

# **Agenda of the European Commission**

## ***23 February – 1 March 2015***

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

### **Tuesday 24 February**

How digital is your country? Find out in the new EU Digital Index

### **Wednesday 25 February:**

Commission presents Energy Union Strategy

### **Thursday 26 February:**

The Commission adopts its monthly infringements package

### **Friday 27 February:**

The Commission presents the winter economic package

Tuesday 24 February

## *How digital is your country? Find out in the new EU Digital Index*

### **The news:**

How many citizens go online to watch videos online or use public services? How many smaller businesses sell over the internet? How many homes have high-speed broadband? The answers to these questions – and 30 more – are found in the new EU Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI).

The Index looks at areas including connectivity (how widespread, how fast and how affordable broadband is), internet skills, the use of online activities from news to shopping, how integrated different digital technologies are (e-invoices, cloud services, e-commerce, etc), and at digital public services such as e-government and e-health. It looks country-by-country – and at Europe as a whole.

### **The background:**

The Index compiles new data and uses a weighting system to rank each country based on digital performance.

This information is particularly relevant as the European Commission prepares its [Digital Single Market](#) strategy, due in May — so that the EU's single market freedoms can "go digital".

The objective is to make the most out of the great opportunities offered by digital technology, which knows no borders. Citizens should be able to access services, music, movies and sports events on their electronic devices wherever they are in Europe. Companies should be able to develop their activities in the EU, with the same data protection and consumer rules wherever their server is based. By creating a Digital Single Market, Europe can generate up to €250 billion in additional growth, and hundreds of thousands of new jobs, in the next five years.

### **The event:**

The Index will be presented and discussed at the [Digital4EU](#) forum in Brussels on 24 February. Both [Vice-President Ansip \(@Ansip\\_EU\)](#) and [Günther H. Oettinger \(@GOettingerEU\)](#) will take part. Live coverage will be provided via web-streaming.

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**Wednesday 25 February:**

***Commission presents Energy Union Strategy***

**The news:**

The European Commission will adopt a Framework Strategy for a Resilient Energy Union with a Forward-Looking Climate Change Policy. The Energy Union is one of the key priorities of the new Commission as laid down by President Juncker in his political guidelines.

The Energy Union Strategy will go hand in hand with a Climate Communication "Road to Paris" and a Communication reporting on the electricity interconnection target of 10%.

**The background:**

Much has been done in the field of energy over the last years. The EU has started to build the most integrated, competitive and sustainable Internal Energy Market in the world. Still the current energy policies are unsustainable in every sense of the term and don't deliver all benefits that citizens and companies can expect.

Some few examples:

- › The fact that most of the EU's energy comes from outside the EU, notably from a few countries which use their energy supply as a political bargain puts the EU at constant risk for disruptions. Energy systems in Europe are fragmented into 28 national silos and some parts of the EU are still insufficiently integrated in the energy system.
- › EU companies are facing gas prices which are no less than three times higher than those enjoyed by their American counterparts. This is a huge burden for industry and EU's economy overall.
- › And when it comes to low-carbon technology: among the top 10 solar energy companies, none is European. Still too much energy is wasted, and the EU has not yet built the low-carbon economy and society.

**The event:**

- Wednesday 25 February: Press conference with Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič and EU-Commissioner Miguel Arias Cañete (details to follow).
- Press release and MEMOs available on the day.

**The sources:**

More information about the Commission's priorities:

[http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/energy-union/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/energy-union/index_en.htm)

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**Thursday 26 February:**

***The Commission adopts its monthly infringements package***

**The news:**

On Thursday 26 February, the European Commission will adopt its monthly infringements package. These decisions cover all Member States and most of EU policies and seek to enforce EU law across Europe in the interest of both citizens and businesses.

**The background:**

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

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

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

**The event:**

A comprehensive fact sheet on all referrals and reasoned opinions, specific press releases on each referral and a fact sheet on the procedure will be available on the day in the Press Release Database: <http://europa.eu/rapid/>

**The sources:**

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

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**Friday 27 February:**

***The Commission presents the winter economic package***

**The news:**

On 27 February, the Commission will present the winter economic package, the next milestone in the streamlined European Semester cycle. It follows the adoption of the Annual Growth Survey last November and sets out the analytical basis for the adoption of country-specific recommendations (CSRs) in May.

The package will include:

- 28 country reports and one euro area report (staff working documents) analysing the economic policies of all Member States and the euro area as a whole. This includes in-depth analyses of macroeconomic imbalances for 16 countries, as identified by the Commission last November.
- Possible further steps under the Macroeconomic Imbalances Procedure (MIP) and the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP) for some Member States.
- A chapeau Communication summarising the main findings and possible legal decisions.

It is the first time the Commission presents the winter economic package in this format and publishes country reports so early in the Semester cycle. The reports are no longer presented together with the country-specific recommendations in the spring, but three months earlier to allow more time for discussions with stakeholders and more ownership by Member States.

**The background:**

This economic package builds on the new "virtuous triangle" for jobs and growth that the Commission presented in its 2015 Annual Growth Survey: fiscal responsibility, structural reforms and investment. It is also aligned with the priorities of the Investment Plan for Europe, which calls for mobilising finance for investment, making financing reach the real economy and improving the investment environment. Finally, possible steps under the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP) will take into account the guidance of the Commission from 13 January 2015 on "making the best use of the flexibility within the existing rules of the Stability and Growth Pact". In the cases of France, Italy and Belgium, the Commission has announced last November that it would examine by early March 2015 its position vis-à-vis those countries' obligations under the SGP in the light of the finalisation of the countries' budget laws for 2015 and the expected specification of their structural reform programmes.

**The event:**

The winter economic package will be presented at a press conference on 27 February, exact timing to be confirmed.

**The sources:**

EU's economic governance explained: [MEMO/14/2180](#)

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