

Celebrating 10 years of the Eastern Partnership

On 14 May, the European Union, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine marked the 10th anniversary of the Eastern Partnership with a High Level Conference in Brussels. The conference celebrated the achievements of the last ten years in the EU's relationships with its six Eastern partners, and started discussions on the future strategic direction of the partnership, to continue delivering concrete results for citizens.

The **High-level Conference** was hosted by the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude **Juncker** and brought together Heads of State or Government and Foreign Ministers of the partner countries, Foreign Ministers of the European Union Member States, civil society representatives, business leaders, young people and journalists from across the 34 countries. The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission, Federica **Mogherini**, the Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes **Hahn**, and the Commissioner for Trade, Cecilia **Malmström**, also participated.

"The Eastern Partnership is fundamentally a future-oriented partnership for the citizens and with the citizens; firmly focussed on what is important for them. Together we are working towards stronger economies, stronger governance, stronger connectivity and stronger societies", said President **Juncker**. *"We have put in place ambitious Association Agreements and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine and citizens of these countries also benefit from visa free travel for short stays in the EU. 125,000 loans have been provided to businesses in the Eastern Partnership, of which half are in local currency, and we have contributed to the creation of over 30,000 jobs in the region. And our trade has increased with each of the six Eastern Partnership countries, which together are the EU's 10th trading partner. I would like us to continue to focus on the content of what we believe we should do together so that our Partnership can keep its promises."*

The full speech of President **Juncker** is available [online](#).

A partnership that delivers

The first panel of the conference reflected on the [partnership's main achievements](#) over the past ten years.

Commissioner **Hahn** said: *"We are celebrating a decade of strong commitment of EU Member States and its six partners to strengthen cooperation, bring real change to people's lives and strengthen reform processes. The Eastern Partnership enables all six partners to address issues of common interest with the EU. For that purpose, we have set out the "20 deliverables for 2020" vision focussed on stronger economy, governance, connectivity and society.*The

Eastern Partnership will be marked this year by key achievements and a clear vision for the future; continuing to focus on tangible benefits for citizens will remain a key priority in the years to come."

The full speech of Commissioner **Hahn** is available [online](#).

The panel consisted of the President of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan, Belarus, Poland and Sweden, Elmar Mammadyarov, Vladimir Makei, Jacek Czaputowicz, and Margot Wallström respectively, and a business representative, Maurice Beckand Verwee. Together with participation from the audience, they reflected on the progress made under the ambitious [20 Deliverables for 2020](#) work plan, a common agenda adopted at the last [Eastern Partnership Summit of November 2017](#). A factsheet highlighting [10 major successes over the past 10 years](#) and an overview of the [implementation of the 20 Deliverables for 2020](#) are available online.

A future-oriented partnership

The second part of the conference provided the opportunity to launch discussions on the future of the Eastern Partnership.

"In these ten years, we have shown what a partnership with the European Union is all about: positive change in the lives of our people, particularly the young ones", said High Representative/Vice-President, Federica **Mogherini**. *"We made it easier travel to the EU, increased trading opportunities for businesses, and increased mobility for academics and students. Our friendship today is much more mature than it used to be. We are much more focused on what truly matters to our citizens. Their priorities will continue to be the focus of our friendship."*

The full speech of High Representative/Vice-President Federica **Mogherini** is available [online](#).

The second panel comprised the the Prime Minister of Georgia, Mamuka Bakhtadze, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova, Pavel Filip, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Armenia and Lithuania, Zohrab Mnatsakanyan and Linas Linkevičius respectively, the European Trade Commissioner, Cecilia **Malmström**, youth representative, Hennadiy Maksak, and was moderated by Member of the European Parliament and Co-President of the EuroNest Parliamentary Assembly, Rebecca Harms. Together with members of the audience, they reflected on some of the major challenges that lie ahead, such as:

- Implementing reforms to strengthen the rule of law, the judiciary, and the fight against corruption;
- Further protecting the environment and actively tackling climate change;
- Increasing societal resilience by countering hybrid threats and disinformation;
- Strengthening the environment for civil society and a free and independent media;
- Improving the lives of citizens affected by the conflicts in the region;
- Finding ways to further increase trade and business opportunities.

