EU integration process in CEE countries	**EU's enlargement current situation** Each year, the European Commission adopts its 'Enlargement package': an overview of enlargement strategy and progress achieved towards EU accession in the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia as well as Kosovo), Turkey and Iceland. http://europa.eu/newsroom/highlights/special-coverage/enlargement/index_en.htm **European Energy Union Announcement** The Commission launches the European Energy Union; a fundamental step towards the completion of single energy market and reforming how Europe produces, transports and consumes energy. http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4497_en.htm?locale=en **Commission reports on visa-free travel from the Western Balkans** The Commission published its fifth assessment of the functioning of the visa-free scheme with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4482_en.htm?locale=en **MEPs assess reform efforts of Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro and FYROM in 2014** The committee welcomes the new Serbian government's commitment to the European integration process and its constructive approach to relations with its neighbours. The accession process must nonetheless be more inclusive and transparent http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20150223IPR24721/html/MEPs-assess-reform-efforts-of-Serbia-Kosovo-Montenegro-and-FYROM-in-2014
Pros, advantages and obligations resulting from EU membership	**Passenger rights: Commission refers Austria and Luxembourg to the EU Court of Justice for not complying with bus and coach rules** The European Commission has referred Austria and Luxembourg to the European Court of Justice for not complying with the EU Regulation establishing the rights of passengers travelling by bus and coach http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4496_en.htm?locale=en **Commission takes Greece to Court over poor waste water treatment presenting a risk to public health** In the EU, Member States need adequate collection and treatment

	systems for urban waste water, as untreated water poses risks to human health, inland waters and the marine environment. Greece was first warned in 2010 about this particular case, which concerns areas with a population in a range between 2000 and 15000. http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4491_en.htm?locale=en **Spain to contribute €1.5bn to Juncker's investment fund** *Germany and Spain are the two member states to have pledged money to Commission's growth fund.* http://www.europeanvoice.com/article/spain-to-contribute-e1-5-billion-to-junckers-investment-fund/
General development of the EU	**How digital is your country? New figures reveal progress needed towards a digital Europe** There are plenty of digital opportunities waiting to be unlocked to benefit European citizens and companies. From shopping or studying online, to paying bills or using public services over the Internet – the Web is the answer, if the right conditions are in place. http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4475_en.htm **Building the Energy Union: Key electricity interconnection between France and Spain completed** Energy interconnectors are crucial to build an Energy Union with a forward-looking climate policy, one of the key priorities of the new Commission http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4463_en.htm **Protection of victims in the EU** The Victims' Rights Directive will give victims of crime stronger rights to support and protection across the European Union. http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-4465_en.htm **EU releases €212 million to ensure healthcare, education and other basic social services to the Palestinian people** The European Union has released the first tranche of its 2015 financial support to the Palestinian Authority and to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), totalling €212 million. http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4440_en.htm **Investment Plan: Green light for SME financing before the summer** Following a decision by the Board of Governors of the European Investment Bank (EIB), small and medium-sized companies (SMEs) across Europe should be able to benefit from the first funds from the new European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) before the summer. http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4441_en.htm

Introduction to EU institutions and their Functioning	**CoR launch an online consultation to assess the Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes for 2014-2020** It will focus mainly on negotiation processes, the quality of the PAs and OPs, adherence to the Code of Conduct on Partnership, and the barriers to proper planning and implementation of ESIF. http://cor.europa.eu/en/news/Pages/cor-launch-an-online.aspx **European Commission stands by Italy on coping with migratory pressure on Lampedusa** European Commission has announced that it is stepping up its assistance to Italy. Firstly, the Frontex Joint Operation Triton will be extended until at least the end of 2015. http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4453_en.htm **European Commission lays the foundation for a fairer and more transparent approach to taxation in EU** The European Commission launched its work on its ambitious agenda to combat tax avoidance and aggressive tax planning. http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4436_en.htm
Introduction to EU law	**European Commission lays the foundation for a fairer and more transparent approach to taxation in EU** The European Commission started the ambitious project to combat tax evasion, avoidance and aggressive tax planning. The College of Commissioners held a first orientation debate on possible key actions to ensure a fairer and more transparent approach to taxation in the EU. **http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4436_en.htm** **Uber files second complaint against French law** European Commission needs to probe the regulation which it claims favours regular cabs at its expense. Uber has filed a second complaint to the European Commission against a French law that the online taxi-booking service says favours regular taxis at its expense. **http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2015/feb/18/uber-files-second-complaint-against-french-law** **PNR: Passenger Name Record-New measures to tackle crime and terrorism** This measure, of implementing a Passenger Name Record was rejected in 2013 over concerns about the impact it could have on fundamental rights and data protection, is now again on the agenda of MEPs. Recent acts of terror in Paris and Copenhagen, as well as the crisis in the Middle East and Ukraine, have given the measure a new, decisive boost. **http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20150217STO24619/html/Much-Ado-About-PNR**

