

[Aerodynamic lorry cabs – provisional agreement with Parliament on speedier introduction on the market](#)

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[Mergers: Commission approves acquisition of joint control over Virgin Atlantic by Air-France-KLM, Delta and Virgin Group](#)

Today's decision concerns the proposed acquisition by Air France-KLM of a 31% joint-controlling interest in Virgin Atlantic Limited, which leads to joint control over Virgin Atlantic by Air France-KLM, Delta Air Lines Inc. and Virgin Group.

The Commission's investigation

The Commission investigated the impact of the transaction on the market for (i) **air transport of passengers** (ii) **cargo air transport services** and (iii) **maintenance, repair and overhaul services**.

As regards the **air transport of passengers**, the transaction gives rise to overlaps on direct/indirect flights (i.e. one of the companies provides a direct flight from one city to another, while the other provides a one-stop flight for the same route) and indirect/indirect flights (i.e. the companies provide one-stop flights between two cities). These relate to routes from the UK to North America, Africa, Asia and the Caribbean, and from Continental Europe/Ireland to North America.

The Commission also investigated whether the companies' combined slot holdings at airports where their portfolios overlap, would prevent competitors from entering or expanding their presence at these airports (namely London Heathrow and Manchester). Control over a large portfolio of slots at congested airports could result in higher barriers to entry for airlines wanting to operate at these airports, which in turn could result in higher fares for passengers.

The Commission's investigation found that:

- None of the overlapping routes raises competition concerns despite a small number of routes with high combined market shares, because (a) the overlapping routes are direct/indirect overlaps; (b) Virgin Atlantic, Delta and Air France-KLM are not close competitors and they continue to face significant competition from other carriers on the routes where the activities of both airlines overlap.
- The increase in their combined slot portfolio is unlikely to have a negative effect on passengers at London Heathrow and Manchester airports.

As regards the **cargo air transport markets**, the transaction is unlikely to raise competition concerns notably because Air France-KLM, Delta and Virgin Atlantic are not close competitors and continue to face strong competition on the affected cargo routes (e.g. from Lufthansa or Cargolux).

Finally, as regards **maintenance, repair and overhaul services**, the transaction does not raise any competition concerns because of its limited impact on these market.

The Commission therefore concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns in any of the relevant markets and cleared the case unconditionally.

Background

The Commission previously approved the acquisition of joint control of Virgin Atlantic by Delta and Virgin Group in [June 2013](#).

Today's decision approves the acquisition of joint control by Air France-KLM, Delta Air Lines Inc. and Virgin Group over Virgin Atlantic Limited by way of purchase of shares. At the same time, Air France-KLM, Delta and Virgin Group intend to enhance the scope of their existing cooperation in the provision of air transport services for passengers and cargo by combining and expanding

two pre-existing “metal neutral” joint venture arrangements between Delta and Air France-KLM, and between Delta and Virgin Atlantic. These are cooperative arrangements in which they jointly plan and manage capacity, pricing, and inter-airline financial settlements, with all participating airlines sharing profits equally.

Companies and products

Air France-KLM, based in France, is the holding company of Air France, the French national carrier airline and KLM, the Dutch national carrier airline. The company provides passenger air transport services, cargo air transport services and maintenance, repair and overhaul services.

Delta is an international airline with headquarters in the United States. Delta provides passenger air transport services and cargo air transport services (using cargo holds on its passenger aircraft), as well as maintenance, repair and overhaul services.

Virgin Group, based in British Virgin Islands, is the holding company of a group of companies, including Virgin Atlantic, active in a wide range of products and services worldwide. The Virgin Group holding company, Virgin Group Holdings Limited, is wholly-owned by Sir Richard Branson.

Virgin Atlantic is an international airline with headquarters in the UK, providing passenger air transport services and cargo air transport services (using cargo holds on its passenger aircraft), as well as maintenance, repair and overhaul services.

Merger control rules and procedures

The transaction was notified to the Commission on 8 January 2019.

The Commission has the duty to assess mergers and acquisitions involving companies with a turnover above certain thresholds (see Article 1 of the Merger Regulation) and to prevent concentrations that would significantly impede effective competition in the EEA or any substantial part of it.

