Large heroin seizure in Italy supported by Eurojust

8 November 2018

Last weekend, 270 kg of heroin was seized by Italian Customs agents in the Port of Genoa, Italy, hidden in a container that arrived from Iran, the largest seizure of drugs in Genoa in 20 years. The Italian Police arranged for a portion of the seized drugs to be sent further on its planned route, the first controlled delivery of heroin outside Italy. The drugs travelled by truck through three States, with the Netherlands as the final destination. Two suspects were arrested in the Netherlands.

The long investigation was coordinated between the judicial and law enforcement authorities of five States, with the support of Eurojust, and was organised by the Italian Antimafia District Directorate (*Direzione Distrettuale Antimafia* (Dda)). Information was exchanged with the Central Drug Trafficking Directorate (*Direzione Centrale per I Servizi Antidroga*) and the Italian Police Central Operations Service (Servizio Centrale Operativo della Polizia di Stato).

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Africa-Europe Alliance: boosting sustainable energy investments in Africa

Today at the Africa Investment Forum in Johannesburg organised by the African Development Bank, the European Union and the African Union have launched the EU-Africa high-level platform on sustainable energy investments in Africa.

During his State of the Union speech President **Juncker** has announced the new ‘Africa – Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs’ to substantially boost investment in Africa, strengthen trade, create jobs, and invest in education and skills. The high-level platform that was set in motion today represents a concrete action under this alliance to boost strategic investments and strengthen the role of the private sector.

Commissioner for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, Elżbieta **Bieńkowska,** said in Johannesburg: “*If we are serious about sustainable energy investments in Africa, we need everybody on board, including the private sector. The high-level platform will pave the way for* *that: experts from the public, private, academic and financial sectors will jointly discuss challenges and barriers to sustainable investment in this area and help to address them."*

The High Level Platform brings together public, private and financial operators as well as academia from Africa and Europe. They will examine challenges and strategic interests that could accelerate impact, especially for sustainable growth and jobs. The high-level platform aims to attract and boost responsible and sustainable private investments towards sustainable energy in Africa.

A concrete outcome of the high-level platform launch event was the announcement of three streams of work, 1) identify energy investments with high impact for growth and job creation, 2) analyse energy investment risks and propose policy guidelines for a sustainable investment and business environment and 3) boost exchanges between African and European private sector.

Background

By bringing energy actors from the private and public sectors together from both continents, the high-level platform will foster the partnership between European and African businesses, and support the 'Africa- EU Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs'. It will help to make most of opportunities around sustainable energy investments in Africa, as well as to better address challenges and key barriers that currently hinder it.

The Africa Investment Forum in Johannesburg takes place from 7-9 November 2018 and is organised by the African Development Bank. The Forum is the place where project sponsors, borrowers, lenders, and public and private sector investors come together to accelerate Africa's investment opportunities – especially the energy sector.

The 'Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs' builds on the commitments taken during the African Union – European Union Summit, which took place in November last year in Abidjan, where the two continents agreed to strengthen their partnership. It sets out the key strands of action for a stronger economic agenda for the EU and its African partners.

Access to sustainable energy plays a fundamental role in development. The objective of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is to give universal access to affordable, reliable, modern energy services. The EU is determined to help partner countries to increase renewable energy generation and to diversify their energy sources ensuring the transition to a smart, secure, resilient and sustainable energy system for all. Mobilisation of the private sector is crucial for this endeavour.

For More Information

Africa-Europe Alliance

[ESMA proposes a regulatory change to support the Brexit preparations of counterparties to uncleared OTC derivatives]

In the context of the on-going withdrawal negotiations between the EU and the UK, and to address the situation where a UK counterparty may no longer be able to provide certain services across the EU, counterparties in the EU may want to novate their non-centrally cleared OTC derivative contracts by replacing the UK counterparty with an EU counterparty. However, by doing this, they may trigger the clearing obligation for these contracts, therefore facing costs that were not accounted for when the contract was originally entered into.