The entire High Level Conference is available to [watch again online](#) via Europe by Satellite, while [photo coverage](#) is also available.

Two days of celebrations in Brussels

The High Level Conference took place a day after the annual [Eastern Partnership Foreign Ministers' Meeting](#) in Brussels, chaired by High Representative/Vice-President, Federica **Mogherini**, with the participation of the Foreign Ministers of the 28 EU Member States and of the six Eastern Partner countries. [Chair's conclusions on the occasion of the Eastern Partnership's 10th anniversary](#) stress its importance, celebrate its success and achievements so far, and reflect on the future of the strategic and ambitious partnership.

Also on Monday, the President of the European Council, Donald **Tusk**, hosted a celebratory dinner for the Heads of State or Government of the Eastern partner countries. President **Juncker**, High Representative/Vice-President **Mogherini** and Commissioner **Hahn**, as well as Radosław Sikorski and Carl Bildt, former Foreign Ministers of Poland and Sweden respectively and initiators of the Eastern Partnership framework back in 2008, the President of Romania, Klaus Iohannis, and the Foreign Minister of Finland, Timo Soini also attended the dinner. In parallel, the ["Creating Together"](#) concert took place at the Brussels Centre for Fine Arts, BOZAR, bringing together on one stage the well-known Brussels Jazz Orchestra and musicians from the six Eastern partner countries.

For more information

[Factsheet on the Eastern Partnership's Top 10 Achievements](#)

[Keynote speech by President Jean-Claude Juncker at the EaP High Level Conference](#)

[Speech by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the EaP High Level Conference](#)

[Speech by Commissioner Johannes Hahn at the EaP High Level Conference](#)

[Chair's Conclusions on the occasion of the Eastern Partnership's 10th Anniversary](#)

[Eastern Partnership – Monitoring of the 20 Deliverables for 2020](#)

[Factsheet on myths about the Eastern Partnership](#)

[Website of the 5th Eastern Partnership Summit](#)

[Factsheet on EU-Armenia relations](#)

[Factsheet on EU-Azerbaijan relations](#)

[Factsheet on EU-Belarus relations](#)

[Factsheet on EU-Georgia relations](#)

[Factsheet on EU-Moldova relations](#)

[Factsheet on EU-Ukraine relations](#)

Eurojust crackdown on counterfeit olive oil trade

□The Hague, 14 May 2019

✘ **With the active support of Eurojust, the Italian Public Prosecution Office (PPO) of Foggia, in close cooperation with the German national authorities, dismantled an organised crime group trading adulterated olive oil in Germany and Italy, leading to the arrest of 24 persons. Two suspects of Italian origin were arrested in Germany via European Arrest Warrants (EAWs). Eurojust, the EU's Judicial Cooperation Unit, assisted the national authorities by facilitating the transfer of proceedings, the execution of EAWs and mutual legal assistance requests, and by successfully coordinating the action day that led to the pre-trial arrest of the main suspects. The total damage amounted to at least €8 million.**

The investigations in Foggia were initiated in 2015, following an alert by the Italian Ministry of Health on the sale of counterfeit olive oil and a preceding request by the German Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety (Bundesamt für Verbraucherschutz und Lebensmittelsicherheit, (BVL)). The proceedings were transferred from the German to the Italian authorities. Investigations were opened and followed by the Italian Carabinieri for Health Safety (NAS), a specialized unit of the Italian Law Enforcement, in close contact with German police forces.

The members of the organised crime group were allegedly involved in the production and trade of counterfeit olive oil and are suspected of illegal trading, participation in a criminal organisation, adulteration of food products, and other offences committed in relation to the above crimes. The olive oil, which originates from Apulia in Southern Italy, was mixed with various substances, such as chlorophyll, beta-carotene and soya oil, to modify its colour. The product was then distributed to the German market for a long period of time as extra virgin olive oil, mainly restaurants and shops in Stuttgart, Frankfurt and Berlin, as well as restaurants and supermarkets throughout Italy.

