agriculture
CER – Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies	Marta – Marta Resource Centre for Women
CoR – Committee of the Regions	MC – Ministry of Culture
CSB – Central Statistical Bureau	MD – Ministry of Defence
<i>Dzīvības koks</i> – (The tree of Life) Latvian Cancer Patient Support Society	MEA– Ministry of Economic Affairs
EDC – Education Development Centre	MEPRD – Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development
EESC – European Economic and Social Committee	MES – Ministry of Education and Science
EFSA – European Food Safety Authority	MF – Ministry of Finance
FCMF – Financial and Capital Market Commission	MH – Ministry of Health
FEE – Foundation for Environmental Education	MI – Ministry of the Interior
HEI – Health Effects Institute	MJ – Ministry of Justice
LAD – Latvian Association of the Deaf	MoF – Ministry of Foreign Affairs
LALRG – Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments	MT – Ministry of Transport
LAPAS – Latvian Platform for Development Cooperation	MW – Ministry of Welfare
LAPM – Latvian Association of Personnel Management	NEPLP – National Electronic Mass Media Council
LATA – Latvian Open Technology Association	PFL – Association Prison Fellowship Latvia
LBAS – Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia	SAMLV – State Agency of Medicines of Latvia
LCCI – Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry	SC – State Chancellery
LDCYSF – Latvian Disabled Children and Youth Sport federation	SIF – Society Integration Foundation
LDDK – Employers' Confederation of Latvia	SUSTENTO – Latvian Umbrella Body for Disability Organisations
LIKTA – Latvian Information and Communications Technology Association	UL – University of Latvia
LNB – National Library of Latvia	VHTP – Ventspils High Technology Park
	VKPPI – State Inspection for Heritage Protection of Latvia

CONDUCT OF THE PRESIDENCY

Presidency in regions of Latvia



- 1 Visit to Pļaviņas HPP
- 2 International conference took place in Alūksne
- 3 Visit to Camp Adazi
- 4 Introductory visit to Babīte Rhododendron Nursery
- 5 Bread baking at Lāči Bakery
- 6 Conference that took place in Brukna, Bauska municipality
- 7 Visit to Vidzeme Concert Hall and SIA Cēsu alus; also international conference took place in Cēsis
- 8 Souvenirs of the Latvian Presidency – svilpaunieki – were created in Daugavpils
- 9 Souvenirs of the Latvian Presidency – svilpaunieki – were also created in Engure municipality, Apšuciems
- 10 Visit to Fortum Latvia biomass cogeneration plant, the Veterinary Clinic at the Latvia University of Agriculture, the Baltijas Gumijas Fabrika, Latvijas Piens, Pet Baltija in Jelgava
- 11 Visit to Ložmetējkalns in Jelgava
- 12 Conference took place in Jēkabpils
- 13 Several international conferences, seminars, meetings took place in Jūrmala. Visit to Jūrmala social care centre, Dzintari Music Hall; souvenirs of the Latvian Presidency – svilpaunieki – were also created in Jūrmala
- 14 Souvenirs of the Latvian Presidency – svilpaunieki – were also created in Krāslava
- 15 Conference took place in Kuldīga
- 16 Visit to Ķemeri National Park
- 17 Conference took place in Lielvārde municipality, Lēdmane
- 18 Souvenirs of the Latvian Presidency – wooden brooches – were created in Liepāja
- 19 Forum took place in Līgatne. Visit to the Līgatne bunker
- 20 Souvenirs of the Latvian Presidency – svilpaunieki – were also created in Madona
- 21 Nature Concert Hall was organised at the Salaspils National Botanic Garden
- 22 Souvenirs of the Latvian Presidency – svilpaunieki – were also created in Madona municipality, Mētriena
- 23 The Green Expedition took place from Nida to Ainaži
- 24 Souvenirs of the Latvian Presidency – svilpaunieki – were also created in Mālpils
- 25 Souvenirs of the Latvian Presidency – svilpaunieki – were also created in Ogre
- 26 Souvenirs of the Latvian Presidency – svilpaunieki – were also created in Preiļi
- 27 Souvenirs of the Latvian Presidency – svilpaunieki – were also created in Priekule municipality, Virgas
- 28 Souvenirs of the Latvian Presidency – svilpaunieki – were also created in Rēzekne municipality, Ilzeskalns
- 29 Souvenirs of the Latvian Presidency – svilpaunieki – were also created in Rēzekne municipality, Ozolaine
- 30 Souvenirs of the Latvian Presidency – svilpaunieki – were also created in Rēzekne municipality, Vērēmi
- 31 Souvenirs of the Latvian Presidency – svilpaunieki – were created in Rēzekne
- 32 Visit to Rundāle Palace
- 33 Conference took place in Babīte municipality, Ratnieki
- 34 Visit to the Mazsili Tree Nursery in Sabile municipality
- 35 Visit to SIA Getliņi Eko
- 36 Meetings took place in Sigulda, visit to Kokapstrāde 98 factory and a test drive done in bobsleigh track in Sigulda
- 37 Concert at the Nature Concert Hall in Rūši meadow
- 38 Conference took place in Talsi
- 39 Visit to Mežmāja Nature Education Centre of the Forest Research Station
- 40 Visit to AS Tērvete and AS Tērvetes AL in Tērvete
- 41 Souvenirs of the Latvian Presidency – svilpaunieki – were also created in Tukums
- 42 Souvenirs of the Latvian Presidency were also created in Tukums municipality, Irlava
- 43 Visit to SIA Silu kūdra in Tukums municipality, Sēme
- 44 Visit to SIA Buku audzētava in Valgunde
- 45 Conference took place in Valmiera; visit to Valmieras Stikla šķiedra and Valmiermuižas alus

CONDUCT OF THE PRESIDENCY

LATVIAN PRESIDENCY PUBLIC DIPLOMACY AND CULTURAL PROGRAMME

Culture is a constant source of inspiration which makes life more colourful and acts as a stimulus to reach new peaks. The Latvian Presidency of the EU Council offered Latvia the chance to inspire and excite people during these six months with a diverse cultural programme that had **contemporaneity, uniqueness** and **excellence** as its core values.

The Latvian Presidency's public diplomacy and cultural programme featured around 83 events in 76 different countries that were organised with the help of Latvian diplomatic and consular representations and other partners. 130 concerts, 63 exhibitions, 26 film screenings, 6 theatre performances and around 600 seminars, conferences and readings took place during the Latvian Presidency of the EU Council. In their different ways, they all showcased the **general themes** of the cultural programme:

- the idea of a united Europe,
- the end of World War II,
- the road to contemporaneity in professional art,
- the synthesis of artistic genres and addressing topical societal issues in art,
- song and dance celebrations on the Amber Road, and
- engaging the diaspora in the Presidency.



Latvian Presidency
of the Council of the
European Union

The archetypal image of a grinding stone chosen as the **logo** for the Latvian Presidency is a symbol of work, thus reaffirming that creative and productive activity lies at the basis of European welfare and success. The dynamic movement of the rotating grinding stone brings about the energy and growth with which Europe meets new challenges. Its circular shape suggests unity and wholeness – the commonly held ideals

and values upon which the European project is built. The ability to focus and strive for common values is accentuated through the eye being drawn to the centre of the logo. The colours and pattern of the Presidency logo were used in official souvenirs – ties and linen scarves – and the logo also featured on the 2 euro commemorative coins and the stamps issued by *Latvijas Pasts* that travelled to all parts of the world.



CONDUCT OF THE PRESIDENCY



RECEPTION ROOM ON LEVEL 50 AT THE JUSTUS LIPSIUS. MINT ARMCHAIR COMFY, DESIGNER: JĀNIS RAUZA

© HZE



JUSTUS LIPSIUS ENTRANCE VESTIBULE

© HZE

Keeping up with a presidency tradition, an exhibition of national design entitled *Follow Latvia* was on display at the EU Council's Justus Lipsius building in Brussels throughout the Latvian Presidency. The exhibition featured large-scale images of the Latvian landscape and cultural heritage and a collection of furniture by Latvian designers. An interactive Dance Path celebrating the vitality of the country's dance

tradition was mapped out in the entrance vestibule of the building, marking the steps of the Latvian folk dance *Spriguleits* which was very easy to learn by following the pattern on the rug. Colleagues in the EU Council building were introduced to the first steps of the dance by Latvian dancers from Brussels. It is also possible to try out this dance on Latvia's Facebook page: *If you like Latvia, Latvia likes you.*



VAIRA VĪĶE-FREIBERGA, THE FORMER PRESIDENT OF LATVIA AND CURRENT PRESIDENT OF THE CLUB DE MADRID DURING THE HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF EU'S EASTERN AND SOUTHERN NEIGHBOURHOODS

© ANDREJS KOVAĻOVŠ/LATVIAN EMBASSY IN SPAIN

Latvia's diplomatic and consular representations organised a range of **seminars, conferences, readings and other discussion events** in cooperation with long-standing foreign partners – public administration institutions, universities, institutes, think tanks and non-governmental organisations. The topics chosen for these events were in line with the Latvian Presidency's priorities and current developments in the world: *the current geopolitical situation in the region and EU-Russia relations; the Eastern Partnership and aspects regarding implementation of the association agreements; EU cooperation opportunities with the Central Asian countries; EU growth and long-term financial policy; EU digital policy; the information society: Latvia's experience; the role of mass media in facilitating democracy; information security; cyber security issues; energy (in)security: opportunities and challenges for the EU Member states in the Baltic Sea Region, and others.* Latvian officials and specialists in the respective fields were the main experts discussing these topics.