Decentralised management of EU funds	**Unlocking Funding for Europe's Growth - European Commission consults on Capital Markets Union** The European Commission launched its landmark project to unlock funding for Europe's businesses and to boost growth in the EU's 28 Member States with the creation of a true single market for capital. http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4433_en.htm **Employment: Commission proposes €6 million from the Globalisation Fund to help over 2,500 road haulage and delivery workers in France** The European Commission has proposed to mobilise €6 million from the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) to help 2,513 former workers of Mory-Ducros in France to find new jobs. The proposal now goes to the European Parliament and the EU's Council of Ministers for approval. Franch workers will receive career advice and guidance. The total estimated cost of the package is €10 million. http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4472_en.htm **CoR launch an online consultation to assess the Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes for 2014-2020** The CoR has launched an online consultation on the outcome of the negotiations on the Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes to assess the set of strategic documents from the perspective of regional and local authorities which will use the 2014-2020 European Structural and Investment Funds. http://cor.europa.eu/en/news/Pages/cor-launch-an-online.aspx
Multi-level governance	**World Habitat awards 2015/16** The Building and Social Housing Foundation invites innovative housing projects to apply for the 2015/16 World Habitat Awards for the chance to gain recognition for their work. The deadline for submissions is 30 April 2015. http://www.eukn.eu/news/detail/world-habitat-awards-201516/ **Europe's local and regional governments: don't ditch EU waste package** The European Committee of the Regions (CoR) has demanded that the European Commission reconsider its withdrawal of proposed changes to EU waste legislation. The Committee - the EU's assembly of local and regional authorities – argues that it would be far more sensible to build on the original proposals then "start again from scratch". It calls on the Commission to use its proposals on the original package - outlined in an opinion adopted yesterday - as the basis for creating an ambitious piece of EU waste legislation that will help deliver a sustainable "circular economy" in Europe. http://cor.europa.eu/en/news/Pages/eu-waste-package.aspx
Introduction to different	**ETS REFORM: EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW IN A NUTSHELL**

negotiation chapters	The EU's emissions trading scheme (ETS) was set up to reduce gas emissions and fight climate change, but it is not working as efficiently as it could. On 24 February MEPs approved draft legislation to tackle the imbalances of supply and demand of emission allowances, which is holding back investment in green technologies. Read on to find out what the reform is all about.
Chapter 1: Free movement of goods	
Chapter 2: Freedom of movement for workers	http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20150225STO26902/html/ETS-reform-everything-you-need-to-know-in-a-nutshell
Chapter 3: Right of establishment and freedom to provide services	
Chapter 4: Free movement of capital	**GROWTH, SOLIDARITY AND PAYING THE BILLS: BUDGET MEPS VOTE 2016 BUDGET PRIORITIES**
Chapter 5: Public procurement	Next year's EU budget priorities should be fostering growth by helping employment, enterprises and entrepreneurship, showing solidarity both within the EU and with countries outside it and putting EU finances in order by tackling the overdue payments backlog and reforming the EU revenue system, say Budgets Committee MEPs in a resolution voted.
Chapter 6: Company Law	
Chapter 7: Intellectual property law	http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20150226IPR27862/html/Growth-solidarity-and-paying-the-bills-budget-MEPs-vote-2016-budget-priorities
Chapter 8: Competition	
Chapter 9: Financial services	**European Citizen's Prize: acknowledging people's contributions to Europe**
Chapter 10: Information society and media	They are the ones who make Europe a better place: 47 people and organisations from all over the EU received the European Citizen's Prize at a ceremony in Brussels on 25 February as an award for their contributions to European cooperation and the promotion of common values. This included anything from defending the rights of vulnerable groups in society, to working to improve knowledge of EU law and policies, fighting extremism and promoting tolerance and dialogue.
Chapter 11: Agriculture and rural development	
Chapter 12: Food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary policy	
Chapter 13: Fisheries	http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20150225STO26907/html/European-Citizen%E2%80%99s-Prize-acknowledging-people%E2%80%99s-contributions-to-Europe
Chapter 14: Transport policy	
Chapter 15: Energy	**EU job-search aid for redundant workers in Belgium, Germany and Poland**
Chapter 16: Taxation	Some 3,000 workers made redundant in Belgium, Germany and Poland in 2013-2014 should receive EU aid worth €6.3million to help them find jobs, the Budgets Committee recommended on Thursday. The European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) aid still has to be approved by Parliament as a whole and the Council of Ministers.
Chapter 17: Economic and monetary policy	
Chapter 18: Statistics	
Chapter 19: Social policy and employment	http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/press-release
Chapter 20: Enterprise and industrial policy	**First discussion on European Energy Union strategy**
Chapter 21: Trans-	Parliament discusses the plans for a European Energy Union, a top priority for the current Commission, after they are unveiled in the House

this afternoon by Maroš Šefčovič, Vice-President for Energy Union. The debate starts at 15.00 **.** The committee on Industry, Research and Energy is currently drafting a non-binding resolution on the European Energy Security Strategy, scheduled for a vote in committee on 7 May 2015
http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20150224IPR25034/html/First-discussion-on-European-Energy-Union-strategy