The organised crime group was sending 23 000 l of adulterated oil to Germany every 15 days. During the investigations, the Carabinieri seized more than 150 000 l of oil ready for sale. The organised crime group bought, on a yearly basis, more than 1 million l of oil to be adulterated. This oil was

bought at a price of around €1,20 and was sold, once adulterated, at a street value of €10 to €15.

The leader of the criminal organisation is considered to be the most important counterfeiter of olive oil in Italy. However, the German buyers are not regarded as members of the organised crime group, as they were not part of its structure and are only suspected of handling fraudulently produced goods.

[[Click here](#) or on image to view video] 

Eurojust improved the cooperation between the national judicial authorities by helping them to efficiently exchange information and gather useful evidence to build a strong case against the members of the criminal organisation. Eurojust held three [coordination meetings](#) at its premises in The Hague, *inter alia*, to discuss prosecutorial strategies and identify the competent executing authority in each Member State for the requested measures. Europol was involved at an early stage of the investigations, participating in the first Eurojust coordination meeting in 2016.

Only through Eurojust's coordination, it was possible to identify the activities and capabilities of this organised crime group, which operated for a long time undisturbed, taking advantage of a penal legislation not particularly severe towards the single acts of trade in counterfeit oil. For this reason, it was less easy to understand the transnational dimension of the fraud and the insidiousness of the organised group in the food products market.

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[Ebola: EU provides further €5 million in humanitarian aid in Democratic Republic of Congo](#)

The EU is stepping up humanitarian support with an additional €5 million as the [Democratic Republic of Congo](#) continues to experience its biggest Ebola outbreak to date. The confirmed death toll of the epidemic now stands at over 1,000 people. With today's announcement, total EU funding to tackle the disease in the country amounts to €17 million since 2018.

Christos **Stylianides**, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management and EU Ebola Coordinator said: *"The EU is committed to continue helping partners and the authorities fight Ebola in the Democratic Republic of Congo for as long as it takes. Since the outbreak last year, the EU has provided funding, experts, medical evacuation equipment, our humanitarian flight*

service and helped neighbouring countries. We are also supporting the health sector in the country and the development of Ebola vaccines and treatments. Yet the disease remains a serious threat and all must be done to curb the epidemic. Aid workers must also be free to do their lifesaving job without the threat of violence."

The EU funding announced today supports the World Health Organisation as well as other partners to ensure access to health care and infection and prevention measures, working with local communities to promote understanding, acceptance and support of the response, and social protection and nutritional support to survivors and their families.

The Ebola response in the country has had to face a number of serious and continuous challenges, including high population mobility, weak health structures and poor community acceptance of the contagion prevention measures. On top of these is the ongoing conflict in the affected areas, the violent attacks perpetrated on Ebola treatment centres and response teams.

Background

The Ebola virus epidemic in the Democratic Republic of Congo has so far been confined to the eastern provinces of North Kivu and Ituri, both torn by long-standing conflicts, aggravating an already fragile humanitarian situation.

In response to the outbreak, the EU provides financial support to humanitarian partners involved in various actions in the Ebola response. EU humanitarian health experts in the [Democratic Republic of Congo](#) are involved in the coordination of the response and are in daily contact with health authorities, the World Health Organisation and operational partners. Furthermore, the [European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control](#) sent an epidemiologist to Butembo, the second epicentre of the outbreak, between November and December 2018 to provide further technical and specialised support and is closely following the development of the outbreak.

The EU's Humanitarian Air Service, [ECHO flight](#), regularly transports personnel, supplies and equipment to various Ebola-affected areas. It has operated so far over 80 flights.

The [EU Civil Protection Mechanism](#) has been activated twice in relation to the outbreak, upon request of World Health Organisation. Norway, which is a participating state in the Mechanism, dispatched a specialised team to the [Democratic Republic of Congo](#) to give training to health workers on the use of high-tech isolation units that it had given to support the Ebola response for use in specific medical evacuation cases. Upon a second request by the World Health Organisation, Norway provided three additional isolation units, and is offering further training sessions on their operation. The EU co-finances 85% of the transport costs involved for this assistance deployed through the Mechanism.