CONDUCT OF THE PRESIDENCY



RAINIS (GORAN GORA) AND ASPAZIJA (EVA IKSTENA-STRAPCANE)

© JURA PODNIEKA STUDIJA

Throughout the six months, the unique #mindpower project travelled around Europe. Devoted to the outstanding Latvian poets Rainis and Aspazija in celebration of their 150th anniversary, this featured 29 short films in which celebrities from all the EU Member States – politicians, diplomats, actors, artists and researchers – read excerpts from the works of both poets in their native language and clothed them in images from their own cultures. As these ideas are still topical today, the challenge was twofold – for the creators to see these values and then to help modern Europeans understand them.

Books are a powerful affirmation of cultural wealth. For that reason, the Presidency compiled **sets of books** in cooperation with the National Library of Latvia and donated them to over 70 libraries in 35 countries. Books about Latvian history and politics, and Latvian language, culture and literature, art and architecture were sent to national libraries and universities in countries which have centres for Baltic studies. The aim of the donations was to promote knowledge about our country and its culture, and to help popularise Latvia and lead to a greater understanding of our country's history, especially during the 20th century.



SET OF BOOKS DONATED

© EU2015.LV



THE LATVIAN FILM COLLECTION

PUBLICITY PHOTO

Film presents a great opportunity for Latvia to show its soul and depict the emotions that typify the country. The National Film Centre of Latvia (NKC) has thus compiled a

comprehensive **collection of Latvian films**, ranging from the classics to contemporary masterpieces. A total of 25 DVD discs were thematically arranged to present 70 films of various lengths and genres. Many of the film collections have already found a new home in other countries of the world – in Latvian embassies, diplomatic missions and honorary consulates, and in foreign libraries and centres for Baltic studies. This collection shows foreign viewers that Latvian films are a serious and competitive art form of high artistic quality. Several DVD compilations were gifted to Latvian national and regional libraries, and the libraries of higher education institutions, to also encourage local people to find out more about films produced in Latvia. A special section devoted to these films was set up on the *If you like Latvia, Latvia likes you* Facebook page to promote this collection. Facebook users can take a test there to find out which Latvian film character they most resemble. The cultural programme also supported the making of several documentaries, such as “Planet Amber” which tells the story of modern Amber Road and “In the Belly of the City” which discovers the Riga Central Market and the uniqueness of Latvian cuisine.

CONDUCT OF THE PRESIDENCY

Within the Presidency's cultural programme, nine **travelling exhibitions** were on show in the Latvian diplomatic missions around the world throughout the six months. The exhibitions told the tales of the nature, history, architecture and art, fashion and design and achievements in science and sport of Latvia. They showcased Latvian creative thinking and the ability to give new light to national traditions.

PHOTOS FROM THE TRAVELLING EXHIBITION
"PROUD LATVIA. SUCCESS STORIES OF LATVIAN
DESIGN"



CONDUCT OF THE PRESIDENCY

An extensive exhibition programme served as a showcase for Latvian art, starting with the early 20th century's foremost artists, such as Kārlis Johansons and Gustavs Klucis, right up to the most recent graduates of the Art Academy of Latvia. For the first time Latvia was represented in the Venice Art Biennale parallel programme: works by nominees and winners of the Purvītis Prize showcased the role of Latvian art in contemporary creative processes.



EXHIBITION "GRADUATION" BY THE ART ACADEMY OF LATVIA IN LONDON

© EDGARS HINCENBERGS



OPENING EVENT OF THE LATVIAN PRESIDENCY AT THE BOZAR CENTRE FOR FINE ARTS IN BRUSSELS

© YANNICK SAS

Some of Latvia's finest musicians performed concerts abroad during the last six months: these included the State Choir *Latvija*, Latvian Radio Choir, Latvian National Symphony Orchestra, and the *Kremerata Baltica* and *Sinfonietta Riga* Chamber Orchestras, as well as internationally acclaimed soloists such as singer Elīna Garanča, violinists Gidons Krēmers, Baiba Skride and Vineta Sareika, pianists Reinis Zariņš and Vestards Šimkus, and conductors Andris Nelsons, Andris Poga and Ainārs Rubiķis. The performance of Giuseppe Verdi's "Requiem" in Paris received a particularly enthusiastic response from the audience. The cultural programme was enriched with performances by the Latvian Radio Big Band, Maestro Raimonds Pauls, the Māris Briežkalns Quintet and many others. A guest performance of the opera "Valentine" by Arturs Maskats was held in the Deutsche Oper Berlin to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II. The Latvian National Ballet, the New Riga Theatre and the Valmiera Drama Theatre also gave guest performances.

The inhabitants of Latvia also had the opportunity to enjoy top-class cultural events – an Italian renaissance portrait exhibition, a selection of artworks from Mikhail Baryshnikov's art collection, an exhibition of works by Luxembourg-born photographer Edward Steichen and triennial events in the field of textile and fibre art. Guests of the Presidency events at the National Library were also able to find out about the history of publishing at the *514. Book. 2014* exhibition and about the achievements of Latvian designers in recent years. In April, the Nordic Light multimedia symphony by Ēriks Ešenvalds was premiered at the Latvian National Opera, while in June the air of Riga was filled with thousands of voices singing at the Nordic-Baltic Choral Festival which marked the end of the Presidency.



EXHIBITION "TWO CENTURIES OF ITALIAN PORTRAIT PAINTING. 1580-1780" AT THE "RIGA BOURSE" ART MUSEUM

© EU2015.LV

CONDUCT OF THE PRESIDENCY

During the Presidency special attention was paid to the presenting of **traditional Latvian culture abroad**. The "Daiļrade" folk dance ensemble and Latvian craftsmen visited China. The exhibition entitled "Ornaments of the Latvian Soul", created by the Latvian National Centre for Culture and dedicated to national costumes and the song and dance celebration tradition, was on show in Munich and Luxembourg, while the Latvian National History Museum exhibition "Amber – Jewel of the Baltic Sea" was on display in Minsk and Kiev. Performances by the Laima Jansone ethno jazz trio demonstrated the compatibility of traditional music with the rhythms of modern music.



PUBLICITY PHOTO

DANCE ENSEMBLE "DAIĻRADE" PERFORMS AT THE BEIJING NATIONAL CENTRE FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS



EXHIBITION "ORNAMENTS OF THE LATVIAN SOUL" AT THE FIVE CONTINENTS MUSEUM IN MUNICH

© LNKCC



LAIMA JANSONE
ETHNO JAZZ TRIO

© EU2015.LV

CONDUCT OF THE PRESIDENCY

PRESIDENCY – ENGAGEMENT, GROWTH AND SUSTAINABILITY

The Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union focused on three values – **engagement, growth and sustainability** – when planning and ensuring the successful conduct of the Presidency. Efforts to engage society were already made at the stage of choosing priorities, as future opportunities were also envisaged for the broader involvement of citizens in Presidency meetings and communication events, as well as in the public diplomacy and cultural programme.

To determine the priorities of the Latvian Presidency, several **discussion rounds** were organised, engaging around 1200 representatives from the public and non-governmental sectors, academia, businesses, the creative world, and the social partners. These discussions served as the conceptual basis for the development of the Presidency's work programme and the approval of the Presidency's priorities.

NGOs and social partners provided invaluable support in preparing for the Presidency. At the planning stage, **93 NGOs** signed a cooperation protocol with a commitment to participate in the preparation and conduct of the Presidency. The NGOs also had the opportunity to **tender for projects** and apply for funding covering up to 95% of the total costs

of the project. 10 projects in total were implemented. As far back as 12 June 2014, the social partners signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with the Cabinet of Ministers on the planning and conduct of the Latvian Presidency of the EU Council in 2015.

40 different ceramic artists from all over Latvia helped in the making of the main Presidency souvenir – the **svilpauniēks** (a ceramic whistle) – creating a unique gift for every guest of the Presidency. The artists worked using different techniques and styles. Among them were ceramic masters and members of the Artists' Union of Latvia, pottery enthusiasts and even whole families who have worked with ceramics for generations.



LATVIAN GIFT TO THE DELEGATES – SVILPAUNIĒKS (CERAMIC WHISTLE)

The **welcome given to the Presidency** would not have been the same without the engagement of the people of Latvia. 50 000 people came together on New Year's Eve on the banks of the Daugava in Riga to dance the Latvian folk dance *Spriguleits*, which was chosen as the "messenger" of Latvian dance traditions in the EU.

Before the official opening of the Presidency, around 60 young people from Latvia had the opportunity to play the roles of ministers and delegates during a **simulation of an Informal Meeting of EU Council Ministers**. Despite the bad weather, the young people raised the EU and Member States' flags outside the main venue of the Latvian Presidency – the National Library of Latvia, also known as the "Castle of Light" – thus highlighting that the Presidency had its "home" in the urban setting of Riga.



YOUNG PEOPLE PARTICIPATING IN THE SIMULATION OF THE INFORMAL MEETING OF MINISTERS OF THE EU COUNCIL

© EU2015.LV

CONDUCT OF THE PRESIDENCY

Having understood the importance of raising public awareness, the Latvian Presidency organised several activities involving Latvian schools and teachers. To help teachers speak about the European Union in a way that would be interesting for their students, the Presidency organised seminars to inform them about educational aids prepared during the Presidency. During these six months, special Presidency ambassadors from the “Māja” (“The House”) Club spoke to young people about topical EU issues in an exciting way. In addition, around 150 experts from 30 institutions and NGOs took part in the annual **Back to School campaign** during which they visited Latvian schools to share their professional experience and knowledge about the European Union. Over 10 000 students listened to these presentations in various schools.



