

Daily News 01 / 08 / 2019

Portugal: a €68 million cohesion investment to upgrade the Minho railway line

The Cohesion Fund invests almost €68 million in northern Portugal, to upgrade the 92-km section of the Minho single-track railway line between Nine and Valença, on the Spanish border. The project is part of the Porto-Valença-Spain rail corridor, which plays an important economic role in the region. In addition, the upgrade will improve comfort, safety and reliability on the line, will reduce travel time by 10 minutes for international trains and will support the development of intermodal transport by linking important nodes such as the Port of Leixões, Porto's Francisco Sá Carneiro Airport and logistics hubs. Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation **Carlos Moedas** said: *"This upgrade to the Minho railway line will boost Portugal's connectivity with the rest of Europe, along the Atlantic coast. On top of promoting a shift to more environmentally-friendly transport, passengers and businesses will enjoy better connections with the Spanish region of Galicia and increased mobility in the greater Porto area."* This €68 million investment represents the second stage of a cohesion project overall worth €125 million. This second stage includes the electrification of the line and the construction of four stations at Midões, Barroelas, Carreço and Carvalha to allow larger goods trains to cross. The rail section should be operational in 2021. (For more information: Christian Spahr – Tel.: +32 2 295 00 55; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)

Équilibre entre vie professionnelle et vie privée : entrée en vigueur de droits nouveaux et actualisés pour parents et aidants qui travaillent

Aujourd'hui, la Directive sur l'équilibre entre la vie personnelle et la vie privée, qui prévoit de nouveaux droits pour les parents et les aidants qui travaillent, entre en vigueur. Cette nouvelle directive fixe un certain nombre de règles, nouvelles ou plus strictes, pour les congés parentaux, de paternité et des aidants, ainsi que le droit de demander des conditions de travail flexibles. Cela permettra aux parents et aux personnes en charge d'un membre de leur famille de choisir comment combiner leur travail et leur vie de famille. Frans **Timmermans**, Premier vice-président de la Commission, a déclaré : *« Une Europe juste et durable signifie donner aux femmes et aux hommes le droit de jouer un rôle égal à la maison et sur le lieu de travail. Je suis fier de l'entrée en vigueur aujourd'hui de la nouvelle législation européenne que nous avons proposée sur l'équilibre entre vie professionnelle et vie privée. Ces règles renforceront l'égalité des sexes sur notre continent et amélioreront la vie de famille et la vie professionnelle de nombreux Européens. »* La commissaire chargée de l'emploi, des affaires sociales, des compétences et de la mobilité de la main-d'œuvre, Marianne **Thyssen**, a déclaré pour sa part : *« Les nouvelles règles constituent un pas en avant énorme vers une Europe plus sociale, et témoignent du véritable esprit du [Socle européen des droits sociaux](#). Les nouvelles règles constituent également un modèle permettant d'aligner les priorités sociales et économiques. Les entreprises pourront attirer et retenir des hommes et des femmes talentueux. L'économie européenne bénéficiera de cette proposition,*

qui contribuera à combler le fossé entre hommes et femmes en matière d'emploi. Un meilleur équilibre entre le travail et la vie personnelle pour les femmes et les hommes n'est pas seulement la chose juste, mais aussi la chose intelligente à faire. » Vera Jourová, commissaire à la justice, à l'égalité des genres et aux consommateurs, a ajouté : « Grâce à ces nouvelles règles, les familles pourront gérer plus facilement l'équilibre entre travail et vie personnelle. C'est bon pour notre société et nos économies. » Plus d'informations sur la directive sont disponibles [ici](#). Les États membres disposent maintenant de trois ans pour transposer les règles européennes en droit national. (Pour plus d'informations: Christian Spahr – Tél .: + 32 229 500 55; Sara Soumillion – Tél .: + 32 229 67094; Mélanie Voin – Tél: +32 229 58659)

Union de la sécurité : entrée en vigueur de règles plus contraignantes pour les explosifs et la lutte contre le financement du terrorisme