The vast majority of notified mergers do not pose competition problems and are cleared after a routine review. From the moment a transaction is notified, the Commission generally has a total of 25 working days to decide whether to grant approval (Phase I) or to start an in-depth investigation (Phase II).

More information will be available on the Commission’s [competition website](#), in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.8964](#).

EMCDDA signs two new working arrangements with ECHA and EFSA

Two new working arrangements will be signed in Brussels today between the EMCDDA and the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA).

The EMCDDA will now be cooperating with five EU agencies under new legislation applying from 23 November 2018, which strengthens the EU Early Warning System on new psychoactive substances ⁽¹⁾. Three existing working arrangements with the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC); the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and Europol were updated and signed in December 2018 ⁽²⁾.

EMCDDA Director Alexis Goosdeel will be signing the working arrangements with ECHA Executive Director Bjorn Hansen and EFSA Executive Director Bernhard Url. The agreements will ensure that the agencies exchange information on new psychoactive substances, in accordance with their respective mandates.

ECHA has the mandate to ensure a high level of protection of human health and the environment, including the promotion of alternative methods for assessment of hazards of substances, as well as the free circulation of substances on the internal market while enhancing competitiveness and innovation.

The purpose of EFSA is to contribute to a high level of protection of human life and health and to take account of animal health and welfare, plant health and the environment, in the context of the internal market.

The new arrangements will align the agencies' working relationships with the new legislation, which allows Europe to rapidly respond to public health and social threats caused by new psychoactive substances.

Daily News 12 / 02 / 2019

COLLEGE MEETING: Commission paves the way for first joint defence industrial projects under EU budget

Today, the European Commission formally initiated work with Member States to finance joint industrial projects in the field of defence. In a few weeks, following the views of Member States, the Commission will adopt the work programme and launch calls for proposals for the European Defence Industrial Development Programme under the EU budget for 2019-2020. This will help pave the way for the future European Defence Fund for the period 2021-2027. Vice-

President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, said: *“Defence cooperation in Europe helps Member States spend taxpayer money more efficiently, reduce duplications in spending, and get better value for money. Defence cooperation promotes a strong and innovative defence industry and raises the EU’s autonomy and technological leadership in defence. Unthinkable only a few years ago, defence cooperation is becoming a reality today.”* Commissioner Elżbieta **Bieńkowska**, responsible for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, added: *“To protect our citizens, Europe needs cutting-edge, interoperable defence technology and equipment in novel areas like artificial intelligence, encrypted software, drone technology or satellite communication. Thanks to the European Defence Fund, we are making this happen. We are ensuring Europe becomes a stronger security provider.”* In a world of increasing instability and cross-border threats to our security, no country can succeed alone. That is why the **Juncker** Commission is making an unprecedented effort to protect and defend Europeans. It has already taken first steps to boost cooperation between Member States in the field of [defence research](#) and defence industry development, with more to follow in 2019-2020. In June 2018, the Commission also proposed a [fully-fledged €13 billion European Defence Fund for 2021-2027](#), which is now under discussion by the European Parliament and Council. A readout of the College meeting, delivered by Vice-President **Katainen**, is broadcast on [EbS](#). A press release is available [online](#). (For more information: Lucia Caudet – Tel.: +32 229 56182; Mirna Talko – Tel.: +32 229 87278)

COLLEGE MEETING: Brexit Preparedness: European Commission adopts “no-deal” contingency measure for railway safety and connectivity

Given the increasing risk that the United Kingdom may leave the European Union on 30 March this year without a deal (a “no-deal” scenario), the European Commission has today adopted a proposal to help mitigate the significant impact that such a scenario would have on rail transport and connectivity between the EU and the UK. Today’s proposal will ensure the validity of safety authorisations for certain parts of rail infrastructure for a strictly limited period of three months to allow long-term solutions in line with EU law to be put in place. This is, in particular, related to the Channel Tunnel and will be conditional on the United Kingdom maintaining safety standards identical to EU requirements. This will ensure the protection of rail-passengers, the safety of citizens and will avoid major disruptions of cross-border rail operations after the UK’s withdrawal. In addition to this proposal, it is also essential that the concerned undertakings and national authorities continue to take all necessary measures to comply with EU rules on train driver licences, market access, as well as safety certificates and authorisations required to operate in the EU. Today’s proposal follows the calls by the European Council (Article 50) in [November](#) and [December 2018](#) to intensify preparedness work at all levels, and the adoption on 19 December 2018 of the [Commission’s Contingency Action Plan](#). The proposal is temporary in nature, limited in scope and will be adopted unilaterally by the EU. A [press release](#) is available online. (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: + 32 229 56172; Daniela Stoycheva – Tel.: +32 229 53664)