150 EXPERTS VISITED SCHOOLS IN LATVIA DURING THE CAMPAIGN “BACK TO SCHOOL”

© GITA ESITE-KALNIŅA



OVER 175 THOUSAND PEOPLE PARTICIPATED IN THE “BIG CLEAN UP” CAMPAIGN

© TALKAS.LV

In spring the Latvian Presidency was involved in the Big Cleanup (*Lielā talka*) campaign, encouraging other citizens to also take part in environmental clean-up and redevelopment activities aimed at making Latvia the cleanest and tidiest country in the world by 2018 when we will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Latvian State. This year about 175 000 of the country’s inhabitants took part in Big Cleanup activities.

54 000 people visited the **European Space Expo** – the largest travelling exhibition in Europe, which arrived in Riga at the end of April and was on display until the beginning of May. Thus, in terms of number of visitors, the Latvian capital is second in the ranking of 24 European cities that have hosted the exhibition.

The Latvian Presidency also supported and invited other citizens to join campaigns that support environmentally friendly thinking and a healthy lifestyle. In March this year, during **Earth Hour**, both the interior and facade lighting of the Castle of Light (the National Library of Latvia) was switched off, thus demonstrating environmentally friendly thinking and the significance of saving resources. In early June, the Latvian Presidency took part in **No Elevators Day**, calling on all citizens to pay more attention to their health and to take advantage of opportunities to be more active in everyday life – such as by climbing stairs instead of using elevators or escalators.



MAIN VENUE IN RIGA FOR THE LATVIAN PRESIDENCY TURNS OFF THE LIGHTS DURING THE EARTH HOUR

© EU2015.LV

CONDUCT OF THE PRESIDENCY

One of the best attended Presidency events was the Presidency kilometre at the **Lattelecom Riga Marathon** which provided cultural entertainment for all those who took part. This year's marathon attracted nearly 26 000 runners from 69 countries, and the number of those representing the Latvian Presidency was very impressive: with 296 participants, the Presidency's joint team was the 8th largest of all.



PRESIDENCY KILOMETRE AT THE LATTELECOM RIGA MARATHON

© F64 PHOTO AGENCY

Latvia can be proud of its enterprising, intelligent and creative people who have impressed the whole world with their ideas. That is the reason why several exhibitions were opened during the Presidency to introduce both residents and guests of Riga to innovative ideas created in Latvia in the field of contemporary design. These were demonstrated at the **Design Manifestation/Reputation** exhibition and the outdoor exhibition in the field of innovation — **Amazing Latvian Ideas** – that was seen by almost 100 000 visitors in just seven weeks. At the main meeting venue of the Latvian Presidency — the National Library of Latvia — the **Riga IT Demo Centre** established exclusively for the Presidency presented more than 30 achievements by Latvian companies working in the IT and high technology field.



OPENING OF THE EXHIBITION "DESIGN MANIFESTATION / REPUTATION" AT THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF LATVIA

© EU2015.LV



OPENING OF THE RIGA IT DEMO CENTRE AT THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF LATVIA

© MARTINS VILCENS, MAKEART



OPENING OF OUTDOOR EXHIBITION "AMAZING LATVIAN IDEAS" IN RIGA

© ILMĀRS ZNOTIŅŠ

CONDUCT OF THE PRESIDENCY

Journalists attended the Presidency events

    **1,900** times 

Presidency website EU2015.LV has


356,016
visits

864,520
views

Spending approx.
3 min 8 sec
at the site

Presidency's audiovisual database includes

 **767**
videos

 over
11,600
photos

Since the beginning of the Presidency



5,411
articles and
stories

most of them in
January —

1,851

have been published in Latvian media

Videos prepared and broadcast (EbS) by the Latvian Presidency were used by
making

142
TV channels

5,710
TV stories

in total length of
21 h and 46 min

The most widely covered event was the Eastern Partnership Summit

The most videos have been used by TV channels in Greece, Spain, Italy, Germany and Portugal



The Latvian Presidency
Youtube channel has

245,938
views



Twitter account in Latvian
@es2015lv has

1,957,300
views
(on average 12,400 views a day)

Twitter account in English
@es2015lv has

4,863,000
views
(on average 27,000 views a day)



4,165
followers

7,600
followers

CONDUCT OF THE PRESIDENCY

STAFF OF THE PRESIDENCY AND THE PRESIDENCY INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

Although the whole of the public administration was involved in the work of the Presidency, 1 140 employees worked most directly in preparing and implementing the Presidency's work. They were divided into five target groups: EU Council working group leaders, their deputies, sectoral experts, coordinators on sectoral issues and communicators for sector-related issues.

In preparing for the first Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union it was vital to strengthen the knowledge of public administration staff. Training for the Presidency was the largest investment in recent years in human resource development by the Latvian public administration. The training took place from March 2013 to December 2014 in Riga and Brussels (for staff of the Permanent Representation of the Republic of Latvia to the European Union). The training was mainly provided by the European Institute of Public Administration and the European Union institutions.

In order to strengthen the knowledge and skills of staff directly involved in Presidency work, the training was organised in two parts:

- A centralised Presidency training programme (substantive training and foreign language development), for all employees involved in the preparation and implementation of the Presidency.
- Training on industry-related issues (courses, seminars, conferences, consultations) organised by the sectoral ministries for their staff.

The decision to create the Presidency Internship Programme was taken in 2013. It aimed to provide guide services for the high-level foreign delegations, and to enable young people to participate in the work of the Latvian Presidency and gain unique professional experience.

The Presidency Internship Programme was launched in December 2013 and was held in three stages (examination of applications, telephone interviews, face-to-face interviews). 300 applications were received, and 107 participants were enrolled in the Presidency Internship Programme. The training for the delegation guides took place in September and October 2014, and the Internship programme then ran from November 2014 until the end of the Presidency in June 2015.

Those involved in the Programme worked on a voluntary basis or to gain practical work experience for a university course. The work was done without remuneration.

Of the 107 who took part in the Presidency Internship Programme:

- 102 worked as guides for the foreign delegations: their duties involved greeting delegates at the airport and escorting them throughout the event, coordinating practical arrangements for the delegation and ensuring the flow of information between the event organisers and the delegations;
- 5 worked as assistants at the Presidency media centre where they coordinated media streams, looked after media registration, offered services at press conferences and provided information for visitors to the media centre at the National Library of Latvia.

For many of the Presidency Internship Programme participants this was their first significant work experience. It gave them an insight into various areas of professional life and strengthened the knowledge they had gained at university.



LIAISON OFFICERS OF THE LATVIAN PRESIDENCY

CONDUCT OF THE PRESIDENCY

1 140

employees from public administration were directly involved in preparing and implementing the Presidency's work including:



- 230 EU Council working group Chairs
- 230 EU Council working group Vice-Chairs
- 90 coordinators
- 40 communicators
- 550 experts

7,3 was the grade they gave themselves when assessing their knowledge about the EU after taking training courses in 2013 and 2014 (in comparison to 4.8 out of 10 in 2013).



Presidency Internship Programme

107 young people were enrolled in the Presidency Internship Programme and became the liaison officers for foreign delegations

300 hours on average each of them worked on voluntary basis in the Presidency events

23 years – the average age of the Participants of the Programme representing **21** higher education institutions



CONDUCT OF THE PRESIDENCY

PRESIDENCY IN NUMBERS

- 181** days was the duration of the Latvian Presidency of the EU Council
- 1680** Latvian Presidency events organised in Latvia and Brussels
- 53** Council meetings chaired by the Latvian representatives
- 158** times Latvian ministers and high officials had visits in Brussels and Luxembourg
- For **64** hours or **3854** minutes Latvia has represented the EU Council at the European Parliament plenary sessions.
- 12,5** hours took the longest trialogue meeting in Brussels (from 19:30 to 8:00 when discussing the European Fund for Strategic Investments)
- 25 300** people took part in the Presidency events in Latvia
- 1140** employees from public administration were directly involved in preparing and implementing the Presidency's work
- 107** young people from the Presidency Internship Programme worked on voluntary basis in total of **32 000** hours.
- 831** cultural and public diplomacy events in **76** countries
- 1 000 000** "Latvian Presidency of the EU Council" 2 euro commemorative coins
- 200 000** stamps dedicated to the Latvian Presidency at face value of € 0.64
- 40** ceramic artists from all parts of Latvia have created the special Presidency souvenirs – *svilpaunieks*
- 54 000** people visited the European Space Expo in Riga, thus, in terms of number of visitors, the Latvian capital is second in the ranking of **24** European cities that have hosted the exhibition
- 8 minutes** long ovations received the Latvian National Symphony Orchestra and the State Choir *Latvija* under the baton of conductor Andris Poga when they performed the Requiem by Giuseppe Verdi at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées.
- 800 kg** is the total weight of books that were donated to over **70** libraries in **35** countries
- For the **1st time** Latvian exhibition was included in the parallel programme of the Venice Art Biennale
- 17 000** tulips in the flower bed by the National Library of Latvia formed the Presidency logo
- 800** foreign journalists from over **40** countries visited Presidency events in Latvia