Environment Committee backs switchover to advanced biofuels
The draft law aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that result from the growing use of agricultural land to produce biofuel crops. A draft law to cap the production of traditional biofuels and accelerate the shift to alternative sources, such as seaweed and waste, was approved by the Environment Committee on Tuesday. It aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that result from the growing use of agricultural land to produce biofuel crops.
http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20150223IPR24714/html/Environment-Committee-backs-switchover-to-advanced-biofuels

Fraud: countering misuse and abuse of the EU budget
About 94% of the EU budget is spent within member states on initiatives such as farm support and backing for research and small businesses. To ensure the money is used correctly, the EU keeps an eye on it and claims back funds if they have been misused. Every year the European Commission presents these violations and outlines countermeasures in a report it submits to the Parliament.
http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20150218STO24903/html/Fraud-countering-misuse-and-abuse-of-the-EU-budget

INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY: CELEBRATING LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY IN EUROPE
The UN's International Mother Language Day is marked every 21 February to promote linguistic and cultural diversity around the world. Diversity is the bedrock of Europe's cultural heritage, so the EU is keen to also protect linguistic diversity. The EU boast 24 official languages, but how many of them can you recognise? Try our quiz to find out.
http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20150217STO24620/html/International-Mother-Language-Day-celebrating-linguistic-diversity-in-Europe

Plzeň and Mons: meet Europe's cultural capitals for 2015
Plzeň in the Czech Republic and Mons in Belgium are Europe's cultural capitals for 2015. Inaugurated in 1985, cultural capitals highlight the diversity and richness of European culture, while also fostering a European identity. More than 50 cities around Europe have already had

the honour and since 2011 two cities from two different EU countries share the title each year. Read on to find out more about this year's cultural capitals.
http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20150213STO24003/html/Plze%C5%88-and-Mons-meet-Europe's-cultural-capitals-for-2015

Research and Innovation: CoR and European Commission to set up a "Regional Knowledge Platform"
The European Committee of the Regions (CoR) and the European Commission's Directorate-General for Research and Innovation have engaged to enhance the role of regions as drivers for research and innovation, thereby contributing to growth and job creation in Europe.
http://cor.europa.eu/en/news/Pages/cor-and-ec-to-set-up-regional-knowledge-platform.aspx

ENERGY UNION AND ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE

Delivering on this top priority set out in President Juncker's political guidelines, the European Commission set out its strategy to achieve a resilient Energy Union with a forward-looking climate change policy.
http://ec.europa.eu/news/2015/02/20150225_en.htm

Specific issues relating to the • European arrest warrant, • Stockholm programme: Europe of rights, Europe of justice, Europe that protects, Access to Europe, Europe of solidarity, Europe in a globalised world • Third pillar: the pillar devoted to police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters, which came under Title VI of the Treaty on European Union • Recognition of professional	**Ukraine, Greece, terrorism, Libya: highlights of debate with Tusk and Juncker** The violations of the Minsk II Ukraine-Russia ceasefire agreement, the deal reached with Greece, a Passenger Name Record (PNR) system to fight terrorism and the worrying situation in Libya were among the issues addressed in a debate with European Council and Commission presidents Donald Tusk and Jean-Claude Juncker on Wednesday. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/press-release **EUROPEAN CITIZEN'S PRIZE: ACKNOWLEDGING PEOPLE'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO EUROPE** They are the ones who make Europe a better place: 47 people and organisations from all over the EU received the European Citizen's Prize at a ceremony in Brussels on 25 February as an award for their contributions to European cooperation and the promotion of common values. This included anything from defending the rights of vulnerable groups in society, to working to improve knowledge of EU law and policies, fighting extremism and promoting tolerance and dialogue. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20150225STO26907/html/European-Citizen%E2%80%99s-Prize-acknowledging-people%E2%80%99s-contributions-to-Europe **CoR calls for a "multilevel protection" of the rule of law and fundamental rights in the EU** Together with civil society, local and regional authorities are essential