The EU has also financially supported Ebola vaccine development and research on Ebola treatments and diagnostic tests.

In addition to the emergency response, the EU is implementing a development cooperation programme to support the health sector.

Outside the DRC, EU humanitarian funds have also been helping in the reinforcement of preparedness and prevention measures in neighbouring countries to avoid a spillover of the outbreak.

For more information

Factsheet: [EU response to the Ebola epidemic](#)

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Digital Single Market: Cheaper calls to other EU countries as of 15 May

As of 15 May, a new maximum price will apply for all international calls and SMS within the EU. As a result, consumers calling from their country to another EU country will pay a maximum amount of 19 cents per minute (+VAT) and 6 cents per SMS message (+VAT). Following the end of roaming charges in June 2017, these new price caps for international calls and SMS in the EU are part of the [EU-wide overhaul of telecoms rules](#) to strengthen coordination of electronic communications and enhance the role of the Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications (BEREC). The new rules for international calls tackle [large price discrepancies](#) that previously existed between Member States. On average, the standard price of a fixed or mobile intra-EU call was three times higher than the standard price of a domestic call, and the standard price of an intra-EU SMS message more than twice as expensive as a domestic one. In some cases the standard price of an intra-EU call can be up to ten times higher than the standard price for domestic calls. A new [Eurobarometer survey](#) on international calls shows that four in ten respondents (42%) have contacted someone in another EU country in the past month. 26% of the respondents said they used landline, mobile phone, or SMS to reach someone in another EU country. Telecoms operators across the EU will have to notify the consumers of the new price caps. The rules will apply in all 28 EU countries as of 15 May and soon also in Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein. The maximum price is capped only for personal usage, i.e. for private customers. Business customers are excluded from this price regulation, given that several providers have special offers particularly attractive for business customers. Further details are available in the [press release](#) and [Q&A](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Inga Höglund – Tel.: +32 229 50698)

Plan Juncker: nouveaux prêts à l'innovation accordés par Bpifrance

Le Fonds européen d'investissement (FEI), filiale du groupe de la Banque européenne d'investissement, garantira à hauteur de 50% les nouveaux prêts accordés par Bpifrance aux sociétés innovantes et aux start-up. La garantie du FEI, dans le cadre du programme européen Innovfin pour les PME, s'élèvera à 300 millions d'euros pour un montant total de prêts qui pourra atteindre 600 millions d'euros. Cette garantie est ensuite soutenue par le Fonds européen pour les investissements stratégiques, EFSI, le cœur du Plan Juncker, afin de permettre au groupe de la Banque européenne d'investissement de soutenir d'autres projets – parfois plus risqués. Pierre **Moscovici**, commissaire européen pour les affaires économiques et financières, la fiscalité et les douanes, a déclaré : *« Avec 238 000 start-ups et PME bénéficiant de financements, la France fait partie des premiers pays européens soutenus par le plan Juncker. Je me réjouis de la signature de ce quatrième accord entre le groupe BEI et Bpifrance dans le cadre du plan Juncker, portant à 2 milliards d'euros l'enveloppe disponible pour les entreprises françaises innovantes éligibles au soutien de Bpifrance. Ces nouveaux financements soutiendront la croissance et la création d'emploi dans tous les territoires français. »* L'accord entre les deux institutions a été signé à l'occasion de la conférence annuelle organisée par le groupe BEI « Investir dans l'Europe de demain », ouverte par Pierre **Moscovici** et Nicolas Dufourcq. En avril 2019, le plan Juncker a mobilisé près de 393 milliards d'euros d'investissements supplémentaires dans toute l'UE, dont plus de 68 milliards en France. Le plan soutient actuellement 945 000 petites et moyennes entreprises en Europe. (Pour plus d'informations: Annika Breidhardt – Tél.: +32 229-56153; Siobhan Millbright – Tél.: +32 229 57361)

Ebola: l'UE octroie 5 millions d'euros supplémentaires d'aide humanitaire à la République démocratique du Congo