CONDUCT OF THE PRESIDENCY

- 1900** times the journalists attended the Presidency events taking place in Latvia; for their convenience the Media Centre located at the National Library of Latvia worked **623** hours in **76** days, the longest being **18** hours without a break
- 864 520** page views on EU2015.LV website, visitors spending approx. **3 minutes** and **8 seconds** at the site; in total, **670** media releases published in Latvian and English and over **400** – in German and French.
- 370 349** minutes spent watching videos on Presidency's Youtube channel.
- 1 957 300** views on Latvian Twitter account @es2015lv
- 4 863 000** views on English Twitter account @eu2015lv
- 142** TV channels from all over the world have used the free Europe by *Satellite* content in their stories, in total creating **21 h** and **46 minutes** of footage
- Provision of **350** hours of Presidency events' live broadcast watched by **163 000** viewers from all over the world
- 156** visits by young people – the special Presidency ambassadors from the "Māja" Club to schools in Riga and other places in Latvia. Over **3 300** students took part in the lectures and interactive games.
- 2687** kilometres ran the joint team of the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Presidency at the *Lattelecom* Riga Marathon which is as much as one and a half times around the territory of Latvia
- 402 477** *Spriguleits* dance steps were danced in the "Keep in step with Latvians" Facebook application
- 3rd place** for the Presidency logo in the *Gada preču zīme – Latvijai* (annual trademark competition in Latvia)

Numbers updated on 26 June 2015

LIST OF LEGISLATIVE AND NON-LEGISLATIVE ACTS THE LATVIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE EU COUNCIL REACHED AGREEMENTS ON

GENERAL AFFAIRS

LEGAL ACTS, DRAFT LEGAL ACTS

- Regulation (EU) 2015/779 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2015 amending Regulation (EU) No 1304/2013, as regards additional initial prefinancing amount paid to operational programmes supported by the Youth Employment Initiative
– Regulation published at the Official Journal of the EU.
- Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2015/616 of 13 February 2015 amending Delegated Regulation (EU) No 480/2014 as regards references therein to Regulation (EU) No 508/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council
– Regulation published at the Official Journal of the EU.
- Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2015/1076 of 28.4.2015 laying down, pursuant to Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council, additional rules on the replacement of a beneficiary and on the related responsibilities, and minimum requirements to be included in Public Private Partnership agreements funded by the European Structural and Investment Funds
– The Council expressed its support for the Regulation on 8 June, it is expected that it will be published in the Official Journal of the EU in the beginning of July.
- Council Decision issuing directives to the Commission for the negotiation of amendments to the Convention on Nuclear Safety in the framework of a Diplomatic Conference of the Contracting Parties to that Convention
– Adopted by the Council
- Council Decision (EU) 2015/284 of 17 February 2015 on the position to be adopted, on behalf of the European Union, in the EEA Joint Committee concerning an amendment to Protocol 4 of the EEA Agreement on rules of origin (Croatia Enlargement)
– Council Decision published in the EU Official Journal.
- Council Decision (EU) 2015/285 of 17 February 2015 on the position to be adopted, on behalf of the European Union, in the EEA Joint Committee established by the Agreement on the European Economic Area, as regards the replacement of Protocol 4 to that Agreement, on rules of origin, by a new Protocol which is aligned to the Regional Convention on pan-Euro-Mediterranean rules of origin
– Council Decision published in the EU Official Journal.
- Council Decision (EU) 2015/765 of 7 May 2015 on the position to be adopted on behalf of the European Union within the Joint Committee established by the Agreement between the European Community, of the one part, and the Government of Denmark and the Home Government of the Faroe Islands, of the other part, as regards the replacement of Protocol 3 to that Agreement, concerning the definition of the concept of ‘originating products’ and methods of administrative cooperation, by a new protocol which, as regards the rules of origin, refers to the Regional Convention on pan-Euro-Mediterranean preferential rules of origin”
– Council Decision published in the EU Official Journal.
- Council Decision (EU) 2015/771 of 7 May 2015 on the position to be taken by the EU in the Joint Committee established under the Agreement between the EC and its Member States, of the one part, and the Swiss Confederation, of the other, on the free movement of persons, as regards the amendment of Annex III on the mutual recognition of professional qualification
– Council Decision published in the EU Official Journal.
- Council Decision (EU) 2015/890 of 8 June 2015 on the position to be adopted, on behalf of the European Union, in the EEA Joint Committee concerning an amendment to Annex II (Technical regulations, standards, testing and certification) of the EEA Agreement (Novel foods)
– Council Decision published in the EU Official Journal.
- Council Decision (EU) 2015/899 of 8 June 2015 on the position to be adopted, on behalf of the European Union, in the EEA Joint Committee concerning an amendment to Protocol 31 to the EEA Agreement, on cooperation in specific fields outside the four freedoms (Copernicus)
– Council Decision published in the EU Official Journal.
- Council Decision (EU) 2015/891 of 8 June 2015 on the position to be adopted, on behalf of the European Union, in the EEA Joint Committee concerning an amendment to Protocol 31 to the EEA Agreement, on cooperation in specific fields outside the four freedoms (Budget line 04.03.01.03)
– Council Decision published in the EU Official Journal.
- Council Decision (EU) 2015/900 of 8 June 2015 on the position to be adopted, on behalf of the European Union, in the EEA Joint Committee concerning an amendment to Protocol 31 to the EEA Agreement, on cooperation in specific fields outside the four freedoms (EaSI)
– Council Decision published in the EU Official Journal.
- Proposal for a Council Decision on the position to be adopted, on behalf of the European Union, in the EEA Joint Committee concerning an amendment to Annex II (Technical regulations, standards, testing and certification) to the EEA Agreement (Batteries and Accumulators)
– Approved by the COREPER II.

LIST OF LEGISLATIVE AND NON-LEGISLATIVE ACTS THE LATVIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE EU COUNCIL REACHED AGREEMENTS ON

- Council Decision (EU) 2015/1016 of 23 June 2015 on the position to be adopted, on behalf of the European Union, within the EEA Joint Committee concerning an amendment to Protocol 31 to the EEA Agreement, on cooperation in specific fields outside the four freedoms
– Council Decision published in the EU Official Journal.
- Council Decision (EU) 2015/1027 of 23 June 2015 concerning the rules applicable to national experts on secondment to the General Secretariat of the Council and repealing Decision 2007/829/EC
– Council Decision published in the EU Official Journal.

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS

- Council conclusions on the European Court of Auditors Special Report No 20/2014 "Has ERDF support to SMEs in the area of e-commerce been effective?"
- Council conclusions on the European Court of Auditors Special Report No 21/2014 "EU-funded airport infrastructures: poor value for money"
- Council conclusions on the implementation challenges of the cohesion policy 2014–2020
- Council conclusions on Special Report No 14/2014 from the European Court of Auditors "How do the EU institutions and bodies calculate, reduce and offset their greenhouse gas emissions?"
- Council conclusions on the Commission's annual work program for 2015
- Council conclusions on Special Report No 19/2014 by the Court of Auditors: EU Pre-Accession Assistance to Serbia
- Council conclusions on the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism

COMMON POSITIONS

- Common Position of the European Union on Taxation (Chapter 16)
- Common Position of the European Union on External relations (Chapter 30)
- Common Position of the European Union on Financial services (Chapter 9)
- Common Position of the European Union on Trans-European networks (Chapter 20)
- 53rd meeting of the EU-Turkey Association Council, Position of the European Union
- Sixth meeting of the EU-Montenegro Stabilisation and Association Council, EU position

OTHER DOCUMENTS

- Riga Declaration "Towards the EU Urban Agenda" (adopted at Informal Meeting of EU Ministers Responsible for Territorial Cohesion and Urban Matters Riga, 10 June 2015)
- EEA Council conclusions (the 43rd meeting, 18 May 2015)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

LEGAL ACTS, DRAFT LEGAL ACTS

- Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2015/602 of 9 February 2015 amending Regulation (EU) No 978/2012 of the European Parliament and the Council as regards the vulnerability threshold defined in point 1(b) of Annex VII to that Regulation (ST 6120/15 SPG 7 WTO 45 DELACT 16)
– Regulation published at the Official Journal of the EU.
- Regulation (EU) 2015/755 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2015 on common rules for imports from certain third countries (recast)
– Regulation published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on common rules for imports of textile products from certain third countries not covered by bilateral agreements, protocols or other arrangements, or by other specific Union import rules (recast)
– Proposal signed by the European Parliament on 9 June

LIST OF LEGISLATIVE AND NON-LEGISLATIVE ACTS THE LATVIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE EU COUNCIL REACHED AGREEMENTS ON

2015. Awaiting publication in the Official Journal of the EU.

- Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on repealing Council Regulation (EEC) No 3030/93 on common rules for imports of certain textile products from third countries
 - Proposal signed by the European Parliament on 9 June 2015. Awaiting publication in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Council Decision (EU) 2015/355 of 2 March adopting the rules of procedure of the European Development Fund Committee
 - Council Decision published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Council Decision (EU) 2015/541 of 24 March 2015 repealing Decision 2011/492/EU concerning the conclusion of consultations with the Republic of Guinea-Bissau under Article 96 of the ACP - EU Partnership Agreement
 - Council Decision published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Council Directive (EU) 2015/637 of 20 April 2015 on the coordination and cooperation measures to facilitate consular protection for unrepresented citizens of the Union in third countries and repealing Decision 95/553/EC
 - Directive published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Council Implementing Regulation (EU) 2015/240 of 9 February 2015 implementing Regulation (EU) No 269/2014 concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions

undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine

- Regulation published in the Official Journal of the EU.