Aujourd'hui, des règles européennes plus contraignantes sur les précurseurs d'explosifs entrent en vigueur. Elles contribueront à empêcher les actes terroristes en limitant l'accès aux substances dangereuses tout en renforçant les garanties et les contrôles applicables à la vente de produits chimiques dangereux pouvant être détournés pour la fabrication d'explosifs artisanaux. Les nouvelles mesures vont interdire de nouvelles substances, harmoniser les règles pour les achats en ligne et hors ligne, limiter l'accès au grand public grâce à une licence permettant d'obtenir seulement certains précurseurs faisant l'objet de restrictions et en permettant un meilleur partage des informations entre les entreprises et les autorités nationales. Aujourd'hui également, de nouvelles règles facilitant l'accès transfrontière des autorités de police et de justice aux informations financières au cours des enquêtes pénales entrent en vigueur. Les nouvelles mesures consistent notamment à donner aux autorités, aux bureaux de recouvrement des avoirs et aux autorités de lutte contre la corruption un accès direct aux informations bancaires contenues dans les registres centralisés de comptes bancaires nationaux. Elles assureront également une plus grande coopération entre les services nationaux, Europol et les cellules de renseignement financier, tout en assurant des garanties solides en matière de procédure et de protection des données, conformément à la Charte des droits fondamentaux. Les États membres disposent à partir de maintenant de 18 mois pour mettre en œuvre les nouvelles règles relatives à l'accès aux précurseurs d'explosifs et de deux ans pour celles relatives à l'information financière. La Commission européenne se tient à leur disposition pour leur apporter l'aide nécessaire. (Pour plus d'informations : Carlos Martin Ruiz de Gordejuela – Tél.: +32 229 65322; Markus Lammert – Tél.: +32 229 80423)

Commission registers a new traditional food speciality: "Rögös túró" cheese from Hungary

As of today, "Rögös túró", a typical Hungarian curd cheese, figures in the EU official register of guaranteed traditional specialities. This registration means it can now only be marketed if produced in line with the registered traditional production methods. The recognition helps strengthen the market

position of its traditional Hungarian producers and offers consumers a guarantee of high traditional quality. “Rögös túró” – a white cheese with a fresh, flavoursome and aromatic taste – is a traditional ingredient of Hungarian cuisine and pastries. More information about this product can be found [here](#). As part of its quality policy, the EU has now registered 62 traditional guaranteed specialities. To learn more about the EU quality policy for farming products, visit the [dedicated page](#). (For more information: Daniel Rosario – Tel.: +32 229 56185; Kinga Malinowska – Tel.: +32 229 51383)

STATEMENTS

European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day: Statement by First Vice-President Timmermans and Commissioner Jourová

Tomorrow, 2 August 2019, will mark the 75th anniversary of the murder of the last Roma victims of the Holocaust who were incarcerated in Auschwitz. Ahead of this occasion, First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** and Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, Věra **Jourová**, released a joint statement: *“Ahead of the Roma Holocaust Memorial Day, we pay tribute to the 500,000 Roma victims of the Holocaust. This year in particular, we commemorate with deep sadness the 75th anniversary of the murder of the last Roma who were so wrongly and brutally incarcerated in the ‘Gypsy Family Camp’ in Auschwitz – people who were put to death just for being who they were. There is no place in our modern European societies and political discourse for the dehumanisation of the Roma or any other minority groups. The atrocities of the past stand as a reminder that equality and non-discrimination are values which cannot be taken as given: upholding them requires our constant attention and readiness to challenge those who would attack them. (...) 75 years have passed, but we do not forget (...) We call on all Member States to recognise the Roma Holocaust and to remember 2 August as the Roma Holocaust Memorial Day across the EU.”* Commissioner **Jourová** will visit the Auschwitz camp on Friday and attend the Commemoration ceremony held by the [Central Council of German Sinti and Roma](#), the Association of Roma in Poland and the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum. The full statement is available [here](#). (For more information: Christian Spahr – Tel.: +32 2 295 00 55, Tim McPhie – Tel.: + 32 229 58602; Mélanie Voin – Tel.: + 32 229 58659)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Stylianides visits Portugal, holds Citizens’ Dialogue and inaugurates “EU Saves Lives” Exhibition in Portimão

On 1 August, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides** will hold a [Citizens’ Dialogue](#) on the European civil protection and the importance of rescEU, in Portimão, Portugal and he will visit the Tsunami Early Warning System installed on the coast of Portimão, where he will witness and discuss the Portuguese efforts on early warning systems and prevention measures. The Commissioner will also meet Mr Eduardo Cabrita, Minister for Internal Administration, in charge of civil protection, to exchange views on the EU civil protection and the next steps for [rescEU](#). On