L'Union européenne accroît son soutien humanitaire de 5 millions d'euros supplémentaires alors que [la République démocratique du Congo](#) (RDC) continue de faire face à la plus grande épidémie d'Ebola jamais connue. Le nombre confirmé de victimes du virus dépasse désormais les 1 000 personnes. Avec les mesures annoncées aujourd'hui, le financement total de l'UE afin de lutter contre l'épidémie d'Ebola s'élève à 17 millions d'euros depuis 2018. Christos **Stylianides**, commissaire européen chargé de l'aide humanitaire et la gestion de crises et coordinateur de l'UE pour la lutte contre Ebola, a déclaré : *« L'UE est déterminée à poursuivre, aussi longtemps que nécessaire, son soutien envers les partenaires et les autorités dans leur lutte contre Ebola en RDC. Depuis le déclenchement de l'épidémie l'année dernière, nous avons financé des experts et du matériel d'évacuation sanitaire, mis à disposition notre service de vol humanitaire, et aidé les pays voisins. Nous soutenons également le secteur de la santé dans le pays, et le développement de vaccins et de traitements contre le virus Ebola. L'épidémie demeure toutefois une menace sérieuse et tout doit être fait pour l'endiguer. Les travailleurs humanitaires doivent aussi être libre d'effectuer leur mission sans la menace de violences. »* Le [communiqué de presse](#) complet est disponible en ligne. (Pour plus d'information : Carlos Martin Ruiz de Gordejuela – Tél.: +32 229 65322; Daniel Puglisi – Tél.: +32 229 69140)

Festival de Cannes 2019: 20 films soutenus par MEDIA mis à l'honneur

La 72ème édition du Festival de Cannes et ses compétitions parallèles, la Quinzaine des réalisateurs et la Semaine de la Critique, présenteront une vingtaine de films cofinancés par le programme [MEDIA](#) de soutien au cinéma européen pour un montant total de 1,5 million d'euros. Six films soutenus par MEDIA seront candidats à la prestigieuse Palme d'Or: *Pain and Glory* de Pedro Almodóvar (Espagne), *The Traitor* de Marco Bellocchio (Italie), *Le Jeune Ahmed* de Jean-Pierre Dardenne et Luc Dardenne (Belgique), *Little Joe* de Jessica Hausner (Autriche, Royaume-Uni, Allemagne), *Désolé de vous avoir manqué* de Ken Loach (Royaume-Uni) et *The Whistlers* de Corneliu Porumboiu (Roumanie, France, Allemagne). Quatorze autres films soutenus par MEDIA seront présentés dans diverses sélections du festival. En marge du festival, la Commission européenne organise le 20 mai une nouvelle édition du [Forum du film européen](#), avec pour thème central les talents européens et le renforcement de la créativité, et la tenue d'un débat autour du Collectif "5050 pour 2020" sur la parité hommes-femmes dans le cinéma. D'autres activités sont organisées pour discuter des opportunités et des défis pour le secteur, notamment une journée « media meets tech » (le mardi 21 mai) mettant en lien des startups innovantes et des investisseurs. De plus, 10 gagnants du concours [#euFilmContest](#) sont invités à assister au festival, où ils pourront visiter le Marché du Film, rencontrer des professionnels de l'industrie du cinéma ou assister à la projection d'un film sélectionné à la Quinzaine des réalisateurs. De plus amples informations sur le programme MEDIA sont disponibles [ici](#), ainsi qu'une liste complète des films soutenus par l'Union européenne participant au festival cette année. (Pour plus d'informations : Nathalie Vandystadt – Tél.: +32 229 67083 ; Inga Höglund – Tél.: +32 229 50698)

Commissioner Vella opens Green Week 2019 today with a focus on implementing environmental laws