- Council Implementing Regulation (EU) 2015/427 of 13 March 2015 implementing Regulation (EU) No 269/2014 concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine
 - Regulation published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Council Decision (CFSP) 2015/241 amending Decision 2014/145/CFSP of 9 February 2015 concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine
 - Council Decision published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Council Decision (CFSP) 2015/432 of 13 March 2015 amending Decision 2014/145/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine
 - Council Decision published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Council Decision (CFSP) 2015/959 of 19 June 2015 amending Decision 2014/386/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in response to the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol
 - Council Decision published in the Official Journal of the EU.

EUROPEAN COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS

- European Council conclusions, 19–20 March 2015

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS

- Council conclusions on CSDP
- Council conclusions on A New Global Partnership for Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development after 2015
- Council conclusions on Gender in Development
- Council conclusions on Annual Report 2015 to the European Council on EU Development Aid Targets
- Council conclusions on the Commission Staff Working Document “Launching the EU International Cooperation and Development Results Framework”

- European Council conclusions, 25–26 June 2015

- Council Conclusions on the European Court of Auditors' Special Report No 18/2014 on EuropeAid's evaluation and results oriented monitoring systems
- Council conclusions on the European Court of Auditors' Special Report No 16/2014 on the “Effectiveness of blending regional investment facility grants with financial institution loans to support EU external policies”
- Council conclusions on the First biennial report on Implementing EU food and nutrition security policy commitments

LIST OF LEGISLATIVE AND NON-LEGISLATIVE ACTS THE LATVIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE EU COUNCIL REACHED AGREEMENTS ON

- Council Conclusions on the European Court of Auditors Special Report No 13/2014 on "EU support for rehabilitation following the earthquake in Haiti"
- Council conclusions on Common Principles for Multi-Purpose Cash-Based Assistance to Respond to Humanitarian Needs

OTHER DOCUMENTS

- Joint Commission-Presidency paper on the final results of the consultation on challenges, trade issues and possible responses to EU access to industrial raw materials
- Outline of the counter-terrorism strategy for Syria and Iraq, with particular focus on foreign fighters
- Amendments of the 2014–2016 Action Programme of the African Peace Facility regarding additional funding allocation
- Council's recommendations regarding the discharge to be given by the European Parliament to the Commission in respect of the implementation of operations under the 8th, 9th and 10th European Development Funds for the financial year 2013
- ACP–EU Council of Ministers' recommendations on fight against trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants
- Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid Working Party (COHAFA) common messages on the Boko Haram insurgency / Nigeria
- COHAFA common messages for public communication on Syria and Iraq
- COHAFA common humanitarian messages on Syria/Iraq ahead of "Kuwait III" on March 31
- COHAFA common messages on the humanitarian situation in Sudan
- COHAFA common messages on the humanitarian crisis in Iraq
- COHAFA common messages on the humanitarian crisis in Yemen
- COHAFA common messages on the humanitarian crisis in Libya
- COHAFA common messages on the refugees/irregular migrants from Myanmar/Burma and Bangladesh
- COHAFA common messages on the situation of the Syrian refugees
- COHAFA common messages on the World Health Organisation (WHO) post-Ebola reform
- COHAFA fiche on EU humanitarian priorities for United Nations General Assembly 70 (September 2015 – September 2016)
- Statements on behalf of EU and its Member States for World Food Programme (WFP) Executive Board First Session (Rome, 9–10 February)
- Statements on behalf of EU and its Member States for World Food Programme (WFP) Executive Board Second Session (Rome, 25–29 May)

ECONOMY AND FINANCE

LEGAL ACTS, DRAFT LEGAL ACTS

- Decision (EU) 2015/601 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 April 2015 providing macro-financial assistance to Ukraine
– Decision published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Recommendation for a Council decision imposing a fine on Spain – manipulation of deficit data in the Autonomous Community of Valencia
– Agreement at the Working Party
- Regulation (EU) 2015/1017 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 June 2015 on the European Fund for Strategic Investments, the European Investment Advisory Hub and the European Investment Project Portal and amending Regulations (EU) No 1291/2013 and (EU) No 1316/2013 – the European Fund for Strategic Investments
– Regulation published in the Official Journal of the EU.

LIST OF LEGISLATIVE AND NON-LEGISLATIVE ACTS THE LATVIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE EU COUNCIL REACHED AGREEMENTS ON

- Council Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2015/623 amending Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1311/2013 laying down the multi-annual financial framework for the years 2014–2020
 - Regulation published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and the Council amending Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union
 - Agreement with the European Parliament approved by the COREPER II.
- Decision (EU) 2015/468 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2015 on the mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund in accordance with Point 13 of the Interinstitutional Agreement of 2 December 2013 between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on budgetary discipline, on cooperation in budgetary matters and on sound financial management (application EGF/2013/007 BE/Hainaut steel (Duferco-NLMK), from Belgium)
 - Decision published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Decision (EU) 2015/471 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2015 on the mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (application EGF/2014/011 BE/Caterpillar, from Belgium)
 - Decision published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Decision (EU) 2015/472 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2015 on the mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (application EGF/2014/012 BE/ArcelorMittal, from Belgium)
 - Decision published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Decision (EU) 2015/473 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2015 on the mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (application EGF/2014/014 DE/Aleo Solar, from Germany)
 - Decision published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Decision (EU) 2015/469 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2015 on the mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund in accordance with point 13 of the Interinstitutional Agreement of 2 December 2013 between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on budgetary discipline on cooperation in budgetary matters and on sound financial management (application EGF/2013/009 PL/Zachem, from Poland)
 - Decision published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Decision (EU) 2015/470 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2015 on the mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund in accordance with Point 13 of the Interinstitutional Agreement of 2 December 2013 between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on budgetary discipline, on cooperation in budgetary matters and on sound financial management (application EGF/2013/011 BE/Saint-Gobain Sekurit, from Belgium)
 - Decision published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Decision (EU) 2015/642 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 April 2015 on the mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (application EGF/2014/015 GR/Attica publishing from Greece)
 - Decision published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Decision (EU) 2015/644 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 April 2015 on the mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (application EGF/2014/018 GR/Attica broadcasting from Greece)
 - Decision published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Decision (EU) 2015/643 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 April 2015 on the mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (application EGF/2014/016 IE/Lufthansa Technik from Ireland)
 - Decision published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Decision (EU) 2015/738 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2015 on the mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (application EGF/2014/017 FR/Mory-Ducros, from France)
 - Decision published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on the mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF/2015/000 TA 2015 – Technical assistance at the initiative of the Commission)
 - Adopted by the Council
- Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on the mobilisation of the EU Solidarity Fund (Floods in Romania, Bulgaria and Italy)
 - Adopted by the Council
- Regulation (EU) 2015/751 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2015 on interchange fees for card-based payment transactions
 - The political agreement with the European Parliament approved by the COREPER II on 21 January, 2015.
 - The Regulation approved by the Council on 20 April 2015.
- Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on payment services in the internal market and amending Directives 2002/65/EC, 2013/36/EU and 2009/110/EC and repealing Directive 2007/64/EC
 - The Political Agreement with the European Parliament approved by the Council.

LIST OF LEGISLATIVE AND NON-LEGISLATIVE ACTS THE LATVIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE EU COUNCIL REACHED AGREEMENTS ON

- Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on structural measures improving the resilience of EU credit institutions
 - General Approach
- Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on reporting and transparency of securities financing transactions and amending Regulation (EU) No 648/2012
 - The Political Agreement with the European Parliament approved by the Council.
- Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2015/356 of 2 March 2015 authorising the United Kingdom to apply differentiated levels of taxation to motor fuels in certain geographical areas, in accordance with Article 19 of Directive 2003/96/EC
 - Decision published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2015/156 of 27 January 2015 extending the period of validity of Implementing Decision 2012/232/EU authorising Romania to apply measures derogating from Article 26(1)(a) and Article 168 of Directive 2006/112/EC on the common system of value added tax
 - Decision published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2015/993 of 19 June 2015 authorising Denmark to apply, in accordance with Article 19 of Directive 2003/96/EC, a reduced rate of taxation on electricity directly provided to vessels at berth in a port
 - Decision published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2015/992 of 19 June 2015 authorising Denmark to introduce a special measure derogating from Article 75 of Council Directive 2006/112/EC on the common system of value added tax
 - Decision published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Council Implementing Decision authorising Italy to introduce a special measure derogating from Articles 206 and 226 of Directive 2006/112/EC on the common system of value added tax
 - Agreement at the working party.
- Council Implementing Decision amending Decision 2009/790/EC in order to authorise Poland to extend the application of a special measure derogating from Article 287 of Directive 2006/112/EC on the common system of value added tax
 - Agreement at the working party.
- Council Directive (EU) 2015/121 of 27 January 2015 amending Directive 2011/96/EU on the common system of taxation applicable in the case of parent companies and subsidiaries of different Member States
 - Directive published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Council Decision (EU) 2015/860 of 26 May 2015 on the signing, on behalf of the European Union, of the Amending Protocol to the Agreement between the European Community and the Swiss Confederation providing for measures equivalent to those laid down in Council Directive 2003/48/EC on taxation of savings income in the form of interest payments
 - Council Decision published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Regulation (EU) 2015/759 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2015 amending Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 on European statistics
 - Regulation published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Council Regulation (EU) 2015/373 of 5 March 2015 amending Regulation (EC) No 2533/98 concerning the collection of statistical information by the European Central Bank
 - Regulation published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EC) No 184/2005 on Community statistics concerning balance of payments, international trade in services and foreign direct investment as regards conferring of delegated and implementing powers upon the Commission for the adoption of certain measures, (COM (2014) 379, 2014/0194(COD))
 - General Approach
- Proposal for a Regulation on indices used as benchmarks in financial instruments and financial contracts
 - General approach
 - Negotiations with the European Parliament and the European Commission started on 2 June 2015.
- Regulation (EU) 2015/760 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2015 on European Long-term Investment Funds
 - Approval by the Council of the EP position at 1st reading.
 - Regulation published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Draft amending budget No 1 to the general budget for 2015 accompanying the proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Fund for Strategic Investments and amending Regulations (EU) No 1291/2013 and (EU) No 1316/2013 – Council position of 26 June 2015
 - Draft amending budget published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Draft amending budget No 2 to the general budget for 2015 accompanying the Proposal for a Council Regulation amending Council Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1311/2013 of 2 December 2013 laying down the multiannual financial framework: Council position of 21 April 2015
 - Draft amending budget published in the Official Journal of the EU.

