Euro Info June 2016 (2)

The information below is from the EurActiv website. For more detailed information on these and other items please go to www.euractiv.com

Hungarian far-right no longer anti-EU: It wants to transform it

Hungary's far-right says it no longer wants to leave the European Union as the migration crisis is offering populist parties, in resurgence across the continent, a chance to "transform" the bloc.

The untapped energy potential of the seas

Floating wind turbines and tidal lagoons are excellent examples of disregarded and underused technologies that are unquestionably advantageous for countries with large swathes of coastline, like France. [EurActiv's partner La Tribune reports](). Bouygues Travaux Publics and Ideol have announced the construction of floating wind turbines off the coast of western France. As opposed to its fixed cousins, which have to be anchored to the seabed, floating turbines are one of a plethora of technologies that allow the production of energy by harnessing the power of the waves.

EU cautions governments against banning Uber, Airbnb

Services such as ride-hailing app Uber and home-rental site Airbnb should only be banned as a last resort, the European Commission said on Thursday (2 June), as it seeks to foster development of the "sharing economy". In its new guidelines, the Commission said any restrictions by EU member states on these online services should be proportionate to the public interest at stake.

Palm oil production up, as forests pay the price

Palm oil biofuels are having a disastrous impact when it comes to deforestation and carbon footprint. [EurActiv's partner Journal de l'Environnement reports](). The equivalent of four Olympic swimming pools of the liquid ends up in the fuel tanks of European vehicles. That's according to calculations carried out NGO Transport & Environment using data provided by Fediol, the European association of vegetable oils. "Between 2010 and 2014, the amount of palm oil imported into Europe for use as biodiesel rose from 8% to 45%. That has translated into a 606% increase in the amount of palm oil used for biodiesel," warned France Nature Environnement (FNE). It's a catastrophe for climate change – which biodiesel was meant to mitigate – as palm oil and

soya production is synonymous with deforestation. While the EU is preparing its proposals on how to decarbonise the transport sector, Jean-Claude Bévillard, an agricultural issues expert at FNE pointed out that "Europe has not wanted to regulate biodiesel production based on environmental criteria. The result is that the French are currently contributing to the deforestation of South-East Asia."

Europe's tech industry could get boost from visa overhaul

Changes to chaotic EU visa rules could help workers move to Europe if they receive a job offer—and their chances are better if they find work in the tech or healthcare sectors. The European Commission proposed changes to the seven-year-old blue card visa programme for skilled workers, which has been hampered by too complicated rules and only attracted a small number of applications.

Health NGOs: Commission 'listened' to industry on alcohol advertising

A new European Commission proposal to reform advertising rules on television and online has opened a new battlefield for health NGOs, advertisers and the alcohol industry. The Commission presented a new draft proposal (25 May) of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD), which governs EU-wide coordination of national legislation on all audiovisual media, both traditional TV broadcasts and on-demand services. The objective of the proposed review was to make Europe's audiovisual media landscape fit for purpose in the digital age. The draft proposal focuses on the development of self-and co-regulation to protect minors from alcohol advertising, and does not impose any particular model on member states, who remain free to apply their own system.

EU to vet member states' gas deals with Russia

The European Council decided on Monday (6 June) that gas-related intergovernmental agreements (IGAs) between member states and third countries would be vetted by the Commission before they are signed. For non-gas related IGAs, a lighter procedure will apply. The security of the EU's gas supply remains a highly topical issue, given the tensions between Ukraine and Russia. Now the European Commission will conduct an assessment of gas-related IGAs before they are signed. In addition, member states shall keep the Commission informed both before the start and regularly during the negotiations of all IGAs.

[Austrian minister wants to replicate Australian model for refugees](#)

Asylum seekers to the European Union should be held on islands rather than be allowed direct access to the continent, Austria's foreign minister has said. Sebastian Kurz suggested in an interview with [Die Presse](#) published on Sunday (5 June) that the bloc follow the "Australian example" to discourage migrants from setting out on the often perilous journey to Europe. Under Australia's harsh and much-criticised immigration policy, asylum-seekers who try to reach Australia by boat are turned back or sent to Pacific camps in Nauru and Papua New Guinea where they are held indefinitely while their refugee applications are processed. They are blocked from resettling in Australia even if found to be refugees.

Migration:

[Council of Europe: the EU must take its responsibilities in the integration of migrants](#)

On 31st May the Commissioner for Human Rights at the Council of Europe presented a report on the integration of migrants in Europe

Commission:

[Development in European Standards](#)

On 1st June the European Commission presented the way standardisation should develop, notably together with technological developments, political priorities and general trends. Standardisation is at the heart of the Strategy for a Single Market

[More transparency and balance in panels of experts](#)

On 30th May the European Commission adopted new rules aiming to make the representation of interests amongst panels of experts more transparent and balanced

[The Commission's Guidelines for the Collaborative Economy](#)

On 2nd June the Commission presented guidelines in view of raising awareness amongst businesses, consumers and public authorities of the elements of collaborative economy, a potential source of growth and employment in the European Union

Council:

[EU/USA Meeting on Security](#)

After their ministerial meeting on 2nd June the USA and the EU repeated their determination to cooperate more closely together for security and citizens' rights. At the same time

they signed an "umbrella" agreement on the protection of personal data transferred by the judicial authorities...

Latvia:

Latvia signs a membership agreement with the OECD

On 2nd June Latvian President, Maris Kucinskis and OECD Secretary General Angel Gurria signed an agreement for Latvia's membership of the OECD. The agreement will enter into force once it has been ratified by the Latvian parliament on 16th June next...

NATO:

NATO visit to Germany

On 2nd June during his visit to Berlin NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said he was pleased with Germany's "exceptional contribution" to NATO's operations in Afghanistan and Kosovo. He also said he appreciated Germany's decision to increase its national military staff and also defence spending

Standard & Poor's analyses the dangers of a Brexit

On 31st May the agency Standard & Poor's published an analysis on the dangers for businesses in the event of an exit by the UK from the European Union. The British real estate, building, aerospace, defence and automotive industries might suffer the most if a Brexit were to occur.

Switzerland:

Saint Gotthard Rail Tunnel

On 1st June Switzerland inaugurated the Saint-Gotthard rail tunnel, the longest in the world (57km) which will help relieve traffic flows between the north and south of Europe