Friday, 2 August, Commissioner **Stylianides** will inaugurate the [“EU Saves Lives”](#) travelling exhibition, together with Minister Cabrita, the Mayor of Portimão and other high-level representatives. The exhibition will be open to visitors in the shopping centre Aqua shopping centre, Portimão until 11 August 2019. *(For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz de Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)*

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

[ESMA ceases renewal of product intervention measures relating to contracts for differences](#)

The European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA), the EU securities markets’ regulator, will not renew the temporary restriction on the marketing, distribution or sale of contracts for differences to retail clients in the European Union (EU).

ESMA has taken product intervention measures relating to contracts for differences, imposing a temporary restriction on their marketing, distribution or sale, in Decisions (EU) 2018/796, (EU) 2018/1636, (EU) 2019/155 and (EU) 2019/679.

As most national competent authorities (NCAs) have taken permanent national product intervention measures relating to contracts for differences that are at least as stringent as ESMA’s measures, ESMA will not renew its temporary restriction. As a result, the currently applicable measures in ESMA Decision (EU) 2019/679 will automatically expire at the end of the day on 31 July 2019.

ESMA will continue to monitor activities in relation to these and other related speculative products to determine whether any other EU-wide measures may be needed.

[Daily News 31 / 07 / 2019](#)

EU and Japan select first Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Programmes

Today, the European Commission has announced the [results](#) of the [call for](#)

[proposals](#) for Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree Partnerships with Japan launched in October 2018. The Commission and the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology have selected three programmes offered by international consortia involving leading universities. Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor **Navracsics**, said: *“In July 2018, I had the pleasure of launching the EU-Japan high-level policy dialogue on higher education, culture and sport, together with my Japanese counterpart, then Minister Hayashi. We stressed the importance of promoting international cooperation in higher education. I am confident that the three Joint Master Programmes we have selected, part of our new EU-Japan cooperation model in higher education, will bring superb results by nurturing students’ talents, fostering excellence and boosting science, technology and innovation. I am looking forward to seeing their positive impact in the months and years to come.”* A budget of €9 million is available for the three top-ranked programmes chosen today, covered equally by the EU and the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport, Science and Technology. More information is available in this [press release](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Marietta Grammenou – Tel.: +32 229 83583)

Construire une Europe plus juste et plus sociale : entrée en vigueur de la législation-clé déposée sous la Commission Juncker

Aujourd’hui, le règlement établissant [l’Autorité européenne du travail \(ELA\)](#) et la [directive sur les conditions de travail transparentes et prévisibles](#) entrent en vigueur. Il s’agit d’un jalon majeur pour faire du [socle européen des droits sociaux](#) une réalité pour nos citoyens. [L’Autorité européenne du travail](#) veillera à ce que les citoyens et les entreprises de l’UE puissent compter sur une application juste et efficace des règles de l’UE en matière de mobilité des travailleurs et de coordination de la sécurité sociale. L’Autorité européenne du travail aidera notamment les États membres à fournir des informations et des services aux citoyens et aux entreprises, à faciliter la coopération, à lutter contre les abus et l’échange d’informations à travers les frontières et à jouer un rôle de médiation entre les États membres en cas de litige. L’Autorité commencera ses activités à Bruxelles en octobre et [se déplacera dès que possible à Bratislava, en Slovaquie](#). Avec les [nouvelles règles sur les conditions de travail transparentes et prévisibles](#), la Commission modernise le droit européen du travail en l’adaptant au nouveau monde du travail. 200 millions de travailleurs dans l’UE bénéficieront de normes de protection minimales nouvelles ou améliorées. Les travailleurs, en particulier les plus vulnérables, bénéficieront d’une plus grande transparence en recevant dès le départ des informations clés sur leurs conditions de travail, ce qui mènera à une plus grande prévisibilité. Cela profitera en particulier aux travailleurs qui s’adonnent à de nouvelles formes de travail, tels que les travailleurs sous contrat «zéro heure» et les travailleurs domestiques, qui n’étaient jusqu’à présent pas protégés par les règles européennes. (Pour plus d’informations: Christian Spahr – Tel.: + 32 229 50055; Sara Soumillion – Tel.: + 32 229 67094)