This year's edition of [EU Green Week](#) (13-17 May 2019) is opened today in Warsaw by Commissioner Karmenu **Vella**. It puts the spotlight on how environmental laws are applied on the ground. EU environmental laws have a huge impact on people's lives. They improve water and air quality, protect nature and prevent waste. But to make a real difference, they must be implemented in full. In April 2019, the European Commission published a set of reports on the state of implementation of environmental laws in Europe: the [Environmental Implementation Review](#) (EIR), which is also a tool to help Member States and local authorities to put into effect the EU legislation. The review summarises the achievements and challenges, and 28 [country reports](#) show where progress has been good, and where there is room for improvement. The reports include specific priority actions for each country, most of which are in areas like air and water quality, waste management and nature protection. EU Green Week 2019 will be built around the findings of the Environmental Implementation Review, and its suggestions for the future. Implementing EU environmental policy and law is not only essential for a healthy environment, but also opens up new opportunities for sustainable economic growth, innovation and jobs. Full implementation of EU environmental legislation could save the EU economy around €55 billion every

year in health costs and direct costs to the environment. This edition of EU Green Week includes events across Europe, with the official opening event today, 13 May in Warsaw (Poland) and a high-level summit in Brussels from 15 to 17 May. The closing of Green Week will be hosted by Commissioner **Vella** at Brussels Conference and will showcase the political conclusions from the Week. A Commission press point is scheduled on Wednesday 15 May at 6pm. Further information is available here on the [programme](#), [registration](#), [livestream](#) and [Newsroom](#) (also with related actions and activities). (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 2 295 61 72; Ana Crespo Parrondo – Tel.:+32 2 298 13 25)

Antitrust: Commission fines AB InBev €200 million for restricting cross-border sales of beer

The European Commission has fined AB InBev €200 409 000 for breaching EU antitrust rules. Anheuser-Busch InBev NV/SA (AB InBev) is the world's biggest beer brewer. Its most popular beer brand in Belgium is Jupiler. AB InBev also sells Jupiler beer in other EU Member States, including the Netherlands and France. In the Netherlands, AB InBev sells Jupiler to retailers and wholesalers at lower prices than in Belgium due to increased competition. AB InBev pursued a deliberate strategy to restrict the possibility for supermarkets and wholesalers to buy Jupiler beer at lower prices in the Netherlands and to import it into Belgium. The overall objective of this strategy was to maintain higher prices in Belgium by limiting imports of less expensive Jupiler beer products from the Netherlands. The Commission concluded that AB InBev abused its dominant position from 9 February 2009 until 31 October 2016 in breach of EU antitrust rules and deprived European consumers of one of the core benefits of the European Single Market, namely the possibility to have more choice and get a better deal when shopping. As a result, the Commission decided to impose a fine on AB InBev. AB InBev has cooperated with the Commission beyond its legal obligation to do so, in particular by expressly acknowledging the facts and the infringement of EU competition rules and by proposing a remedy. The remedy will specifically ensure that the packaging of all existing and new products in Belgium, France and the Netherlands will include mandatory food information in both Dutch and French for the next five years. The Commission granted AB InBev a 15% fine reduction in return for this cooperation. Further information on this type of cooperation can be found on the [Competition](#) website. Margrethe **Vestager**, Commissioner in charge of competition policy, said: *"Consumers in Belgium have been paying more for their favourite beer because of AB InBev's deliberate strategy to restrict cross border sales between the Netherlands and Belgium. Attempts by dominant companies to carve up the Single Market to maintain high prices are illegal. Therefore we have fined AB InBev €200 million for breaching our antitrust rules."* The full press release is available [online](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission opens in-depth investigation into Telia Company's

