

Agenda of the European Commission

17 – 23 March 2014

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

Wednesday 19 March:

- Macro Financial Assistance for Ukraine
- A smarter EU visa policy for growth

Wednesday 19 March:

Macro Financial Assistance for Ukraine

The news:

The Commission will propose macro financial assistance of an additional €1 billion for Ukraine, as announced by President Barroso in the European Parliament plenary session on 12 March (see SPEECH/14/212).

This will bring the total macro financial assistance to €1.6 billion and demonstrates concretely the Commission's solidarity to help Ukraine.

The background:

On 5 March 2014 the European Commission agreed on a package of support identifying a number of concrete measures to assist economically and financially Ukraine (see IP/14/219). These measures should be seen as the Commission's contribution to a European and international effort to support Ukraine's economic and political reforms.

The event:

- Details to be announced on press set-up. Press materials will be available on the day.
- Available on EbS

The contacts:

Simon O'Connor	+ 32 2 296 7359	simon.o'connor@ec.europa.eu
Vandna Kalia	+ 32 2 299 5824	vandna.kalia@ec.europa.eu
Audrey Augier	+ 32 2 297 1607	audrey.augier@ec.europa.eu

Wednesday 19 March:

A smarter EU visa policy for growth

The news:

Despite efforts in recent years, the amount of red tape and practical difficulties facing those who apply for an EU Schengen visa are substantial. Difficulties include long waiting times in some areas of the world, and complex requirements for supporting documents. On 19 March, the European Commission is putting forward a visa package introducing facilitations in the processing of Schengen visas: (1) Clearer and shorter deadlines and easier lodging of visa applications; (2) Easier issuing of multiple-entry visas; (3) A new type of visa allowing those who intend to travel around Europe to stay longer than 90 days in the Schengen area.

The proposed changes address the main problems faced by all categories of visa applicants, and ensure a better distinction between first-time travellers and well known travellers.

The background:

Since the entry into force of the Visa Code in 2010, it has facilitated legitimate travel and tackled irregular migration, by improving consular organisation and cooperation, strengthening procedural guarantees, and reinforcing equal treatment of visa applicants. However, more should be done to address the challenges faced by visa applicants and Member States' consulates.

In addition, a 2012 Commission Communication highlighted the need for the common visa policy to also address potential for generating economic growth.

A 2013 study on the economic impact of short stay visa facilitations on the tourism industry gives an idea of the economic benefit. The findings show that, by introducing various procedural facilitations, an increase in trips to the Schengen area of between 30 and 60 % could be expected.

The event:

- IP and MEMO will be available on the day;
- Press conference with Vice-President Tajani and Commissioner Malmström;
- There will be a technical briefing with experts from DG HOME.
- Available on EbS

The sources:

- Homepage of Cecilia Malmström, Commissioner for Home Affairs
http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/malmstrom/welcome/default_en.htm
- Homepage DG Home Affairs: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/index_en.htm

The contacts:

Michele Cercone:	+32 229-80963	Michele.Cercone@ec.europa.eu
Tove Ernst:	+32 229-86764	Tove.Ernst@ec.europa.eu