Limited exemption from the clearing obligation to facilitate novations

The draft RTS allows UK counterparties to be replaced with EU ones without triggering the clearing obligation. This limited exemption would ensure a level playing field between EU counterparties and the preservation of the regulatory and economic conditions under which the contracts where originally entered into.

The window for the novation of non-centrally cleared OTC derivative contracts which fall under the scope of this amending regulation would be open for twelve months following the withdrawal of the UK from the EU. Counterparties can however start repapering their contracts ahead of the application date, making the novation conditional upon a no-deal Brexit, given the conditional application date of this amending regulation.

Steven Maijoor, Chair, said:

“ESMA and other EU authorities and institutions have been clear on the importance for market participants to be prepared for Brexit, including the possibility of a no-deal scenario. The proposed regulatory change supports counterparties’ Brexit preparations and maintain a level playing field between EU counterparties, while addressing potential risks to orderly markets and financial stability.

“Counterparties should negotiate as soon as possible the novations of their transactions which are in the scope of this amending regulation, given the twelve month timeframe to benefit from it.”

Third country regimes

ESMA is aware of the varying third country regimes across Member States and the impact it has on the provisions of services related to OTC derivative life cycle events, and has already highlighted its concerns in this respect. Market participants will need to take these varying regimes into account in their no-deal contingency plans regarding non-centrally cleared OTC derivatives. Given the limited effectiveness of supervisory convergence in the absence of a common legal basis, ESMA is proposing to reduce legal uncertainty by acting in relation to the clearing obligation.

Next steps

The draft RTS have been submitted to the European Commission for endorsement, and they are subject to the scrutiny of the European Parliament and of the Council.

Further developments on risk-mitigation techniques

ESMA, together with the European Banking Authority (EBA) and the European Insurance and Occupational Pensions Authority (EIOPA) is currently considering a similar approach to facilitate the novation of legacy contracts to EU counterparties considering that novation may also trigger the application of bilateral margin requirements.

As regards non-centrally cleared OTC derivative contracts, the above mentioned measures will be the only regulatory measures the ESAs intend to propose to help address the legal uncertainty raised by the withdrawal of the UK from the EU and to ensure a level-playing field between EU counterparties.

[ESMA updates its Q&As regarding the Benchmark Regulation]()

The updated BMR Q&As provide new clarifications regarding the following topic:

- Use of benchmarks in bilateral agreement on exchanged collateral.

The purpose of these Q&As is to promote common supervisory approaches and practices in the application of BMR. It aims at providing investors and other market participants with clarifications on the applicable requirements. ESMA will periodically review these Q&As and update them where required.

Daily News 07 / 11 / 2018

COLLEGE MEETING: Endocrine disruptors: A strategy for the future that protects EU citizens and the environment

Today the Commission has adopted a Communication, confirming its commitment to protecting citizens and the environment from hazardous chemicals. The Communication outlines how the Commission intends to ensure that the EU approach on endocrine disruptors remains the most modern and fit-for-purpose in the world. The Communication delivers on the commitment taken by the Commission last year, when working with Member States on the criteria to identify endocrine disruptors in the areas of pesticides and biocides. It addresses the concerns of the European Parliament and the Council and follows up from the 7th Environment Action Programme. The EU's strategic approach to endocrine disruptors will continue to be based firmly on science and on the application of the precautionary principle. It aims at: minimising our overall exposure to endocrine disruptors, accelerating the development of a thorough research basis for effective and forward-looking decision-making, and promoting active dialogue allowing all stakeholders to be heard and to work together. For the first time, the Commission will also launch a comprehensive screening of the legislation applicable to endocrine disruptors through a Fitness Check, which will also include a public consultation. The Communication also outlines initiatives currently considered by the Commission to ensure that the implementation of existing policies on endocrine disruptors reaches its full potential. This includes the identification of endocrine disruptors; improving communication throughout supply chains by using Safety Data Sheets as established under REACH; and taking forward the scientific assessment of endocrine disruptors with further regulatory action. The full press release and MEMO are available online.(*For more information: Anca Paduraru – Tel.: +32 229 91269; Aikaterini Apostola – Tel.: +32 229 87624)*