Capital Markets Union: new rules enter into force to foster cross-border

distribution of investment funds

As of today, updated rules to remove the remaining barriers to cross-border distribution of investment funds in the EU come into force. Agreed by the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, the new rules will make cross-border distribution simpler, quicker, cheaper, and increase choice for investors while safeguarding a high level of protection. Investors will obtain more choices for better value. Valdis **Dombrovskis**, Vice-President responsible for Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union said: *"Today's new rules will cut red tape and improve clarity for fund managers who want to market their products across the EU. This will lead to more choice for investors, at lower costs – an important milestone for the Capital Markets Union. To give an example, we want fund managers based in Milan to be able to easily offer their funds in Riga, without compromising on investor protection."* The updated framework takes the form of a [Directive](#) and a [Regulation](#) that complement and amend a series of existing EU legislation on facilitating cross-border distribution of collective investment funds. The updated rules are part of the European Commission's [Action Plan for a Capital Markets Union](#) to help build a true single market for capital across the EU and create more investment opportunities for EU citizens. *(For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Guillaume Mercier – Tel.: +32 229 80564)*

State aid: Commission approves Portugal's investment aid to Navigator's tissue paper plant in Cacia

The European Commission has found Portugal's investment aid of €12 million to Navigator Tissue Cacia S.A. to be in line with EU State aid rules. The aid will support the Navigator Group's plans to invest about €114 million in the production of tissue paper in Cacia (Aveiro). The project is expected to create at least 133 direct jobs. Cacia is located in the Centro region of Portugal, an area eligible for regional aid ([Art. 107\(3\)\(a\)](#) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union). The Commission assessed the aid measure under the [Guidelines on Regional State Aid](#) for 2014-2020, which enable Member States to support economic development and employment in EU's less developed regions and to foster regional cohesion in the Single Market. The Commission found that without the public funding, the project would not have been carried out in Portugal or any other EU country, as it would not have been economically viable. Furthermore, the aid is limited to the minimum necessary to render the project sufficiently profitable for the company to carry out the investment. Finally, the investment aid will contribute to job creation as well as to the economic development of the region. On this basis, the Commission concluded that the positive effects of the project on regional development outweigh any potential distortion of competition brought about by the State aid. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number SA.49461. *(For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Maria Tsoni + 32 229 90526)*

State aid: Commission approves Austrian risk finance scheme for mid-sized

business financing companies

The European Commission has approved, under EU State aid rules, an Austrian tax incentive scheme for mid-sized business financing companies. The measure offers tax incentives to private individual investors for investing in early phase companies and innovative small and medium enterprises in their growth phase. Financial Intermediaries that participate will use Special Purpose Investment Vehicles (SPVs) that can benefit from a capital gains tax exemption, provided they pay out an equal amount in dividends to the investors. In its assessment, the Commission found the measure is in line with EU State aid rules, in particular the [Risk Finance Guidelines](#), as Austria has provided an ex-ante study to identify and explain the specific market failure that the measure addresses. The target companies either fulfil the requirements of the [General Block Exemption Regulation](#). The new scheme will apply to applications submitted before 31 December 2023 and will be in effect until 31 December 2029. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the [public case register](#) under the case number SA.45840. (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Maria Tsoni + 32 229 90526)

State aid: Commission approves public support for Croatian LNG terminal at Krk island

The European Commission has found Croatian plans to support the construction and operation of a liquid natural gas (LNG) terminal at Krk island to be in line with EU State aid rules. The measures approved today will support the construction and operation of a floating LNG terminal, consisting of a floating storage and regasification unit (FSRU) and the connections to the national gas transmission network. Croatia notified the Commission of the €100 million direct financial contribution, as well as of the security of supply fee. Commission assessed these support measures under EU State aid rules, in particular under the [2014 Guidelines on State Aid for Environmental Protection and Energy](#). The Commission found that: (i) the aid measures are necessary, as the project would not be carried out without them; (ii) the aid measures are proportionate and therefore limited to the minimum necessary, as they will only cover the “funding gap”. Therefore, the Commission concluded that the measures are in line with EU State aid rules, as they contribute to further key strategic objectives of the EU, including diversifying gas supply sources and increasing the EU's security of gas supply, notably in the Central and South-Eastern regions, without unduly distorting competition. Commissioner Margrethe Vestager, in charge of competition policy, said: “The new LNG terminal in Croatia will increase the security of energy supply and enhance competition, for the benefit of citizens in the region. We have approved the support measures to be granted by Croatia because they are limited to what is necessary to make the project happen and in line with our State aid rules.” The full press release is available online in [EN](#), [FR](#), [DE](#) and [HR](#). (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Maria Tsoni + 32 229 90526)