RÉUNION DU COLLÈGE: Initiative citoyenne européenne: la Commission enregistre l'initiative « Let's demand smarter vaping regulation! »

La Commission européenne a décidé aujourd'hui d'enregistrer l'initiative citoyenne européenne intitulée « Let's demand smarter vaping regulation! ». L'objectif de l'initiative est de « *créer une législation sur mesure qui distingue clairement les produits de vapotage des produits du tabac et des produits pharmaceutiques* ». Les organisateurs demandent à la Commission de « *mettre en place une nouvelle législation [pour les produits de vapotage] fondée sur le respect obligatoire de normes strictes en matière de fabrication, de sécurité et de qualité des produits, couplée à des pratiques commerciales responsables qui garantissent la protection des jeunes* ». La décision de la Commission d'enregistrer l'initiative ne concerne que la recevabilité juridique de la proposition. À ce stade, la Commission n'en a pas analysé le fond. L'enregistrement de cette initiative aura lieu le 20 février 2019 et marquera le début d'un processus de douze mois au cours duquel les signatures de soutien seront collectées par ses organisateurs. Si, en l'espace d'un an, l'initiative recueille un million de déclarations de soutien, provenant d'au moins sept États membres différents, la Commission disposera d'un délai de trois mois pour réagir. Un [communiqué de presse](#) est disponible en ligne. (Pour plus d'informations: Natasha Bertaud – Tél.: +32 229 67456; Kasia Kolanko – Tél.: +32 229 63444)

Le transport ferroviaire dans l'est de la Pologne plus rapide grâce aux fonds de l'UE

Le Fonds européen de développement régional (FEDER) investit près de 94 millions d'euros dans la modernisation de la ligne ferroviaire n° 216. Cette ligne relie les villes de Działdowo et d'Olsztyn dans la région polonaise de Varmie-Mazurie, dans le nord-est du pays. Lorsque les travaux seront achevés, à l'été 2019, il faudra aux passagers 17 minutes de moins pour voyager entre ces deux villes ainsi qu'entre Olsztyn et la gare centrale de Varsovie. Corina Crețu, commissaire européenne chargée de la politique régionale, a quant à elle déclaré: « *Grâce à cet investissement au titre de la politique de cohésion, les habitants de la région de Varmie-Mazurie bénéficieront de trajets en train plus rapides, plus sûrs et plus confortables. Outre qu'il favorise le passage à un mode de transport plus respectueux de l'environnement, cet investissement de l'UE améliorera l'accessibilité dans cette partie du pays et stimulera le développement régional.* » Ce projet financé par l'Union inclut aussi la construction ou la rénovation de gares ferroviaires dans les villes de Nidzica, d'Olsztynek et d'Olsztyn, dans lesquelles l'accès aux quais et aux trains sera facilité pour les personnes à mobilité réduite. Il porte aussi sur l'aménagement de pistes cyclables, destinées à encourager l'usage du vélo. Ces 94 millions d'euros d'investissement viennent s'ajouter au milliard d'euros déjà investi dans la modernisation des chemins de fer dans l'est de la Pologne au cours de la période 2014-2020. Une fois achevé, le réseau reliera les capitales régionales suivantes: Olsztyn, Białystok, Lublin, Rzeszów et Kielce. (Pour en savoir plus: Christian Spahr – Tél.: +32 2 295 00 55; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tél.: +32 229 56169)

