

## POLITICS

**On 1 March European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker presented the anticipated White Paper on the Future of Europe.** The document is considered a springboard for debate between politicians and citizens on the future functioning of the European institutions. It includes a total of five development scenarios.

**European Council has re-elected D. Tusk as its president.** On 9 March 2017 the European Council decided to elect Donald Tusk as president for another term. Only Poland voted against the decision.

**Populists did not win in the Netherlands.** The right-wing liberal People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) of acting Prime Minister Mark Rutte defeated the right-wing populist challenge of Geert Wilders and secured the chair of prime minister for the next term.

**EU leaders have signed the Rome Declaration on the future of EU.** The meeting in Rome on 25 March was held on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome, which laid the foundation for the community. The declaration reflects the long-term priorities of the EU which are strengthening national prosperity, ensuring security and protection of external borders

## FOCUS ON THE CZECH REPUBLIC

**The European Commission has announced that the Czech Republic ranked 18th in the 2017 Digital Economy and Society Index.** Local businesses had the best results in the Czech Republic mainly thanks to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that use e-commerce. Internet services such as eGovernment, entertainment and those for social purposes did worse.

**The share of renewables in energy con-**

and supporting the stability of the surrounding neighboring countries.

**Great Britain has triggered Article 50.** On 29 March 2017 the United Kingdom officially announced to the other countries of the EU that it wants to secede. European Council President Donald Tusk received a letter on the activation of Article 50, which begins the difficult process of negotiating the terms of leaving the European bloc, which Britain has been a member of for over forty years. Voters decided in favour of Brexit in June 2016.

## ECONOMICS

**Czech National Bank: Exit from the exchange rate commitment.** At its extraordinary meeting on 6 April 2017, the Bank Board of the Czech National Bank decided to discontinue the use of the exchange rate as an additional instrument for easing the monetary conditions. By taking this step, the CNB returned to the conventional monetary policy regime, in which interest rates are the main instrument.

**Denmark and Sweden do not want to increase contributions to the EU.** The departure of Britain from the EU cannot mean an increase in membership contributions for Denmark said local Finance Minister Kristian Jensen. Swedish politicians also expressed a similar view. The solution should be to reduce and redirect EU spending.

**sumption in the Czech Republic is 15.1%.** The share of renewable energy sources in gross final energy consumption in the Czech Republic reached 15.1% in 2015. Compared to 2014 it has not changed. In Slovakia the share of RES increased to 12.9% from 11.7%. The share of renewable energy sources in the EU rose to 16.7% from 16.1%. Eleven Member States including the Czech Republic have already reached the national

**The European Commission has approved the Consumer Financial Services Action Plan.** The aim is to facilitate consumer access to financial products and services in other EU countries. Among other things the plan will lower the cost of bank transfers between EU countries with different currencies and ensure that car insurance abroad calculates bonuses for drivers with no accidents in their homeland.

## FOREIGN TRADE

**EU Member State ministers responsible for trade have expressed general support for the Commission proposal for new anti-dumping methodology.** The Czech Ministry of Industry and Trade added that for the Czech Republic it is also important that the subsequent implementation does not mean an additional burden for European companies. The ministers also discussed the new type of investment protection in the form of the establishment of the Multilateral Investment Court.

## SECTORS

**Berlin has become a huge attraction for startup companies, mainly from the area of fintech.** Soon in volume of investment in the sector it could even surpass the existing capital of fintech, London. In Berlin there are now about 80 to a hundred fintech companies and their numbers are set to double by 2018.

targets for RES set for the year 2020.

**The American Chamber of Commerce in the Czech Republic announced that the Czech Republic is the third most integrated country in the EU internal market.** In free movement of goods the Czech Republic is in second place among EU countries (64.8%), and in free movement of services it occupied 15th place (7.5%).

**Visegrad Four to promote innovation and**

## FORECAST AND PREDICTIONS

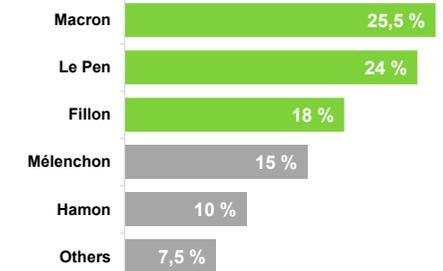
## Meetings of EU institutions

- Eurogroup on 7 April 2017
- General Affairs Council on 25 April 2017
- European Parliament plenary session on 26 - 27 April 2017

**The European Union will establish a joint military planning and conduct capability unit (MPCC).** The MPCC will be responsible for European military training missions. The center will exist within the European diplomatic service and it will manage missions within the framework of the Common Security and Defense Policy. This will therefore improve the support which Brussels provides to non-executive military missions which currently include EU training missions in the Central African Republic, Mali and Somalia.

## Individual opinion polls of the French election

## Polls for the first round



Source: Financial Times, 28 and 29 March

**digitalization.** Representatives of the V4 want to support more digitalisation, innovation, science and research in the region. They also signed the Warsaw Declaration on mutual cooperation in research, development and introduction of innovations and new digital technologies. Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka said at the summit that competitiveness cannot be based on low wages, but on a skilled workforce and good education.