State aid: Commission approves €300 million public support for the development of ultrafast broadband network in Greece

The European Commission has approved, under EU State aid rules, €300 million of public support for Greece's Ultrafast Broadband Infrastructure Scheme. The scheme will bring ultrafast broadband services to customers in areas with insufficient connectivity in Greece. The Greek Ultrafast Broadband Scheme has an indicative budget of €300 million and is financed through the [European Regional Development Fund](#), the [European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development](#) and private investments. The measure will incentivise private investments in further connectivity, facilitate competition and encourage investments in the provision of ultrafast internet access to households and businesses in the target areas. The Commission assessed the measure under EU State aid rules, in particular its [2013 Broadband Guidelines](#). The Commission concluded that the scheme's positive effects on competition in the Greek broadband market outweigh potential negative effects brought about by the public intervention. On this basis, the Commission approved the measure under EU State aid rules. Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy said: *"Access to high-performance internet connectivity is crucial for European citizens, for society and the economy. With this decision, the Commission endorses the use of EU funds for the development of ultrafast internet in areas of Greece where private investment is insufficient. This is an important step for competitiveness and innovation in Greece as well as for social and territorial cohesion, enabling Greek households and businesses to benefit fully from the Digital Single Market."* The full press release is available online in [EN](#), [FR](#), [DE](#) and [EL](#). (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Maria Tsoni + 32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission clears the acquisition of joint control of Oaktree Capital Group by Oaktree Capital Group Holdings and Brookfield

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the proposed acquisition of Oaktree Capital Group, LLC (OCG LLC) by Oaktree Capital Group Holdings, L.P. (OCGH LP) and Brookfield Asset Management Inc (Brookfield), all of the US. OCG LLC and OCGH LP are part of the Oaktree Capital group of companies and provide asset management services focused mainly on corporate credit investment. Brookfield provides asset management services, focused on real estate, infrastructure, renewable power and private equity. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns because of the very low horizontal overlaps between the activities of both companies and the absence of any vertical links. 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.9390](#). (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Maria Tsoni + 32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of joint control of Insightsoftware by Genstar Capital Partners and TA Associates

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of GS Topco LP (Insightsoftware) by Genstar Capital Partners, LLC (Genstar) and TA Associates L.P., all of the US. Insightsoftware, which is

controlled by TA Associates, is active in financial reporting and enterprise performance software solutions aiming to increase the efficiency of financial operations. Genstar is an investment fund focused on leveraged buyout transactions in middle market companies in the US. TA Associates is a private equity group. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns given Insightsoftware's minimal activities within the territory of the European Economic Area, and it's very limited impact on the market structure. 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.9425](#).

(For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Maria Tsoni + 32 229 90526)

Eurostat: Le taux de chômage à 7,5% dans la zone euro, à 6,3% dans l'UE28 (juin 2019)

Dans la zone euro (ZE19), le taux de chômage corrigé des variations saisonnières s'est établi à 7,5% en juin 2019, en baisse par rapport au taux de 7,6% de mai 2019 et au taux de 8,2% de juin 2018. Cela est le taux le plus faible enregistré dans la zone euro depuis juillet 2008. Dans l'UE28, le taux de chômage s'est établi à 6,3% en juin 2019, inchangé par rapport au taux de mai 2019 et en baisse par rapport au taux de 6,8% de juin 2018. Cela demeure le taux le plus faible enregistré dans l'UE28 depuis le début de la série mensuelle sur le chômage en janvier 2000. Ces chiffres sont publiés par Eurostat, l'office statistique de l'Union européenne. Un communiqué de presse est disponible [en ligne](#). *(Pour plus d'informations: Christian Spahr – Tél.: +32 2 295 00 55, Sara Soumillion – Tél.: + 32 229 67094)*