qualifications	partners not only in protecting the modern state governed by the rule of law, but also in working actively and strategically to shape it, via their own policy initiatives. This concerns the protection of specific citizens' rights, but also intercultural relations, socio-economic development, education, health and welfare systems. This is the main message of an opinion adopted by the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) on the "multilevel protection of the rule of law and fundamental rights in the EU". http://cor.europa.eu/en/news/Pages/multilevel-protection-of-rule-of-law-and-fundamental-rights.aspx
Introduction to different sector policies (regional policy, trade policy, agricultural policy, social policy).	**EU's energy union must overcome serious obstacles** As the European commission sets out its plans to harmonise the energy systems of member states, despite the potential benefits there remain huge barriers to success. http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/feb/25/eu-energy-union-must-overcome-serious-obstacles **The critical flaw in the EU's climate plan** A successful EU climate pledge must look beyond emissions within Europe and include collaborative proposals to reduce pollution in developing nations as well. http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/feb/25/eu-climate-change-plan-critical-flaw-in **European carbon market reform set for 2019** MEPs vote to strengthen emissions trading scheme by taking 1.6bn surplus credits off the market to boost carbon prices, but critics call for steps to be taken earlier. http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/feb/24/european-carbon-emissions-trading-market-reform-set-for-2019 **Commission takes first step in ambitious initiative to integrate Europe's fragmented markets for investment** The European Commission today (18 February) launched three consultations on how to create a single market in the European Union for capital and financial services. Creating a capital markets union, as promised by Jean-Claude Juncker, the president of the European Commission, is likely to dominate the new Commission's legislative work. http://www.europeanvoice.com/article/hill-consults-on-capital-markets-union/ **A review of the Bologna process for higher education reform is long overdue.** Higher education in Europe has been reshaped over the past 15 years by

	the Bologna process, an agreement between governments to reform education law and harmonise the way that universities work. Now the 47 nations involved, along with other stakeholders, are beginning a debate on Bologna's future http://www.europeanvoice.com/article/bologna-looks-to-the-future/ **Spain's prime minister backs his government's economic approach, but it may not be enough to stop the rising popularity of the anti-establishment Podemos** Mariano Rajoy, Spain's prime minister, announced measures aimed at creating a million jobs in 2015 at his state of the nation speech yesterday (24 February). If Spain continues its current pace of economic growth, Rajoy foresees the addition of half a million jobs every year. http://www.europeanvoice.com/article/rajoy-defends-economic-policy-ahead-of-election-year/
Promotion of EU upcoming events and news	**Urbact city festival - 6 - 8 of May 2015** The URBACT City Festival will present you with top edge content on urban development, will create links with the urban agendas in Europe around the globe and provide you with the opportunity to meet over 400 peers in the field. Celebrating the results of URBACT II, the networks created and the knowledge produced, the festival will set the scene for URBACT III, the new features and activities foreseen for 2014 – 2020. http://urbact.eu/urbact-city-festival **Smart specialisation strategies: state of implementation and prospects for cooperation between regions, 17 March 2015, 1 - 2:30 p.m.** Implementing smart specialisation strategies has become a priority for all EU regions receiving funding from the European Structural and Investment Funds between 2014 and 2020. These strategies will help regions to tap into their innovation potential. The EU will support implementation through various networking activities including the Seville JRC's Smart Specialisation Platform, which provides for relevant expertise, advice and an exchange between policy makers and national and regional administrations. During the briefing, representatives of the JRC and of the European Commission's DG for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO) will present an overview of the planned 2014-2020 strategies and discuss possibilities for cooperation. **http://cor.europa.eu/en/events/Pages/smart-specialisation-strategies-0129-8433.aspx** **An Investment Plan for Europe: joining forces CoR Conference, 15 April 2015** Shortly after starting its 2014-2019 mandate the European

Commission proposed a new Investment Plan for Europe. On 15 April 2015, the CoR will bring together EU policy makers and regional and local representatives to assess the Plan from a local perspective. Political leaders and investment experts will discuss the potential of the Plan for the local and regional levels, the role regions and cities can play in its roll-out and the future investment capacity of sub-national authorities in times of austerity.
www.cor.europa.eu/investment

EER2016: search for Europe's most entrepreneurial city or region begins
The Committee of the Regions has launched the 2016 edition of the European Entrepreneurial Region (EER) Award. Any EU region or city, regardless of their size or wealth, with outstanding future-oriented entrepreneurial strategies can apply until 16 March 2015.
http://cor.europa.eu/en/news/Pages/eer2016-search-begins.aspx

Lunchtime briefing: Smart specialisation strategies: state of implementation
Implementing smart specialisation strategies has become a priority for all member states regions receiving funding from the European Structural and Investment Funds between 2014 and 2020. These strategies will help regions to tap into their innovation potential and the EU will accompany their implementation through various networking activities including the Smart Specialisation Platform set up by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) in Seville.
http://insideurope.eu/node/539