



Kicking off the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the EU: Juncker Commission travels to Riga

Brussels, 06 January 2015

On 7-8 January, the College of Commissioners will travel to Riga for its traditional visit to the incoming Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The rotating Presidency will be held by Latvia for the first time, from January until June 2015. The College of Commissioners and the Latvian government will discuss the priorities of the Latvian Presidency during a plenary session as well as in several "cluster debates" (see Annex). Vice-Presidents and Commissioners will have bilateral meetings with Ministers and also engage in a dialogue with key stakeholders and Members of the Saeima, the Latvian Parliament. On 9 January, President Jean-Claude Juncker and the Latvian Prime Minister Laimdota Straujuma will also kick-off the European Year for Development 2015 which will focus on setting a new course to ending poverty, promoting development and combating climate change for a sustainable post-2015 world.

Commission President **Jean-Claude Juncker** said ahead of the visit: *"A new year starts with a new Presidency of the EU ready to deliver results that matter to citizens. Latvia is holding for the first time the Presidency of the EU and I have been impressed by the preparations and the level of ambition I have seen so far. I look forward to discussing with our Latvian colleagues and friends in Riga how we can swiftly turn ambitions into action: boosting Europe's competitiveness by improving the investment climate, delivering a borderless digital Europe and a strong European energy union, are our joint priorities. By working together, we will deliver."*

"I will have the pleasure to welcome the President of the Commission Mr. Jean-Claude Juncker and all the Commissioners in Latvia. This symbolic and at the same time content wise important visit, will mark the beginning of Latvia's presidency of the Council of the EU. There is an ambitious and for Europe very necessary work period ahead for both – Latvia's government and for the Juncker team. Our presidency's priorities – competitive Europe, digital Europe and engaged Europe – will be a guiding light for our work in the coming six months", said the Prime Minister of Latvia, **Laimdota Straujuma**.

Background

The College of Commissioners travels to the Member State that holds the Presidency of the Council of the EU in order to discuss the EU's priorities for the next six-month period with the Member State's government. From 1 January, Latvia will hold the Presidency of the Council of the EU, followed by Luxembourg (July-December 2015), Netherlands (January-June 2016) and Slovakia (July-December 2016).

The EU's 28 Member States take in turn the chair of the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU for a period of six months each. During this period, the Presidency chairs meetings at many levels, proposes guidelines and draws up compromises. More information is available [here](#).

Annex

The Programme

Thursday, 8 January

At **9:00** the programme will start with a dialogue between Latvia's national Parliament, stakeholders and the Commission on various topics in parallel, followed by a meeting between the Government of Latvia and the College of Commissioners.

At **10:30** there will be a **photo opportunity** before the meeting between the Government and the Commission and a family photo will be taken before continuation of the meeting over lunch.

At **13:50**, after the working lunch, there will be a bilateral meeting between the President of the Commission and the Prime Minister of Latvia.

At **14:00** a series of cluster meetings will take place between key Ministers and Commissioners:

Cluster meeting	EU participation	Latvian participation
Jobs and growth, including the Investment Package	First Vice-President Timmermans, Vice-President Georgieva, Vice-President Dombrovskis, Commissioner Thyssen, Commissioner Moscovici, Commissioner Hogan, Commissioner Hill, Commissioner Bieńkowska, Commissioner Jourová, Commissioner Navracsics	Minister of Finance Reirs, Minister of Transport Matīss, Minister of Agriculture Dūklavs, Minister of Justice Rasnačs, Minister of Health Belēvičs, Minister of Culture Melbārde
Energy Union and Digital Single Market	Vice-President Ansip, Vice-President Šefčovič, Commissioner Oettinger, Commissioner Arias Cañete, Commissioner Vella, Commissioner Bulc, Commissioner Crețu, Commissioner Vestager	Minister of Economics Reizniece-Ozola, Minister of Environment and Regional Cooperation Gerhards, Minister of Welfare Augulis, Minister of Education and Science Štepiņš
Neighbourhood and beyond	High Representative Vice-President Mogherini, Commissioner Hahn, Commissioner Malmström, Commissioner Mimica, Commissioner Andriukaitis, Commissioner Avramopoulos, Commissioner Stylianides	Minister of Foreign Affairs Rinkēvičs, Minister of Defence Vējonis, Minister of Interior Kozlovskis

At **15:00** (14:00 Brussels time) a **press conference** with European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker and Latvian Prime Minister Laimdota Straujuma will be held in the Ziedoņa hall of the Latvian National Library. This will be available on [EBS](#) and on the website of the [Latvian Presidency of the Council of the EU](#).

After the press conference there will be bilateral meetings between Vice-Presidents, Commissioners and Ministers of the Latvian government.

At **18:00**, there will be a number of **speeches** by the Latvian President Bērziņš, Prime Minister Straujuma, European Commission President Juncker and European Council President Tusk during the **official Presidency opening event** at the Latvian National Opera House.

Friday, 9 January

At **10:00** Riga time (9:00 Brussels time) President Juncker together with the High Representative Vice-President Mogherini and the Latvian Prime Minister Laimdota Straujuma will **launch the European Year for Development 2015** in the National Library of Latvia. This will be available on [EBS](#) and on the website of the [Latvian Presidency of the Council of the EU](#).

The launch event will be followed by several panel debates with the participation of European Commissioners and Latvian Ministers.

Information on the European Year for Development 2015 is available [here](#).

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