COLLEGE MEETING: European Citizens' Initiative: Commission registers 'Mandatory food labelling Non-Vegetarian / Vegetarian / Vegan' initiative'

The European Commission has today decided to register a European Citizens' Initiative entitled 'Mandatory food labelling Non-Vegetarian / Vegetarian / Vegan'. The initiative states that: *'Vegetarians and vegans struggle across the EU to identify suitable food. We must study the ingredients list of a food product to determine if it is fit for purchase with a hyper-awareness of ambiguous ingredients that could either be plant or animal based'.* The organisers call on the European Commission to propose mandatory pictorial labels on all food products indicating whether they are non-vegetarian, vegetarian, or vegan. The 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 12 November 2018, 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. More information is available in the press release here. *(For more information: Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456; Kasia Kolanko – Tel.: +32 229 63444)*

COLLEGE MEETING: Commission proposes fishing opportunities in the Atlantic and North Sea for 2019

Today the Commission presents its proposal ahead of the December Fisheries Council where Member States should agree next year's fishing quotas. The European Commission proposes fishing opportunities (Total Allowable Catches) in the Atlantic and the North Sea for 89 stocks: for 62 stocks the fishing quota is either increased or remains the same, for 22 stocks is reduced and for 5 the Commission proposes new by-catch quotas at low level to reduce the fishing pressure.As the size of some key fish stocks is increasing – notably for Norway lobster in Skagerrak/Kattegat, Northern hake and Southern horse mackerel – so is the profitability of the fishing sector, with an estimated €1.4 billion profit for 2018. Karmenu **Vella**, Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, said: "*Next year will be a milestone year for European fisheries. Our collective duty is to ensure a good transition to the full landing obligation as of 1st January 2019 while continuing our progress to achieve sustainable fishing by 2020. With this proposal, the Commission puts forward concrete solutions to advance on both fronts*." In order to put an end to the wasteful practice of discarding fish, as of 1st January 2019, the landing obligation will apply fully to all EU fishing fleets. This means that all catches of regulated commercial species taken on-board (including by-catch) are to be landed and counted against each Member States' respective quotas. In today's proposal the Commission has already deducted the amounts corresponding to the agreed exemptions to the landing obligation from the advised catches. The fishing opportunities, or Total Allowable Catches (TACs), are quotas set for most commercial fish stocks that keep the stocks healthy, while allowing the fishing industry to profit from fishing the highest amount of fish. In recent years, substantial progress can be observed in the EU with regards to sustainable fishing. 53 stocks are now fishedat Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) levels compared to only 5 in 2009 and 44 in 2017. A press release and MEMO are available online. (*For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: + 32 229 56172; Daniela Stoycheva – Tel.: +32 229 53664*)

Juncker Plan: €190 million for innovative and social Portuguese businesses

Yesterday, in the context of the 2018 Web Summit in Lisbon and in presence of Commissioner **Moedas**, the European Investment Bank Group signed two agreements, together worth €190 million, for the launch of two equity funds managed by the firms Vallis Capital Partners and Mustard Seed MAZE. Both funds benefit from the support of the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the heart of theInvestment Plan for Europe – the Juncker Plan. Vallis

Capital Partners launched a €150 million fund targeting innovative Portuguese small and medium businesses over the next 5 years and Mustard Seed Maze launched a fund worth €40 million to invest in social enterprises in the country. Commissioner Carlos **Moedas**, responsible for Research, Science and Innovation, said: *"These two Juncker Plan deals worth €190 million will give Portuguese small and medium businesses the boost they need to express their talents and turn their ideas into concrete projects. Fresh funding will be available for innovative projects of high value added and for social enterprises, which are two sectors that are key to the future of Europe's economy. The Web Summit is probably the most symbolic place where such deals can be formalized."* A press release is available here. In October 2018, the Juncker Plan had already mobilised €344.4 billion in Europe, including over €7 billion in Portugal, with 793,000 small and medium businesses set to benefit from improved access to finance. *(For more information: Christian Spahr – Tél.: +32 229 50055; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)*

