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EU LEADERS LAUNCH DISCUSSIONS ON NEXT EU STRATEGIC AGENDA IN SIBIU

This week EU leaders gathered in Sibiu, Romania to celebrate the 69th anniversary of the Schuman Declaration. The informal European Council summit served as a basis for launching discussions concerning the EU's strategic agenda 2019-2024. Leaders talked both about internal affairs as well as global challenges, reiterating the role of the EU in providing stability, prosperity and security to its citizens. No concrete decisions were taken, except a high-level Declaration that outlines ten commitments in the areas of growth, social convergence, the single market and internal security, among others. The European Council is set to adopt the next EU strategic agenda on 20-21 June.

ECONOMIC GROWTH TO DROP IN 2019 DUE TO TRADE TENSIONS AND BREXIT

The Commission published its Spring economic forecasts, outlining the current and future economic outlook for the euro area and the EU. Overall, the Commission expects a growth slowdown this year, before rebounding in 2020. In addition, debt-to-GDP ratios and budget balances are forecast to fall in most Member States, whilst headline inflation will likely remain moderately low. The Commission warns that several downside risks persist, including further protectionist measures in US trade policy, the possible implications of China's economic slowdown and the unexpected developments of the Brexit process. On 5 June, the Commission will present its country-specific recommendations in the context of the European Semester.

COMMISSION MAKES PROPOSAL TO WTO ON INTERNATIONAL E-COMMERCE RULES

The Commission stepped up its ambition to establish international rules on e-commerce by publishing its proposal for the new framework. This followed the launch of negotiations between the EU and 75 World Trade Organisation (WTO) members earlier this year. The initiative aims to create a multilateral legal framework that consumers and businesses could rely on to make it easier and safer to buy, sell and do business online. The rules would also aim to ensure the validity of e-contracts and e-signatures, as well as combatting spam and removing cross-border sales barriers and customs duties on electronic transmissions. The proposal will be discussed in the WTO on 13-15 May.

CO2 EMISSIONS IN THE EU DECREASED COMPARED TO LAST YEAR

The European Statistical Office (ESO) estimates that CO2 emissions from fossil fuel combustion decreased by 2.5% in the EU in 2018, compared to the previous year. The highest decrease was recorded in Portugal (-9.0%), followed by Bulgaria (-8.1%) and Ireland (-6.8%). Several Member States recorded an increase, however, with Latvia (+8.5%), Malta (+6.7%) and Estonia (+4.5%) at the top of the list. CO2 emissions are a major contributor to global warming and account for around 80% of all EU greenhouse gas emissions, the ESO warns. They are influenced by factors such as climate conditions, economic growth, population size, transport and industrial activities.

FIRST TRADE DEFENCE MEASURES BASED ON NEW METHODOLOGY PUBLISHED

The Commission released its first anti-dumping and anti-subsidy measures, which are based on the new anti-dumping methodology for imports from countries with significant market distortions. The measures are part of the Commission's action to support the European steel industry when confronted

with unfair trade, in line with a strategy adopted in 2016 to handle consequences of the global overcapacity crisis. The duties range from 13.7% to 58.3%. Overall, 52 EU anti-dumping and anti-subsidy measures are currently in place. The measures on Chinese imports put in place initially in 2013 will now be extended for another 5-year period.

COMING UP NEXT WEEK

- **13 May: Eastern Partnership Foreign Ministers meeting.** On the agenda: implementation of the agenda of "20 deliverables for 2020".
- **13 May: Foreign Affairs Council.** On the agenda: Venezuela, Libya, Sahel.
- **14 May: Agriculture and Fisheries Council.** On the agenda: Future of CAP post-2020, Clean planet for all strategy, European Maritime and Fisheries Fund.
- **14 May: Foreign Affairs Council (Defence).** On the agenda: Sahel, PESCO, EU-NATO cooperation, EDA steering board meeting.
- **16 May: Eurogroup.** On the agenda: Deepening of EMU, Spain post-surveillance programme.
- **16 May: Foreign Affairs Council (Development).** On the agenda: 2030 agenda, youth and development, Sahel, future financial architecture for development.
- **17 May: Economic and Financial Affairs Council.** On the agenda: International topics, excise duties, EMU, European Semester.
- **17 May: EU-Tunisia Association Council.**

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