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The EU Newsletter No. 194

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Welcome to the EU Newsletter. This Newsletter will keep you abreast of all important developments in the EU and its relations with Kazakhstan.

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Energy: Commission sets out new safety standards for offshore oil and gas operations

Brussels – 27 October. The likelihood of a major offshore accident in European waters remains unacceptably high. With a stringent safety regime it is possible to bring the risk of such an accident down to the absolute minimum. Damage done to the environment and coastal economies can be significantly reduced if an effective emergency response plan is put in place beforehand. This is why the European Commission has proposed today a new law which will ensure that European offshore oil and gas production will respect the world's highest safety, health and environmental standards everywhere in the EU.

Energy Commissioner Günther Oettinger said: "Today, most oil and gas in Europe is produced offshore, often in harsh geographical and geological conditions. Given our growing energy demand, we will need all the oil and gas from beneath our seas. But we need to prevent accidents like Deepwater Horizon in the Gulf of Mexico from happening. Securing best industry practices in all our offshore operations is an undisputable must. Today's proposal is a crucial step forward towards safer offshore activities to the benefit of our citizens and our environment".

[Press-release](#)

The Arab Spring wins Sakharov Prize 2011

The European Parliament Sakharov Prize for freedom of thought in 2011 goes to five representatives of the Arab people, in recognition and support of their drive for freedom and human rights. It will be presented to the winners by President Jerzy Buzek at Parliament's formal session in Strasbourg, on 14 December.

Parliament's 2011 Sakharov Prize goes to Asmaa Mahfouz (Egypt), Ahmed al-Zubair Ahmed al-Sanusi (Libya), Razan Zaitouneh (Syria), Ali Farzat (Syria) and posthumously to Mohamed Bouazizi (Tunisia). This nomination was submitted jointly by the EPP, S&D, ALDE and Green groups.

Following the decision by the Conference of Presidents (Parliament President and political group leaders) Thursday morning, President Buzek underlined "these individuals contributed to historic changes in the Arab world and this award reaffirms Parliament's solidarity and firm support for their struggle for freedom, democracy and the end of authoritarian regimes". He added, their award was "a symbol for all those working for dignity, democracy and fundamental rights in the Arab world and beyond."

[Press-release](#)

Statement by High Representative Catherine Ashton on the Day of Liberation of Libya

Catherine Ashton, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Commission Vice-President, today made the following statement:

"The announcement today of the Day of Liberation by Chairman Abdel-Jalil is an historic event. After more than 40 years of despotism, after nine months of bitter and bloody fighting the Libyan people can now look to the future with hope and confidence.

Now is the time for the Libyan leadership to unite during this transition period to build a new Libya based on national reconciliation and respect for human rights, the rule of law and democratic principles. There can be no greater tribute to the suffering of the Libyan people than this, no finer memorial to Gaddafi's victims.

[Full text](#)

Conclusions of the European Council

In the light of the Commission's report on **growth-enhancing areas** and further to the outcome of the political conference on the sources of growth held on 6 October 2011, the European Council identified a limited number of key priorities for internal economic policy that need to be pursued in the short term in order to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive and green growth:

The Single Market has a key role to play in delivering growth and employment. All efforts should be made to ensure agreement by the end of 2012 on the 12 priority proposals set out in the Single Market Act, giving utmost priority to those which can bring the most benefits to growth and jobs. The full implementation of the Services Directive will also deliver significant economic gains; Member States should complete its implementation by the end of this year and ensure that the points of single contact are fully operational and that economic operators are fully informed of the new opportunities it offers. The Commission will report on this issue by the end of 2011. [Full text](#)

EU 'Smart Borders': Commission wants easier access and enhanced security

The EU needs a more modern and efficient management of traveller flows at its external borders. Today the European Commission adopted a Communication which sets out the main options for using new technologies to simplify life for foreigners frequently travelling to the EU and to better monitor third-country nationals crossing the borders.

Enabling smooth and fast border crossing for travellers, while ensuring an adequate level of security, is a challenge for many Member States. Every year more than 700 million EU citizens and third country nationals cross the EU's external borders. This number is expected to rise significantly in the future. By 2030 the number of people at European airports could increase by 80%, which will result in longer delays and queues for travellers if border checking procedures are not modernised in time. It is in the interest of the EU to make it as easy as possible for tourists and business travellers to come to Europe. [Press-release](#)

RECENT SPEECHES

[Speech by Ambassador Nobert Jousten, Head of the EU Delegation to Kazakhstan, delivered on the EU Civil Society Seminar on Human rights](#)

[Invitation letter by President Van Rompuy to the European Council](#)

[Joint statement by President José Manuel Barroso and President Herman Van Rompuy on the reported death of Muammar Gaddafi](#)

[Statement by High Representative Catherine Ashton on the fall of Sirte and reports of the death of Colonel Gaddafi](#)