Mergers: Commission approves Disney's acquisition of parts of Fox, subject to conditions

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the proposed acquisition of parts of Fox by Disney, both US based global media companies. The proposed transaction would combine Disney and parts of Fox, including its film and television studios and its cable and international television businesses. The Commission examined the effects of the proposed transaction on the markets where the activities of the two companies overlap. In relation to (i) production and distribution of films for release in movie theatres and (ii) distribution of content for home entertainment and licensing of films and other TV content, the Commission found that the combination of Disney's and Fox's activities would raise no competition concerns because the merged entity would continue to face significant competition from other players, such as Sony, Universal and Warner Bros. In relation to the (iii) wholesale supply of TV channels, the Commission found that the proposed transaction would have eliminated competition between two strong suppliers of "factual channels" in several Member States of the European Economic Area (EEA). To address the Commission's competition concerns, Disney committed to divest its interest in all factual channels it controls in the EEA, namely: History, H2, Crime & Investigation, Blaze and Lifetime channels. These channels are currently controlled by A+E Television Networks, which is a joint venture between Disney and Hearst. The commitments fully remove the overlap between Disney's and Fox's activities in the wholesale supply of factual channels in the EEA. Therefore, the Commission concluded that the proposed transaction, as modifiedby the commitments, would no longer raise competition concerns. The Commission's decision is conditional upon full compliance with the commitments. The full press release is available online in EN, FR, DE. *(For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)*

State aid: Commission endorses prolongation of Dutch support scheme for

maritime transport

The European Commission has approved under EU State aid rules the prolongation of a scheme supporting the maritime transport sector in the Netherlands. Under the scheme, companies employing seafarers on board wind-propelled commercial cruising vessels can benefit from a reduction in income taxes and social security contributions. The Netherlands has also agreed to extend the benefits of the scheme to all vessels flying the flag of any EU or European Economic Area (EEA) Member State. This is in line with the Commission's interpretation of the Guidelines on State aid to maritime transport. The Commission concluded that the scheme, which will run until the end of 2022, is in line with these Guidelines because it will contribute to the competitiveness of the EU maritime transport sector, while preserving employment and ensuring a level playing field. More information will be available on the Commission's competitionwebsite, in the public case register under the case number SA.46727. *(For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344)*

Eurostat: le volume des ventes du commerce de détail stable dans la zone euro

En septembre 2018 par rapport à août 2018, le volume des ventes du commerce de détail corrigé des variations saisonnières est resté stable dans la zone euro (ZE19) et a diminué dans l'UE28, selon les estimations d'Eurostat, l'office statistique de l'Union européenne. En août 2018, le commerce de détail avait augmenté de 0,3% tant dans la zone euro que dans l'UE28. En septembre 2018 par rapport à septembre 2017, l'indice corrigé des effets de calendrier des ventes de détail a augmenté de 0,8% dans la zone euro et de 1,5% dans l'UE28. Un communiqué de presse est disponible ici. *(Pour plus d'informations: Lucía Caudet – Tél.: +32 229 56182; Mirna Talko – Tél.: +32 229 87278)*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Avramopoulos in Washington for EU–U.S. Justice and Home Affairs Ministerial meeting

Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris **Avramopoulos** will be in Washington D.C. on Thursday and Friday to participate in the EU–U.S. Justice and Home Affairs Ministerial meeting. The Commissioner will represent the EU together with the Austrian Federal Minister of the Interior Herbert Kickl and Federal Minister of Justice Josef Moser on behalf of the Austrian Presidency, who will be also joined by the Romanian Minister of Internal Affairs Carmen Daniela and Minister of Justice Tudorel Toader from the incoming Romanian Presidency of the Council of the EU. The U.S. will be represented by the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security Kirstjen Nielsen and Attorney General Jeff Sessions. The meeting will focus on EU–U.S. cooperation in the areas of: counterterrorism, in particular information sharing and terrorist content online; migration, including smuggling of migrants, border management and visa reciprocity; the resilience of electoral systems; cyberspace, including cross-border access to electronic evidence; and as well as cooperation on counter narcotics efforts. The EU–U.S. Justice and Home Affairs Ministerial meeting is held twice a year to advance transatlantic cooperation in these areas, with the last such meeting taking place on 22 and 23 May 2018 in Sofia, Bulgaria. *(For more information: Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456; Kasia Kolanko – Tel.: +32 229 63444)*