proposed acquisition of Bonnier Broadcasting

The European Commission has opened an in-depth investigation to assess the proposed acquisition of Bonnier Broadcasting by Telia Company under the EU Merger Regulation. As a retail TV distributor, Telia Company licenses TV channels (including ancillary rights) from TV broadcasters, such as Bonnier Broadcasting, to include them in its retail audio-visual offering. The proposed acquisition of Bonnier Broadcasting by Telia Company would create a vertically integrated player in the audio-visual industry in Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden. In Sweden and Finland, Bonnier Broadcasting is the owner of TV channels that are very important for TV distributors to have in the packages they offer consumers, namely its free-to-air and basic pay TV channels and premium pay TV sports channels. The Commission's initial market investigation identified the following main concerns: (i) Telia Company's competitors in TV distribution in Finland and Sweden could be shut out from accessing Bonnier Broadcasting's specific TV channels that are important for consumers. (ii) The merged entity could deny access to TV advertising space on its free-to-air and basic pay TV channels to Telia Company's competitors in the markets for retail mobile telecommunication, fixed internet and TV services. (iii) The merged entity could deny access to its streaming application to customers using competing mobile and fixed internet providers. At this stage, the Commission is in particular concerned that, following the transaction, consumers in Finland and Sweden would face reduced choice and higher prices for retail TV distribution. The Commission will now carry out an in-depth investigation into the effects of the transaction to determine whether its initial competition concerns are confirmed. On 12 April 2019, Telia Company submitted commitments to address the Commission's concerns. However, the Commission considered these commitments insufficient to clearly dismiss its serious doubts as to the transaction's compatibility with the EU Merger Regulation. Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *"The in-depth investigation we are opening today aims to ensure that Telia's proposed acquisition of Bonnier Broadcasting will not lead to higher prices for or less choice of TV channels for consumers in Finland and Sweden."* The full press release is available [online](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission clears the creation of a joint venture by Tenaris and Severstal

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the creation of a joint venture by Tenaris S.A. of Luxembourg and PAO Severstal ("Severstal") of the Russian Federation. The joint venture will build and operate a plant in the Russian Federation for the manufacturing and supply of certain types of tubular products for the oil and gas industry in the Russian Federation and in the Commonwealth of Independent States. Tenaris is active in the manufacturing and supply of seamless and welded tubular products and related services for the oil and gas industry. Severstal is active in mining and in the manufacturing and supply of steel products. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns given that the proposed joint venture will not have any assets in or make any sales into the territory of the European Economic Area. 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.9304](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of joint control over Cadent by Macquarie, China Investment Corporation, Allianz, Dalmore, and INPP

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the proposed acquisition of joint control over the gas distribution business of National Grid (“Cadent”) of the UK by Macquarie Group of Australia, China Investment Corporation (“CIC”) of China, Allianz SE of Germany, Dalmore Capital Limited (“Dalmore”) of the UK and International Public Partnerships Limited (“INPP”) of the UK. Cadent is active in gas distribution through four out of the eight regulated gas distribution networks in the UK. Macquarie is a global provider of banking, financial, advisory, investment and fund management services with controlling interests in companies with activities in the gas sector in the UK. CIC is an investment company, which has joint control over an oil and gas exploration and production company. Allianz is a global financial services group active in insurance and asset management. Dalmore is an independent fund management company focusing on low risk opportunities for institutional investors in the UK infrastructure sector. INPP is an infrastructure investment company. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns given the absence of overlaps between the companies’ activities. 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.9296](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Bieńkowska in Kraków for Citizens Dialogue on 15 years of Poland in the EU and the Future of Europe

Today, 13 May, Commissioner Elżbieta **Bieńkowska**, responsible for the Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs will hold a Citizens’ Dialogue in Krakow. The Citizens’ Dialogue will give the opportunity to look back at the 15 years since Poland joined the EU and look ahead at the perspectives for the future (see [factsheet](#) on EU support to Poland since 2004). The Dialogue will evolve around topics such as Poland’s EU membership, the upcoming European elections, the EU budget for the period from 2021 to 2027 and opportunities for Polish entrepreneurs in the Single Market. Since 2004, the Polish GDP has more than doubled and unemployment is at an all-time low of 3.5%, down from 19.1% in 2004. The Single Market is one of the EU’s greatest achievements. It has brought benefits to all EU countries, citizens and businesses. Since the start of the mandate, the **Juncker** Commission has been working to unlock the full potential of the [Single Market](#). The Commission has

presented 67 proposals directly relevant for the proper functioning of the Single Market, 20 of which remain to be agreed (see [factsheet on the Single Market](#)). That is why in November 2018 the Commission presented a [fresh assessment of the situation in the Single Market](#) calling for renewed political commitment. At the [European Council in March 2019](#), EU leaders reiterated the importance of a strong economic base for Europe's prosperity and competitiveness, including the Single Market in all its dimensions. More information on the Citizens' Dialogue is available [here](#). (For more information: Lucia Caudet – Tel.: + 32 229 56182; Victoria von Hammerstein – Tel.: +32 229 55040)