Eurostat: Euro area annual inflation down to 1.1%

Euro area annual inflation is expected to be 1.1% in July 2019, down from 1.3% in June according to a flash estimate from Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. Looking at the main components of euro area inflation, food, alcohol & tobacco is expected to have the highest annual rate in July (2.0%, compared with 1.6% in June), followed by services (1.2%, compared with 1.6% in June), energy (0.6%, compared with 1.7% in June) and non-energy industrial goods (0.4%, compared with 0.3% in June). A Eurostat press release is available [here](#). *(For more information: Annika Breidhardt – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Enda McNamara – Tel.: +32 229 64976)*

Eurostat: GDP up by 0.2% in both euro area and EU28

Seasonally adjusted GDP rose by 0.2% in both the euro area (EA19) and the EU28 during the second quarter of 2019, compared with the previous quarter, according to a preliminary flash estimate published by Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. In the first quarter of 2019, GDP had grown by 0.4% in the euro area and by 0.5% in the EU28. Compared with the same quarter of the previous year, seasonally adjusted GDP rose by 1.1% in the euro area and by 1.3% in the EU28 in the second quarter of 2019. In the previous quarter, GDP had grown by 1.2% in the euro area and by 1.6% in the

EU28. A Eurostat press release is available [here](#). (For more information: Annika Breidhardt – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Enda McNamara – Tel.: +32 229 64976)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini in Bangkok, Thailand, to participate in the EU-ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference and the 26th ASEAN Regional Forum

On 1 and 2 August, High Representative/Vice-President Federica **Mogherini** will be in Bangkok, Thailand to co-chair the European Union – Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Post-Ministerial Conference and to represent the EU at the 26th ASEAN Regional Forum. The meetings follow the 22nd EU-ASEAN ministerial that took place in Brussels on 21 January 2019, where the EU and Ministers from ASEAN reaffirmed their shared role in shaping the political, socio-economic, and security agenda for both regions and globally. At this meeting, the European Union and ASEAN [agreed in principle to upgrade their relations to a Strategic Partnership](#). Alongside discussions on enhancing connectivity, including through support to the implementation of ASEAN's own [Master Plan on Connectivity 2025](#), Ministers are expected to stress the need to strengthen the multilateral rules-based system, and the importance of free and open trade. They will also address a number of pressing global and regional issues. The High Representative will hold a number of bilaterals in the margins of the meetings, including with the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Thailand, and the Foreign Ministers of China, the Republic of Korea, Japan, Canada, Indonesia and New Zealand. The High Representative's visit takes place in the context of recently [enhanced EU security cooperation in and with Asia](#) and the [EU's wider strategy to better connect Europe and Asia](#). For more information about EU-ASEAN relations, please consult the [dedicated factsheet](#). Photo and video coverage of the visit will be available on [EbS](#). (For more information: Maja Kocijancic, Tel.: +32 229 86570; Adam Kaznowski, Tel.: +32 229 89359)

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

[EU and Japan select first Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Programmes](#)

Today, the European Commission has announced the [results](#) of the [call for proposals](#) for Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree Partnerships with Japan launched in October 2018.

Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor **Navracsics**, said:

“In July 2018, I had the pleasure of launching the EU-Japan high-level policy dialogue on higher education, culture and sport, together with my Japanese counterpart, then Minister Hayashi. We stressed the importance of promoting international cooperation in higher education. I am confident that the three Joint Master Programmes we have selected, part of our new EU-Japan cooperation model in higher education, will bring superb results by nurturing students’ talents, fostering excellence and boosting science, technology and innovation. I am looking forward to seeing their positive impact in the months and years to come.”

The Commission and the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology have selected three programmes offered by international consortia involving leading universities:

- *Master of Science in Imaging and Light in Extended Reality*, University of Eastern Finland (Finland) and Toyohashi University of Technology (Japan). Additional country partners: Belgium and France, as well as associated partners from Finland, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland and Japan.
- *Japan-Europe Master on Advanced Robotics*, coordinated by École Centrale de Nantes (France) and Keio University (Japan). Additional country partners: Italy and Poland.
- *History in the public sphere*, Central European University (Hungary) and Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (Japan). Additional country partners: Italy and Portugal, as well as an associated partner from France.