Commissioner Bieńkowska in South Africa for Africa Investment Forum

Commissioner for the Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs Elżbieta **Bieńkowska** travelled to South Africa to represent the European Commission at the Africa Investment Forum. Her visit takes place two months after President **Juncker** announced in his State of the Union Speech the creation of an Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs: *"What happens in Africa matters for Europe, and what happens in Europe matters for Africa. Our partnership is an investment in our shared future. It is a partnership of equals in which we support each other, help each other to prosper and make the world a safer, more stable and more sustainable place to live."* Today, the Commissioner will visit the Special Economic Zone for Green Technologies, north of Capetown. Within Special Economic Zones (SEZs) cluster industries from a particular sector such as manufacturing, agro-processing or energy gather together to benefit from scale and co-location. Tomorrow in Johannesburg at the Africa Investment Forum, Commissioner **Bieńkowska** will deliver opening remarks for the launch of the EU-AU High-Level Platform on Sustainable Energy Investments in Africa. On the occasion of her visit, the Commissioner will also meet with Mr Mmamoloko Tryphosa Kubayi, Minister for the Department of Science and Technology and the CEO of South African National Space Agency Mr Valanathan Munsami.The Africa Investment Forum is an event where project sponsors, borrowers, lenders, and public and private sector investors come together to accelerate Africa's investment opportunities and support the economy and social development of the Continent. More than 2000 participants are expected to join the event including African Heads of State and Government, major African CEOs, International Organisations and Finance Institutions. *(For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel.: +32 229 56182; Victoria von Hammerstein – Tel.: +32 229 55040)*

Vice-President Šefčovič in Ireland for second Energy Union Tour

As part of his second Energy Union Tour, Commission Vice-President for Energy Union **Maroš Šefčovič** will travel to Ireland on 8November. The Vice-President will give a keynote speech at the 2018 Climate Innovation Summit in Dublin Castle. The Summit focuses on the finance needed to accelerate climate action. The Vice-President will also meet Richard Bruton, Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment of the Republic of Ireland, their talks will focus on the Clean Energy Package and the preparations of Ireland's 2030 national energy and climate plan. The Vice-President will also meet members of the Irish parliament, and key stakeholders. Vice-President **Šefčovič** said: *"Ireland has invested significantly into renewables integration and interconnections. Now that economic growth is back, Ireland must make sure to decouple it from greenhouse gas emissions. Upon this visit I will be keen to discuss with Irish authorities and key stakeholders what further benefits the Energy Union can bring to Ireland, together with our unaltered support to Ireland's climate and energy policies."* (*For more information: Anca Paduraru – Tel.: +32 229 56186; Lynn Rietdorf – Tel.: +32 229 74959)*

Commissioner Miguel Arias Cañete in China to meet Climate negotiators

Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy, Miguel **Arias Cañete** will be in Beijing, China on Thursday 8th and Friday 9th of November to exchange views with Chinese authorities ahead of the global climate summit COP24, which will take place in Katowice, Poland in the beginning of December. Commissioner **Arias Cañete** will meet bilaterally with the Special Representative for Climate, Mr Xie Zhenhua and the Minister for Ecology and Environment, Mr Li. Accompanied by opening remarks from the Special Representative for Climate, Mr Xie Zhenhua, he will also give a speech at Tsinghua University Institute for Climate Change and Sustainable Development on Friday afternoon. Earlier this year, the EU and China issued a joint leaders statement showing their commitment to intensify their political, technical, economic and scientific cooperation on climate change and clean energy to drive forward a world-wide transformation to a thriving low carbon and climate-resilient economy and society and clean energy system. (*For more information: Anna-Kaisa Itkonen – Tel.: +32 229 56186; Lynn Rietdorf – Tel.: +32 229 74959)*

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