Europe leads the global clean energy transition: latest Eurostat data confirm

that the EU is on track to meet its 2020 Renewable energy target

When Jean-Claude **Juncker** became President of the European Commission he vowed to make the bloc a [global leader in renewable energy](#). Achieving 20% of energy from renewable sources in 2020 is one of the headline targets of the [Europe 2020 strategy](#). An increasing share of renewable energy is not only necessary to decarbonise our economy and to improve our energy security, it is also ensuring the EU's position at the forefront of the development of technologies of the future and creating growth and jobs. The EU has been a leading voice in international climate negotiations for years and was once again instrumental in reaching an agreement on the "Paris Rulebook" at the [COP24 in Katowice](#). But fighting climate change is not only about brokering international deals, it is also about delivering at home. EU Climate Action and Energy Commissioner Miguel **Arias Cañete** said: *"The EU is on track to meet its 2020 renewable target, with eleven Member States already above their national targets. And as Europe heads to become the world's first major economy to go climate neutral by 2050, we will need to step up our efforts. In a climate-neutral Europe, power generation should be fully decarbonised by 2050, more than 80% of the EU's electricity will be produced by renewable energy sources. To get there, the momentum created by renewables for competitiveness, growth and jobs in Europe must continue."* The Juncker Commission recently finalised negotiations of the [Clean Energy for All European package](#), setting ambitious targets for 2030. However, setting new targets is only credible if we deliver on our current objectives. [Today's Eurostat report](#) shows that the EU is on track for reaching its renewable energy target for 2020. In 2017, the share of energy from renewable sources in gross final consumption of energy in the EU, reached 17.5%, up from 17.0% in 2016 and more than double the share as in 2004 (8.5), the first year for which the data are available. The Commission is delivering on its [priority](#) to put in place a fully integrated Energy Union with a forward-looking climate policy by leading abroad and fulfilling its commitments at home. *(For more information: Anna-Kaisa Itkonen – Tel.: +32 229 56186; Lynn Rietdorf – Tel.: +32 229 74959)*

Capital Markets Union: Commission welcomes Member States' agreement on the review of the European supervision in the areas of EU financial markets and anti-money laundering

The Commission welcomes today's agreement between EU Member States to press ahead with negotiations on the review of the European System of Financial Supervision – a crucial component of the EU's Capital Markets Union and broader European Monetary Union. The Council's negotiating mandate was confirmed by the EU Economy and Finance Ministers at their meeting this morning in Brussels. Valdis **Dombrovskis**, Vice-President in charge of Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union said: *"The review of the European System of Financial Supervision will mark a significant step towards making our supervisory rules more effective and efficient. I am confident that if all sides work with a lot of commitment an overall agreement can be reached under this legislature."* Vice-President **Jyrki Katainen**, responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness,

added: *“Strengthening the EU’s financial supervision tools is a key priority for the Capital Markets Union. EU Member States have today taken a decisive step towards a system that can help drive deliver investment, jobs and growth.”* Commissioner for Justice, Gender Equality and Consumers, Věra **Jourová**, said: *“The reform will guarantee that supervision of money laundering risks in the financial sector is pro-active and fast. It will also make sure that the rules are evenly enforced throughout the EU.”* European financial markets are evolving rapidly. Regulatory and supervisory convergence within the Single Market must be enhanced if we want to help these markets work more effectively and to be ready to address new challenges. In particular, the European Supervisory Authorities (ESAs) need to be better equipped if we want to promote supervisory convergence and to address new challenges. To that end, [the Commission proposed](#) in September 2017 to improve the mandates, governance and funding of these bodies (the European Banking Authority, the European Insurance and Occupational Pensions Authority and the European Securities and Markets Authority) which are pivotal in ensuring that financial markets across the EU are well regulated, strong and stable. This proposal [was amended in September last year](#) to strengthen the supervisory framework in the area of anti-money laundering and terrorist financing. The Commission now calls on both the European Parliament and the Council to make all efforts to reach a final political agreement on the entire package before the recess of the European Parliament. *(For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Patrick McCullough – Tel.: +32 229 87183)*

Mobility Package: Commission welcomes provisional agreement on clean vehicles in public procurement