This call for proposals, the first of its kind, is jointly implemented and financed by the Commission, through the [Erasmus+](#) programme, and the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (through the Inter-University Exchange project). It will enable high-performing students from around the world to study in at least two of the universities represented in each programme. At least one of these universities will have to be in Japan and at the end of their studies, students will receive a joint, double or multiple Master degree(s). Another element is the inclusion of partners from the business world, in addition to the academic partners.

Background

The call for proposals for Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree Partnerships with Japan was published on 24 October 2018. Ten applications were received. A budget of €9 million is available for the three top-ranked programmes chosen today, covered equally by the EU and the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport, Science and Technology. As part of this funding, for each of the three programmes a maximum of 64 scholarships will be made available for the best students.

For More Information

[Call for Proposals](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[Erasmus+ Programme Guide](#)

A Japanese version of this press release is available [here](#)

Latest update on drug-related deaths and mortality in Europe

The EMCDDA has published today its latest update on [Drug-related deaths and mortality in Europe](#). The information provided in the report is collected through the EMCDDA's expert network on drug-related deaths (DRD). The updates presented shed light on important public health challenges faced by European policymakers and stakeholders, with regard to monitoring, prevention, risk assessment, harm reduction and drug treatment. Below are some of the findings 'At a glance'.

Overdose deaths: a very high burden of premature preventable deaths

- Over 8 200 deaths involving one or more illicit drugs were reported in 2017 in the European Union. This estimate exceeds 9 400 deaths when Norway and Turkey are included.
- Males account for four-fifths of the drug-induced deaths.
- Most of the deaths were premature, affecting people in their thirties and forties.

Opioids: the main driver of fatal overdoses in Europe

- Opioids, often heroin, are involved in between eight and nine out of every 10 drug-induced deaths reported in Europe, although this is not true for all countries.
- Opioids used in substitution treatment are also commonly found in post-mortem analysis in some countries.
- Deaths related to medications, such as oxycodone and tramadol, are also reported.
- Deaths associated with fentanyl, its analogues are probably underestimated, and outbreaks of deaths related to these substances have been reported.

Stimulants and benzodiazepines involved in many deaths

- Post-mortem toxicology analyses of overdose cases suggest that in most cases, multiple drug toxicity is implicated.
- Overall, cocaine is reported in an increasing number of deaths. Increased cocaine injection is also reported in several countries.
- Synthetic cannabinoids were involved in the majority of drug-induced

deaths reported in Turkey in 2017.

- Fake medicines, diverted medicines and new benzodiazepines are related to an increasing proportion of drug-related deaths in some countries. Benzodiazepines are causing particular concern in Scotland (UK), where they were implicated in more than half of the reported drug-related deaths in 2017, with recent increases driven mainly by deaths involving new benzodiazepines, such as etizolam.

High overall mortality among drug users

- Seven countries reported new data from mortality cohort studies among high-risk drug users.
- Findings suggest that high-risk drug users are three to seven times more likely to die than their peers of the same age and gender in the general population.
- The most frequently reported causes of death include overdose, HIV/AIDS, other infections, liver disease, cancer, respiratory disease and cardiovascular disease.
- The proportion of deaths due to overdose is likely to be underestimated.

Responding to drug-related deaths

- Coverage and diversity of responses to drug-related deaths vary between and within countries.
- Updates provided on drug consumption rooms and take-home naloxone programmes indicate the expansion of these responses in countries across Europe in 2018.
- While the evidence base for their effectiveness is growing, more research is needed on these and other responses.

Implications for public health and for monitoring

- There is an ongoing need to improve the epidemiology of drug-related deaths – from a toxicology perspective, in particular – in order to get more accurate and informative figures in Europe.
- Further implementation of cohort and linkage studies is needed and can be attained with relatively little investment.
- Additional sources of information offer timelier data – important for early identification of threats – and may be triangulated. These include open source information monitoring and data from acute intoxications presented at hospital emergency units.

The report – the most recent edition in the agency's Rapid Communication series – ends by underlining the need to improve the epidemiology of drug-related deaths in order to obtain more accurate and informative figures. It states: 'Doing so includes strengthening the completeness and comparability of information available from forensic toxicology sources, if the exact drivers and triggers of deaths and outbreaks are to be understood and tackled. Investing in enhanced monitoring, preparedness and responses in Europe is crucial, particularly against the backdrop of the drug overdose crises currently experienced by the United States and Canada'.