LIST OF LEGISLATIVE AND NON-LEGISLATIVE ACTS THE LATVIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE EU COUNCIL REACHED AGREEMENTS ON

- Draft amending budget No 3 to the general budget for 2015: Entering the surplus of the financial year 2014
– Draft amending budget approved by the Council.
- Draft amending budget No 4 to the general budget for 2015 accompanying the proposal to mobilise the European

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS

- Council Conclusions: The 2015 Annual Growth Survey and Joint Employment Report: Political guidance on employment and social policies
- European Semester 2015 – Annual Growth Survey: macro-economic and fiscal guidance to Member States and Alert Mechanism report

OTHER DOCUMENTS

- European Semester 2015: Council Recommendations on the National Reform Programmes (2015) to each Member State, including Macroeconomic Imbalance Procedure (MIP)
- Council Recommendations on the National Reform Programmes 2015 to each Member State, delivering Council Opinions on the updated Stability or Convergence Programmes and Council recommendation on the implementation of the broad guidelines for the economic policies of the Member States whose currency is the euro
- Broad Economic Policy Guidelines
- Council Recommendation on discharge to be given to the Commission in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2013
- Joint Statement on a payment plan 2015–2016

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

LEGAL ACTS, DRAFT LEGAL ACTS

- Proposal for a Directive on provisional legal aid for suspects or accused persons deprived of liberty and legal aid in European arrest warrant proceedings
– General Approach
- Proposal for a Council regulation on the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (Eurojust)
– General Approach
- Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the protection of individuals with regard to

Union Solidarity Fund for Romania, Bulgaria and Italy
– Draft amending budget approved by the Council.

- Draft amending budget No 5 to the general budget for 2015: Responding to migratory pressures
– Draft amending budget approved by the Council.

- Council conclusions on budget guidelines for 2016
- In-depth reviews 2015 ECOFIN Council conclusions
- Council conclusions on the sustainability of public finances in light of ageing populations

- EU Terms of Reference for the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors meeting in Istanbul on 9–10 February
- ECOFIN Report to the European Council on Tax issues
- Report by Finance Ministers in the framework of the Euro Plus Pact
- Guidance on Hybrid Permanent Establishment Mismatches Concerning Two Member States
- EU – BEPS Presidency roadmap
- Joint Conclusions of the Ministerial Dialogue between the Economics and Finance Ministers of the EU and the Western Balkans and Turkey
- Export Credit support for Smart Grids
– Agreement (*ad referendum*)

the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data (General Data Protection Regulation)
– General Approach

- Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on promoting the free movement of citizens and businesses by simplifying the acceptance of certain public documents in the European Union
– General Approach

LIST OF LEGISLATIVE AND NON-LEGISLATIVE ACTS THE LATVIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE EU COUNCIL REACHED AGREEMENTS ON

- Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing Small Claims Procedure and creating a European order for payment procedure
 - Agreement with the European Parliament approved by the Council.
- Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (Cepol), repealing and replacing the Council Decision 2005/681/JHA
 - Agreement with the European Parliament approved by the Council.
- Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) 604/2013 as regards determining the Member State responsible for examining the application for international protection of unaccompanied minors with no family member, sibling or relative legally present in a Member State
 - On 15 February 2015 COREPER II approved mandate in order to start negotiations with the European Parliament.
- Council Decision (EU) 2015/438 of 2 March 2015 establishing the position to be taken on behalf of the European Union within the Joint Committee set up under the Agreement between the European Union and Ukraine on the facilitation of the issuance of visas, with regard to the adoption of common guidelines for the implementation of the Agreement
 - Council Decision published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Council Decision (EU) 2015/785 of 20 April 2015 on the signing, on behalf of the European Union, and provisional application of the Agreement between the European Union and the United Arab Emirates on the short-stay visa waiver
 - Council Decision published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Proposal for a Council Decision on the signing, on behalf of the European Union, and provisional application of the Agreement between the European Union and the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste on the short-stay visa waiver
 - Adopted by the COREPER II
- Proposal for a Council Decision on the signing, on behalf of the European Union, and provisional application of the Agreement between the European Union and the Commonwealth of Dominica on the short-stay visa waiver
 - Adopted by the Council
- Proposal for a Council Decision on the signing, on behalf of the European Union, and provisional application of the Agreement between the European Union and Grenada on the short-stay visa waiver
 - Adopted by the Council
- Proposal for a Council Decision on the signing, on behalf of the European Union, and provisional application of the Agreement between the European Union and the Independent State of Samoa on the short-stay visa waiver
 - Adopted by the Council
- Proposal for a Council Decision on the signing, on behalf of the European Union, and provisional application of the Agreement between the European Union and Saint Lucia on the short-stay visa waiver
 - Adopted by the Council
- Proposal for a Council Decision on the signing, on behalf of the European Union, and provisional application of the Agreement between the European Union and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines on the short-stay visa waiver
 - Adopted by the Council
- Proposal for a Council Decision on the signing, on behalf of the European Union, and provisional application of the Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the short-stay visa waiver
 - Adopted by the Council
- Proposal for a Council Decision on the signing, on behalf of the European Union, and provisional application of the Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Vanuatu on the short-stay visa waiver
 - Adopted by the Council
- Proposal for Council Decision authorizing the opening of negotiations on short-stay visa waiver agreements between the European Union and Colombia and Peru
 - Adopted by the Council
- Proposal for a Council Decision to authorise the opening of negotiations for an agreement between the EU and Mexico for the transfer and use of Passenger Name Record (PNR) data to prevent and combat terrorism and other serious transnational crime
 - Adopted by the Council

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS

- Council conclusions on the Renewed European Union Internal Security Strategy 2015–2020
- Council conclusions on disability inclusive disaster management
- Council conclusions concerning the introduction of a mandatory standardised marking of construction machinery and agricultural and forestry vehicles in order to better protect them against theft

LIST OF LEGISLATIVE AND NON-LEGISLATIVE ACTS THE LATVIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE EU COUNCIL REACHED AGREEMENTS ON

- Council conclusions on fight against impunity for the crime of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes within the European Union and its Member States

OTHER DOCUMENTS

- Riga Joint Statement following the informal meeting of Justice and Home Affairs Ministers in Riga on 29 and 30 January
- Riga Joint Statement on enhancing transatlantic cooperation in the area of Justice, Freedom and Security
- Joint Declaration on a Mobility Partnership between the Republic of Belarus and the European Union and its participating Member States
- An Agreement between the European Union and Belarus on the facilitation of the issuance of short-stay visas
 - Amendments to the Commission's negotiating guidelines approved by the COREPER II on 25 February 2015.
- Roadmap on the follow-up to the European Council conclusions
- Second meeting of the EU-China Migration and Mobility Dialogue (Beijing, 9 April 2015)
 - Terms of reference agreed on 1 April COREPER II.
- Council Recommendations on cross-border videoconferencing
- Implementation of the Multiannual European e-Justice Action Plan 2014–2018
 - Expert group on e-CODEX related issues
- Report on access to law

EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL POLICY, HEALTH AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS

LEGAL ACTS, DRAFT LEGAL ACTS

- Council Decision (EU) 2015/772 of 11 May 2015 establishing the Employment Committee and repealing Decision 2000/98/EC
 - Council Decision published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Council Decision (EU) 2015/773 of 11 May 2015 establishing the Social Protection Committee and repealing Decision 2004/689/EC
 - Council Decision published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Proposal for a Council Decision authorising Member States to ratify, in the interest of the European Union, the Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930, of the International Labour Organisation with regard to matters related to social policy
 - Agreement in the Council
- Proposal for a Council Decision authorising Member States to ratify, in the interest of the European Union, the Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930, of the International Labour Organisation with regard to matters related to judicial cooperation in criminal matters
 - Agreement in the Council
- Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on seafarers amending Directives 2008/94/EC, 2009/38/EC, 2002/14/EC, 98/59/EC and 2001/23/EC
 - Agreement with the European Parliament
- Proposal for a Council Decision on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States
 - General Approach
- Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on in vitro diagnostic medical devices
 - Partial General Approach
- Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on medical devices, and amending Directive 2001/83/EC, Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 and Regulation (EC) No 1223/2009
 - Partial General Approach
- Proposal for a Council Directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation
 - Progress report

LIST OF LEGISLATIVE AND NON-LEGISLATIVE ACTS THE LATVIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE EU COUNCIL REACHED AGREEMENTS ON

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS

- Council conclusions on Annual Growth Survey and the Joint Employment Report in the context of the European Semester: political guidance on employment and social policies
- Council conclusions on Moving towards more inclusive labour markets
- Council conclusions on EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014–2020: Adapting to new challenge
- Council conclusions on European Court of Auditors' Special Report No 3/2015 "EU Youth Guarantee: first steps taken but implementation risk ahead"
- Council conclusions on equal income opportunities for women and men: Closing the gender gap in pensions
- Presidency Conclusions "From inclusive education to inclusive employment for people with disabilities"