Yesterday, the European Parliament and the Council reached a provisional agreement on the European Commission’s [proposal to reform the Clean Vehicles Directive](#). It is part of the Clean Mobility Package, which aims at to help accelerate the transition to low- and zero emission vehicles. Commissioner for Transport Violeta Bulc welcomed the agreement: *“We are delivering on our commitments. By promoting clean vehicles in public procurement, we are giving a solid boost to the deployment of clean mobility solutions, which will contribute to cleaner air for citizens.”* Specifically, the proposed Directive defines clean vehicles and sets minimum targets for Member States for their public procurement. Following this provisional agreement, it will have to be formally approved by the European Parliament and the Council, before it can enter into force. *(For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Daniela Stoycheva – Tel.: +32 229 53664)*

Seafarers: Commission welcomes provisional agreement to ensure highest standards for training and certification

The European Commission welcomes yesterday’s provisional agreement by the European Parliament and Council on its [proposal on seafarers’ training and certification](#). The co-legislators accepted all the goals set out in the initial Commission proposal, which seeks to simplify and update the EU regulatory framework on training and certification for seafarers, including the mutual recognition of certificates issued by EU Member States. The reform will align EU rules with the recently updated [STCW Convention](#), which has

been adopted by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO). It will therefore ensure that seafarers working on-board the EU fleet have top quality knowledge and skills. The reform will also step up the efficiency of the centralised system used to recognise certificates for seafarers issued by third countries. Co-legislators also found agreement on aspects of the digitisation of seafarers' certificates, possible initiatives to promote the concept of Maritime Certificate of Excellence, and the consideration, in the future, of whether a third country has ratified the Maritime Labour Convention before employing seafarers certified by it. This provisional agreement will now need to be formally approved by the European Parliament and the Council before it can enter into force. *(For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: + 32 229 56172; Daniela Stoycheva – Tel.: +32 229 53664)*

Security Union: Commission welcomes the agreement on enhanced rules to fight terrorist financing

Today the European Parliament and the Council reached a political agreement on the Commission's proposal to facilitate cross-border access to financial information by law enforcement authorities. A [political priority for 2018-2019](#), the new measures will allow police to quickly access crucial financial information for criminal investigations, boosting the EU's response to terrorism and other serious crime. Welcoming the agreement, Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris Avramopoulos said: *"If you want to catch criminals and terrorists, you need to be able to follow their money. The new rules agreed today will ensure swift access to financial information and smoother cooperation across Europe so that no criminal or suspect can slip under the radar any longer or get away with dirty money."* Commissioner for the Security Union Julian King said: *"We have been closing down the space in which terrorists and criminals operate, denying them the means to carry out their deadly attacks. Today, we are cutting this space even further, making it easier for law enforcement to access financial information to help them crack down on the financing of terrorism. I would like to thank the European Parliament and the Council for delivering on an important commitment to building a safer Europe."* Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality Věra Jourová said: *"Improving the cooperation between Financial Intelligence Units and law enforcement in the EU will allow us to crack down faster and more effectively on money laundering. We need to be vigilant towards suspicious transfers of money, which can be one of the signals that a terrorist attack is being prepared. Such information needs to be relayed fast, and this can only be done if we have a strong network."* The [full press release](#) is available online. *(For more information: Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456; Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Kasia Kolanko – Tel.: +32 229 63444; Melanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659)*

rescEU: Commission welcomes European Parliament's positive plenary vote

The European Parliament has today voted overwhelmingly to adopt rescEU, an initiative of the Commission to strengthen European capacities to respond to natural disasters like forest fires, floods, earthquakes and other crises. Welcoming the vote, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis

Management Christos **Stylianides** said: *“This vote in the European Parliament paves the way for a stronger European civil protection response system. With rescEU, no country hit by a disaster will stand alone. rescEU makes EU solidarity more tangible and more effective. Our citizens must know that Europe is here to protect and save lives and livelihoods. I thank the European Parliament for its strong support. We are now a step closer to making rescEU a reality. For the good of all Europeans.”* Today’s vote endorses the initial [political agreement](#) reached in December 2018 between the Parliament and Council. Following today’s European Parliament Plenary vote, the final step is due to be adoption by the Council of the European Union in March. rescEU would then be due to enter force towards the end of March. (For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz De Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Daniel Puglisi –Tel.: +32 229 69140)

Commission welcomes European Parliament’s positive plenary vote on EU-Morocco fisheries partnership

