Completing Europe's Economic and Monetary Union – College of Commissioners discusses first steps

To mark Stage 1 of the Deepening of Europe's Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), which starts today (1 July 2015), the College of Commissioners had a first debate on the "Five Presidents' Report". The report entitled "Completing Europe's Economic and Monetary Union" was prepared at the request of the Euro Summit of October 2014 and the European Council of December 2014 by European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, together with the President of the Euro Summit Donald Tusk, the President of the Eurogroup JeroenDijsselbloem, the President of the European Central Bank Mario Draghi and the President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz. It was presented to EU leaders at the European Council in June.

The Commission will use the coming weeks and months to consult closely with Member States, the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and other European institutions, and calls on all stakeholders to participate actively in shaping the completion of EMU.

(More information in IP-15-5294 and STATEMENT-15-5296 )

Implementing the 2015 Work Programme: Commission to withdraw proposals blocked in Parliament and Council
As foreseen in its 2015 Work Programme, the Commission today decided to withdraw two legislative proposals - the Maternity Leave Directive and the Earth Observation Satellite Data Directive - on which the co-legislators have not been able to find a timely political agreement. They will be replaced with new initiatives in the 2016 Work Programme, aiming to meet their policy objectives in a more effective way. The Council has concluded that there is no prospect of progress on the proposed Maternity Leave Directive. It is unlikely that the proposed Earth Observation Satellite Data Directive could be adopted in a form that would meet its internal market objectives. The Commission will now formally confirm to the European Parliament and the Council its intention to proceed to withdraw these proposals. The Commission also confirmed that it will continue to work with the co-legislators for an agreement on a third proposal – for a Regulation on organic production and labelling of organic products - where political discussions have advanced significantly.

(More information in IP-15-5286 and IP-15-5287)

- Commission welcomes deal to improve consumer protection for insurance products

The European Commission has welcomed the agreement reached last night on a proposal for a revised Directive on insurance sales, known as the Insurance Distribution Directive. These new rules will improve the way insurance products are sold and will bring real benefits to consumers and retail investors. The agreement on the legal text follows negotiations between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission. Under the new Directive, consumers and retail investors buying insurance products will benefit from greater transparency about the price and the costs of these products and will be able to make more informed decisions when they purchase such products.

(More information in IP-15-5293)

- Launch of new Structural Reforms Support Service

Today the European Commission launches its new Structural Reforms Support Service. Steered by Vice-President Dombrovskis, the Service officially starts today to provide specialised technical assistance to Member States. On their request, the Service will help Member States implement important growth-enhancing administrative and structural reforms. The Service will also help Member States absorb and use EU funds more effectively. This is an area where past technical assistance to Member States has produced good results. Its first task will be to assist Vice-President Dombrovskis in the coordination of the Commission's efforts to support the Greek people in these difficult times. Experts for the new service will be drawn from across the Commission, Member States and from international bodies. It will draw on the valuable experience of the Task Force for Greece and the Support Group for Cyprus, amongst others. It will be headed by Director-General Maarten Verwey.

- Opening the doors: new public consultation tools introduced by the Commission

On 19 May the Commission announced a number of new public consultation tools as part of its Better Regulation agenda. Today the Commission implements the first of these measures, introducing new opportunities for stakeholder comments on Commission policy documents and proposals. Firstly, the initial Roadmap or Inception Impact Assessment of any new legislation will be open for comments. This provides an opportunity for citizens and stakeholders to give input very early on in the policy development cycle, before impact assessment and the related 12-weeks public consultation are launched, allowing their views to
inform the process from the very beginning. Secondly, after the Commission has adopted a legislative proposal, citizens can again submit their comments, within 8 weeks. These comments will be collected and sent to the co-legislators to inform their legislative work. All submissions will be made public. Citizens can access these new tools through the website Your voice in Europe.

- EU Member States granted citizenship to almost 1 million persons in 2013

In 2013, around 985 000 persons acquired citizenship of a Member State of the European Union, up by 20% (or about 163 000 persons) compared with 2012. Of the total number of persons obtaining the citizenship of one of the EU Member States in 2013, 89% were citizens of non-EU countries. The largest groups acquiring citizenship of an EU Member State in 2013 were citizens of Morocco, India, Turkey, Colombia, Albania and Ecuador. Moroccans, Indians, Turks, Colombians, Albanians and Ecuadorians represented together almost a third of the total number of persons who acquired EU citizenship in 2013. Romanians (23 000 persons) and Poles (18 000) were the two largest groups of EU citizens acquiring citizenship of another EU Member State.

(More information in STAT-15-5288)