OTHER DOCUMENTS

- EPSCO report on European Semester 2015
- Joint Riga Declaration on tuberculosis and its multi-drug resistance

COMPETITIVENESS

LEGAL ACTS, DRAFT LEGAL ACTS

- Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EC) No 515/97 of 13 March 1997 on mutual assistance between the administrative authorities of the Member States and cooperation between the latter and the Commission to ensure the correct application of the law on customs and agricultural matters
 - Adoption of Council's position at 1st reading.
- Council Regulation (EU) 2015/802 of 19 May 2015 suspending the autonomous Common Customs Tariff duties on certain heavy oils and similar products
 - Regulation published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Council Decision (EU) 2015/836 of 11 May 2015 on the position to be taken on behalf of the European Union concerning the adoption of a Decision by the EU-EFTA Joint Committee on common transit and a Decision by the EU-EFTA Joint Committee on simplification of formalities in trade in goods as regards invitations to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to accede to the Convention on a common transit procedure and the Convention on simplification of formalities in trade in goods
 - Council Decision published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Proposal for a Council Decision on the position to be taken by the European Union in the EU-EFTA Joint Committee on common transit as regards the adoption of a Decision amending the Convention on a common transit procedure
 - Adopted in the Council
- Proposal for a Council Regulation amending regulation (EU) No 1387/2013 suspending the autonomous Common Customs Tariff duties on certain agricultural and industrial products
 - Adopted in the Council
- Proposal for a Council Regulation amending Regulation (EU) No 1388/2013 opening and providing for the management of autonomous tariff quotas of the Union for certain agricultural and industrial products
 - Adopted in the Council
- Request to the Commission in accordance with Article 241 TFEU – Council Decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the European Union, of the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons who are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled
 - Adopted in the Council
- Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council to approximate the laws of the Member States relating to trade marks (Recast) and Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Council Regulation (EC) No 207/2009 on the Community trade mark (called as "Trade Mark package")
 - Political Agreement was adopted at COREPER I meeting on 24 June 2015; it is planned to adopt Political Agreement at AGRIFISH Council on 13 July 2015.

LIST OF LEGISLATIVE AND NON-LEGISLATIVE ACTS THE LATVIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE EU COUNCIL REACHED AGREEMENTS ON

- Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 2007/36/EC as regards the encouragement of long-term shareholder engagement and Directive 2013/34/EU as regards certain elements of the corporate governance statement
– General Approach
- Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on single-member private limited liability companies
– General Approach
- Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on requirements relating to emission limits and type-approval for internal combustion engines for non-road mobile machinery COM/2014/0581
– General Approach
- Regulation (EU) 2015/758 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2015 concerning type-approval requirements for the deployment of the eCall in-vehicle system based on the 112 service and amending Directive 2007/46/EC
– Regulation published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on package travel and linked travel arrangements, amending Regulation (EC) No 2006/2004, Directive 2011/83/EU and repealing Council Directive 90/314/EEC
– Political Agreement

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS

- Council conclusions on Single Market policy
- Council conclusions on open, data-intensive and networked research as a driver for faster and wider innovation
- Council conclusions on the European Research Area Roadmap 2015–2020
- Council conclusions on the review of the European Research Area advisory structure
- Council Conclusions on the digital transformation of European Industry

OTHER DOCUMENTS

- Work Programme of the High Level Working Group on Competitiveness and Growth
– Approved in COREPER I meeting on 20 February 2015.
- High Level Working Group on Competitiveness and Growth Chair letter – Energy and Climate package: industrial competitiveness aspects
- Stock-taking of December 2013 Competitiveness Council Conclusions by the High Level Working Group on Competitiveness and Growth

TRANSPORT, TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND ENERGY

LEGAL ACTS, DRAFT LEGAL ACTS

- Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a programme on interoperability solutions for European public administrations, businesses and citizens (ISA2) Interoperability as a means for modernising the public sector
– General Approach
- Regulation (EU) 2015/757 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2015 on the monitoring, reporting and verification of carbon dioxide emissions from maritime transport, and amending Directive 2009/16/EC
– Published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Directive (EU) 2015/413 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2015 facilitating cross-border exchange of informations on road-safety-related traffic offences
– Directive published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Directive (EU) 2015/719 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2015 amending Council Directive 96/53/EC laying down for certain road vehicles circulating within the Community the maximum authorised dimensions in national and international traffic and the maximum authorised weights in international traffic
– Directive published in the Official Journal of the EU.

LIST OF LEGISLATIVE AND NON-LEGISLATIVE ACTS THE LATVIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE EU COUNCIL REACHED AGREEMENTS ON

- Council Decision (EU) 2015/214 of 10 February 2015 endorsing the Shift2Rail Master Plan
 - Council Decision published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down measures concerning the European single market for electronic communications and to achieve a Connected Continent, and amending Directives 2002/20/EC, 2002/21/EC and 2002/22/EC and Regulations (EC) No 1211/2009 and (EU) No 531/2012
 - Provisional agreement with the European Parliament. The approval of the agreement is planned at the Luxembourgish Presidency.
- Fourth Railway Package: Market pillar
 - Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 2012/34 establishing a Single European Railway Area, as regards the opening of the market for domestic passenger transport services by rail and the governance of the railway infrastructure and
 - Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EC) No 1370/2007 concerning the opening of the market for domestic passenger transport services by rail
 - Progress report
- 4th Railway Package – Technical pillar:
 - Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Union Agency for Railways and repealing Regulation (EC) No 881/2004
 - Agreement with the European Parliament. Agreement approved by the COREPER I 30 June 2015.
 - Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the interoperability of the rail system within the European Union (Recast)
 - Agreement with the European Parliament. Agreement approved by the COREPER I 30 June 2015.
 - Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on railway safety (Recast)
 - Agreement with the European Parliament. Agreement approved by the COREPER I 30 June 2015.
- Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EC) No 261/2004 establishing common rules on compensation and assistance to passengers in the event of denied boarding and of cancellation or long delay of flights and Regulation (EC) No 2027/97 on air carrier liability in respect of the carriage of passengers and their baggage by air
 - Progress report
- Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down technical requirements for inland waterway vessels and repealing Directive 2006/87/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council
 - General Approach
- Council Decision (EU) 2015/991 of 19 June 2015 establishing the position to be adopted on behalf of the European Union in the relevant Committees of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe as regards the proposals for amendments to UN Regulations Nos 14, 17, 28, 29, 41, 49, 51, 54, 59, 80, 83, 95, 97, 100, 101, 107, 109, 116, 117, 134, and 135, on a new UN Regulation on electric vehicles of category L and on amendments to the Consolidated Resolution on the Construction of Vehicles (R.E.3)
 - Council Decision published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Council Decision (EU) 2015/397 of 5 March 2015 establishing the position to be adopted on the Union's behalf in the relevant Committees of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe as regards the proposals for amendments to UN Regulations Nos 7, 13, 23, 37, 38, 41, 43, 45, 51, 55, 59, 75, 78, 98, 99, 106, 107, 110, 112, 113, 117, 119, 123, 128, 129, on Amendment 2 to UN GTR No 3 with regard to motorcycle braking, on Amendment 3 to UN GTR No. 4 with regard to the Worldwide Heavy-Duty Certification procedure
 - Council Decision published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 98/70/EC relating to the quality of petrol and diesel fuels and amending Directive 2009/28/EC on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources
 - Agreement with the European Parliament. The approval of the Council is expected at the beginning of the Luxembourg Presidency.

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS

- Council conclusions on the transfer of the stewardship of the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA) functions to the multi-stakeholder community
- Council conclusions on the implementation of the Energy Union: empowering consumers and attracting investments in the energy sector
- Council conclusions on the European Court of Auditors Special Report No 1/2015

LIST OF LEGISLATIVE AND NON-LEGISLATIVE ACTS THE LATVIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE EU COUNCIL REACHED AGREEMENTS ON

OTHER DOCUMENTS

- Riga Declaration on remotely piloted aircraft (drones) "Framing the future of aviation", Riga, 6 March 2015
- Declaration of the 3rd ASEM Transport Ministers' Meeting (ASEM TMM3) on the Development of Euro-Asia Multi-modal Transport Connectivity
- UNECE: Improvement in the Implementation of the 1998 Global Agreement
- Lines to take to guide the EU and its Member States in the preparatory process of the World Summit on the Information Society +10 (WSIS+10) Review Process
- Presidency non-paper on the initial discussion on the establishment of the European Energy Union
- Presidency report on the outcome of the discussion among EU Member States and the Commission on the Future of the Energy Community
 1. Presidency summary of political discussion of the EU Energy Ministers on the EU Heating and Cooling Strategy
 2. Presidency policy guidance note on Regional Cooperation in the area of energy.
 3. Presidency recommendations to the Commission for consideration as they prepare their proposals for EU energy and climate, and nature and biodiversity policy tools.
- The representatives of signatories in The Hague on 20–21 May 2015 adopted the International Energy Charter as an update of the European Energy Charter
- Presidency letter to the European Commission on summary of political discussions of the EU Energy Ministers concerning LNG and underground gas storages
- Signing of reinforced Memorandum of Understanding on Baltic Energy Market Interconnection Plan BEMIP (exception Denmark, which is to sign the Memorandum after elections on 17 June 2015)

AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES

LEGAL ACTS, DRAFT LEGAL ACTS

- Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on fixing the adjustment rate provided for in Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013 for direct payments in respect of calendar year 2015
 - Agreement with European Parliament
- Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on transmissible animal diseases ("Animal Health Law")
 - Agreement with European Parliament
- Proposal for a Regulation of the Parliament and of the Council on protective measures against pests of plants
 - General Approach
- Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on organic production and labelling of organic products, amending Regulation (EU) No XXX/XXX of the European Parliament and of the Council [Official controls Regulation] and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007
 - General Approach
- Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to caseins and caseinates intended for human consumption and repealing Council Directive 83/417/EEC
 - Agreement with the European Parliament
- Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council repealing Council Directive 93/5/EEC of 25 February 1993 on assistance to the Commission and cooperation by the Member States in the scientific examination of questions relating to food.
 - Agreement with the European Parliament
- Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on novel foods
 - Agreement with the European Parliament
- Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) No 1343/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on certain provisions for fishing in the GFCM (General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean) Agreement area
 - Agreement with the European Parliament

LIST OF LEGISLATIVE AND NON-LEGISLATIVE ACTS THE LATVIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE EU COUNCIL REACHED AGREEMENTS ON

- Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) No 1236/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down a scheme of control and enforcement applicable in the area covered by the Convention on future multilateral cooperation in the North-East Atlantic fisheries
– General Approach
- Proposal for a multiannual plan for the stocks of cod, herring and sprat in the Baltic Sea and the fisheries exploiting those stocks, amending Council Regulation (EC) No 2187/2005 and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1098/2007
– General Approach
- Council Regulation (EU) 2015/960 of 19 June 2015 amending Regulation (EU) 2015/104 as regards certain fishing opportunities
– Regulation published in the EU Official Journal of the EU.
- Council Regulation (EU) 2015/523 of 25 March 2015 amending Regulations (EU) No 43/2014 and (EU) 2015/104 as regards certain fishing opportunities
– Regulation published in the EU Official Journal of the EU.
- Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Council Regulations (EC) No 850/98, (EC) No 2187/2005, (EC) No 1967/2006, (EC) No 1098/2007, (EC) No 254/2002, (EC) No 2347/2002 and (EC) No 1224/2009 and repealing (EC) No 1434/98 as regards the landing obligation
– Agreement with the European Parliament
- Proposal for a Council Decision establishing the position to be taken on behalf of the European Union within the International Sugar Council as regards the extension of the International Sugar Agreement 1992
– Adopted by the Council
- Proposal for a Council Decision establishing the position to be taken on behalf of the European Union within the International Grains Council with respect to the extension of the Grains Trade Convention 1995
– Adopted by the Council
- Proposal for a Council Decision establishing the position to be adopted on behalf of the European Union with regard to certain resolutions to be voted in the framework of the International Organisation for Vine and Wine (OIV)
– Adopted by the Council

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS

- Council conclusions on CAP simplification
- Council conclusions on Special Report No 22/2014 from the European Court of Auditors entitled: "Achieving economy: keeping the costs of EU-financed rural development project grants under control"
- Council conclusions on Special Report No 23/2014 from the European Court of Auditors entitled "Errors in rural development spending: what are the causes, and how are they being addressed?"
- Council conclusions on Special Report No 24/2014 from the European Court of Auditors entitled: "Is EU support for preventing and restoring damage to forests caused by fire and natural disasters well managed?"
- Council conclusions on Eleventh session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF 11)

OTHER DOCUMENTS

- Updated EU Guidelines for the G20 agriculture ministerial meeting of 7–8 May 2015
- 15 Council mandates for participation in meetings of international Commodities organisations: ICCO (2), ICO (1), IGC (2), IOC (2), ISO (1), ITTO (2), IRSG (1), NFMSG (1), ICAC (3)
- EU mandate for negotiations in Joint Committee with the Kingdom of Norway (Agreement on management of the Atlanto-Scandian herring and blue whiting stock and total allowable catch)
- 18 Council mandates for participation in meetings international organisations' meetings: GFCM (6); ICCAT (1); CCSBT (1); SPRFMO (1); AIDCP(1); SIOFA(1); NEAFC (1); costal states (5)
- 5 Council mandates for negotiations in Joint Committees (individually) with third countries: Kiribati (1), Liberia, São Tomé and Príncipe (1), Greenland (1)
- 7 Council mandates for negotiations in Joint Committees with third countries (individually): Mauritius, Comoro islands, Seychelles Islands, Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Senegal

LIST OF LEGISLATIVE AND NON-LEGISLATIVE ACTS THE LATVIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE EU COUNCIL REACHED AGREEMENTS ON

ENVIRONMENT

LEGAL ACTS, DRAFT LEGAL ACTS

- Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the establishment and operation of a market stability reserve for the Union greenhouse gas emission trading scheme and amending Directive 2003/87/EC
– 1st reading agreement with European Parliament
- Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EC) No 1007/2009 on trade in seal products and repealing Commission Regulation (EU) No 737/2010
– Agreement with European Parliament. The agreement is approved in COREPER I on 30 June 2015.
- Proposal for a Council Decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the European Union, of the Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the joint fulfilment of commitments thereunder
– Agreement with European Parliament approved by the Council.
– It is expected that Council Decision will be published in the Official Journal of the EU in July 2015.
- Proposal for a Council Decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the European Union, of the agreement between the European Union and its Member States and Iceland concerning Iceland's participation in the joint fulfilment of commitments of the European Union, its Member States and Iceland in the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
– Agreement with Iceland was signed on 1 April 2015.
– Agreement with European Parliament approved by the Council.
– It is expected that Council Decision will be published in the Official Journal of the EU in July 2015.
- Council Decision (EU) 2015/146 of 26 January 2015 on the signing, on behalf of the European Union, of the agreement between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and Iceland, of the other part, concerning Iceland's participation in the joint fulfilment of commitments of the European Union, its Member States and Iceland for the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
– Council Decision published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Council Decision (EU) 2015/798 of 11 May 2015 authorising the European Commission to negotiate, on behalf of the European Union, amendments to the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer
– Council Decision published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Proposal for Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the limitation of emissions of certain pollutants into the air from medium combustion plants
– Agreement with European Parliament. The agreement approved on 30 June 2015.
- Council Decision (EU) 2015/423 of 6 March 2015 establishing the position to be adopted on behalf of the European Union within the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Rotterdam Convention as regards the amendments of Annex III to the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for certain hazardous chemicals and pesticides in international trade
– Published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Council Decision (EU) 2015/633 of 20 April 2015 on the submission, on behalf of the European Union, of a proposal for the listing of additional chemicals in Annex A to the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants
– Council Decision published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Council Decision (EU) 2015/627 of 20 April 2015 on the position to be taken, on behalf of the European Union, at the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants as regards the proposals for amendments to Annexes A, B and C
– Council Decision published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Directive (EU) 2015/720 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2015 amending Directive 94/62/EC as regards reducing the consumption of lightweight plastic carrier bags
– Directive published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Council Decision (EU) 2015/451 of 6 March 2015 concerning the accession of the European Union to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)
– Council Decision published in the Official Journal of the EU.
- Directive (EU) 2015/412 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2015 amending Directive 2001/18/EC as regards the possibility for the Member States to restrict or prohibit the cultivation of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in their territory
– Directive published in the Official Journal of the EU.

LIST OF LEGISLATIVE AND NON-LEGISLATIVE ACTS THE LATVIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE EU COUNCIL REACHED AGREEMENTS ON

OTHER DOCUMENTS

- EU's submission on the EU's Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC) regarding emission reductions of the EU and its Member States to the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

EDUCATION, YOUTH, CULTURE AND SPORT

LEGAL ACTS, DRAFT LEGAL ACTS

- Council Decision (EU) 2015/809 of 19 May 2015 designating the European Capitals of Culture for the year 2019 in Bulgaria and Italy
– Council Decision published in the Official Journal of the EU.

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS

- Council conclusions on cultural and creative crossovers to stimulate innovation, economic sustainability and social inclusion
- Taking stock of the Council conclusions on 26 November 2012 on cultural governance
- Council conclusions on the role of early childhood education and primary education in fostering creativity, innovation and digital competence
- Council conclusions on reinforcing youth work to ensure cohesive societies
- Council conclusions on enhancing cross-sectorial policy cooperation to effectively address the socio-economic challenges facing young people
- Council conclusions on maximising the role of grassroots sport in developing transversal skills, especially among young people

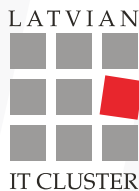
OTHER DOCUMENTS

- EU Ministers for Culture Joint Statement on freedom of expression
- Declaration on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education
- Riga Conclusions 2015 on a new set of medium-term deliverables in the field of VET for the period 2015–2020, as a result of the review of short-term deliverables defined in the 2010 Bruges Communiqué
- Joint Communiqué of the meeting of Ministers responsible for the higher education and vocational education and training of the European Union and Central Asian countries (including the Roadmap for 2015–2018)
- Conclusions by the Chair of the 5th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting "ASEM Education Collaboration for Results"

PRESIDENCY SUPPORTED BY:



airBaltic



LIKTA
Latvijas Informācijas
un komunikācijas
tehnoloģijas asociācija



kārumš



Latvenergo



SAMSUNG



RĀMKALNI



infogr.am



SIA "LDZ CARGO"
VAS "Latvijas dzelzceļš"
International Road Union
Embassy of Armenia in Latvia
Embassy of Belarus in Latvia
Embassy of Georgia in Latvia
Embassy of Moldova in Latvia