Today the European Parliament voted in favour of the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the EU and Morocco. The agreement, and its protocol valid for 4 years, will further strengthen the strategic partnership between the Union and Morocco in the fisheries sector. It will allow the EU fleet to fish surplus stocks that are not being fished by local fishermen, in exchange for an overall financial contribution of € 208 million. The socio-economic impacts of the Agreement will benefit the populations concerned and it will have a positive impact on the sustainable development of natural resources. Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Karmenu **Vella** said: *“The agreement with Morocco that the European Parliament endorsed today is very good news for both sides of the Mediterranean. It is a real partnership that delivers economic benefits, contributes to more sustainable fishing and improves governance.”* After today’s European Parliament vote, the Council will be now in a position to proceed with the final adoption of the agreement in the coming weeks. Once the agreement and protocol enter into force around 130 vessels from up to 10 EU Member States will be allowed to the fishing grounds covered by the agreement, including the waters adjacent to Western Sahara to catch tuna, demersal and small pelagic fish such as sardines, mackerel and anchovies. In exchange, the EU will contribute the sum of €208 million – part compensation to access the fishing zone, part contribution to sectoral fishing support and part fees payable by ship-owners. A Joint Committee will plan and monitor the use of the sectoral support funds. More information is available [online](#). (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: + 32 229 56172; Daniela Stoycheva – Tel.: +32 229 53664)

Mergers: Commission approves merger between Amcor and Bemis, subject to conditions

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the merger between Amcor and Bemis. Amcor and Bemis are both global manufacturers

of packaging solutions worldwide, supplying a broad range of rigid and flexible packaging products for many different sectors, including the food, consumer, medical and pharmaceutical industries. The Commission examined in particular the effects of the proposed transaction on competition in the markets for the supply of flexible packaging for (i) medical use and (ii) for food products in the European Economic Area (EEA), where the activities of Amcor and Bemis overlap. As regards flexible packaging for medical use, the merged entity would have created a player three times larger than the second largest supplier, on a fragmented market with many small suppliers. The Commission was concerned that the transaction as notified would negatively affect competition on the market for flexible packaging for medical use and could lead to higher prices, less choice and less innovation. As regards flexible packaging for food products, the Commission concluded that the proposed merger would raise no competition concerns due to the presence of a large number of alternative suppliers, lower barriers to entry and because it is easier for customers to switch to alternative suppliers. To address the Commission's competition concerns, Amcor and Bemis offered to divest Bemis' entire medical packaging business in the EEA. The commitments fully remove the entire overlap between the companies' activities in the supply of flexible packaging for medical use in the EEA. Therefore, the Commission concluded that the proposed transaction, as modified by the commitments, would no longer raise competition concerns in the EEA. The decision is conditional upon full compliance with the commitments. The full press release is available online in [EN](#), [FR](#), [DE](#). (For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of joint control of AIP by MHI and Danfoss

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over the whole of Artemis Intelligent Power Limited ("AIP") of the UK by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Ltd. ("MHI") of Japan and Danfoss A/S of Denmark. AIP, previously solely controlled by MHI, is active in the provision of technology associated with digital displacement hydraulics. MHI is an international supplier of heavy industrial machinery. Danfoss is a supplier of products and services in areas such as mobile hydraulics, cooling and heating. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, given its limited impact on the market. The transaction was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.9126](#). (For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel.: +32 229 56182; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Concentrations: la Commission autorise l'acquisition de l'activité "Equity Markets & Commodities" de Commerzbank par la Société Générale

La Commission européenne a approuvé, en vertu du règlement européen sur les concentrations, l'acquisition de l'activité "Equity Markets & Commodities" de Commerzbank, basée en Allemagne, par la Société Générale, basée en France.

Equity Markets & Commodities de Commerzbank offre des services de gestion d'actifs, ainsi que la conception, la structuration, l'émission et la tenue de marché de produits de placement structurés. La Société Générale est présente dans le monde entier dans les domaines de la banque de détail et des services financiers, de la gestion globale de placements et de la banque de financement. La Commission a conclu que l'opération envisagée ne poserait pas de problème de concurrence compte tenu des chevauchements horizontaux modérés entre les activités des sociétés dans un petit nombre de pays sur le marché de la structuration, de l'émission et de la tenue de marché de produits d'investissement structurés négociés en bourse, et des relations verticales insignifiantes pour la distribution de produits de placement structurés négociés en bourse. De plus amples informations sont disponibles sur le [site internet concurrence](#) de la Commission, dans le [registre public](#) des affaires sous le numéro d'affaire [M.9130](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Lucía Caudet – Tél.: +32 229 56182; Maria Tsoni – Tél.: +32 229 90526)

STATEMENTS

Statement by Commissioner Günther H. Oettinger on the Decision by the European Ombudsman of 11 February 2019 on the European Commission's appointment of a new Secretary-General

European Commissioner for Budget and Human Resources Günther H. **Oettinger** has today reacted to the Decision by the European Ombudsman of 11 February 2019 on the European Commission's appointment of a new Secretary-General as follows: *"The European Commission takes note of the Decision by the European Ombudsman of 11 February 2019 on the European Commission's appointment of a new Secretary-General. As we have explained in detail earlier – most recently in our opinion of 3 December 2018 on the Ombudsman's initial findings and recommendations – we continue to disagree with a number of those findings. Likewise, we have a different reading of the applicable rules. The College took the unanimous decision to appoint the new Secretary-General in full compliance with all applicable rules, as interpreted by the case law of the European Union Courts. The person currently occupying this post fully meets all the demanding requirements for the job. The European Commission regrets that the Ombudsman seems to disregard the additional clarifications provided. When it comes to the Recommendation that the appointment of the Secretary-General should be carried out independently from the appointment of any other Director-General, I convened a round table with the other EU Institutions on 25 September 2018. The constructive discussions comforted the European Commission in its view that the way in which the Institutions implement the rules is both adequate and fit for purpose. The EU Staff Regulations, supplemented by established case law, provide a solid framework within which each Institution has the autonomy to organise its departments and assign its staff so as to guarantee the excellence and independence of the EU civil service, working for the benefit and in the common interest of our citizens."* The statement is available online in [EN](#), [FR](#) and [DE](#). (For more information: Margaritis Schinas – Tel.: +32 229 60524; Mina Andreeva – Tel.:

[Upcoming events](#) of the European Commission (ex-Top News)

European Citizens' Initiative: Commission registers 'Let's demand smarter vaping regulation! initiative'

The objective of the initiative is to: *" create bespoke legislation which clearly sets vaping products apart from tobacco and pharmaceutical products".* The organisers call on the Commission to *"ensure new legislation [for vaping products] based on mandatory compliance with robust product quality, safety and manufacturing standards, together with responsible marketing practices that ensure youth protection".*

The European Commission's decision to register the Initiative concerns only the legal admissibility of the proposal. The Commission has not analysed the substance at this stage.

The registration of this Initiative will take place on 20 February 2019, starting a one-year process of collection of signatures of support by its organisers. Should the initiative receive one million statements of support within one year, from at least seven different Member States, the Commission will have to react within three months. The Commission can decide either to follow the request or not, and in both instances would be required to explain its reasoning.

Background

European Citizens' Initiatives were introduced with the Lisbon Treaty and launched as an agenda-setting tool in the hands of citizens in April 2012, upon the entry into force of the European Citizens' Initiative Regulation which implements the Treaty provisions. In 2017, as part of President Juncker's State of the Union address, the European Commission tabled [reform proposals for the European Citizens' Initiative](#) to make it even more user-friendly. In [December 2018](#), the European Parliament and the Council agreed on the reform and the revised rules will start applying as of 1 January 2020.

Once formally registered, a European Citizens' Initiative allows one million citizens from at least one quarter of EU Member States to invite the European Commission to propose a legal act in areas where the Commission has the power to do so.

The conditions for admissibility are that the proposed action does not manifestly fall outside the framework of the Commission's powers to submit a proposal for a legal act, that it is not manifestly abusive, frivolous or vexatious and that it is not manifestly contrary to the values of the Union.

For More Information

Full text of the proposed European Citizens' Initiative (available as of 20 February)

[ECIs currently collecting signatures](#)

[ECI website](#)

[ECI Regulation](#)