Commissioner Miguel Arias Cañete in Berlin for international climate talks

Today and tomorrow, Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy Miguel **Arias Cañete** will be in Berlin to participate in the 10th Petersberg Climate Dialogue, an annual gathering of over 30 ministers from around the world for discussions in support of the UN climate change negotiating process. Climate change is one of the biggest challenges humanity faces in the 21st century. After the [successful adoption](#) of the so-called Paris Rulebook last December at the COP24 in Katowice, the EU stays firmly committed to continue leading the way in global climate action, in line with the temperature goals of the Paris Agreement. In this context the Commission has presented a [vision that can lead to achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050](#) through a socially fair transition in November 2018. This year's Petersberg Dialogue will be co-hosted by the German and Chilean governments, with Chile to hold the Presidency of the COP25 climate conference in Santiago in December this year. Discussions will focus on the implementation of the Paris Agreement on climate change and preparations for COP25 and the Climate Action Summit to be hosted by the United Nations Secretary-General in September. Participants will also be able to exchange views on issues such as building resilience to the impacts of climate change, financing and implementation of countries' national climate action plans (nationally determined contributions, NDCs) and how countries will report on progress. In Berlin, Commissioner **Arias Cañete** will also hold bilateral meetings with the Chilean Environment Minister Carolina Schmidt and Chinese Special Envoy on Climate Change Xie Zhenhua. (For more information: Anna-Kaisa Itkonen – Tel.:+32 229 56186; Lynn Rietdorf – Tel.:+32 229 74959)

#School4All: Evènement de haut niveau sur l'éducation en contexte d'urgence avec la participation du lauréat du prix Nobel de la paix Denis Mukwege

Demain, mardi 14 mai, la Commission européenne accueillera plus de 400 écoliers à l'occasion de l'évènement #School4All à Bozar, à Bruxelles. Ils discuteront du soutien de l'UE à l'éducation en contexte d'urgence avec le commissaire chargé de l'aide humanitaire et de la gestion des crises, Christos **Stylianides**, le lauréat du prix Nobel de la paix Denis Mukwege et les chanteuses belges Axelle Red et Typh Barrow. L'évènement donnera le coup d'envoi dans toute l'Europe d'une campagne sur les réseaux sociaux, et il sera retransmis [ici](#). L'éducation en contexte d'urgence est une priorité pour la Commission: au cours des quatre dernières années, plus de 6,5 millions de

filles, de garçons et de professeurs dans 55 pays touchés par des crises ont bénéficié de l'aide humanitaire financée par l'UE pour un meilleur accès à une éducation et une formation de qualité. (*Pour plus d'informations: Carlos Martin Ruiz de Gordejuela – Tél.: 32 229 65322; Daniel Puglisi – Tél.: +32 229 69140*)

Commissioner Jourová in visit to the Netherlands to discuss protection of upcoming European elections

Tomorrow Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality Věra **Jourová** will be in the Hague, in the Netherlands, where she will meet Minister of Justice and Security Ferdinand Grapperhaus, Eurojust President Ladislav Hamran and State Secretary for the Interior and Kingdom Relations Raymond Knops. *"My visit and discussions with the Dutch ministers will very much focus on the upcoming European elections and the need to protect our citizens and our democracies from manipulation,"* said the Commissioner, *"We now have many tools at our disposal to act and coordinate with Member States, platforms and other EU institutions."* (*For more information : Christian Wigand – Tél.: +32 229 62253; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tél.: +32 229 56169*)

Commissioner Gabriel participates in Webit.Festival Europe 2019 in Sofia

Tomorrow 14 May, Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society Mariya **Gabriel** will be in Sofia, Bulgaria, to participate in [Webit.Festival](#), Europe's innovation and technology flagship forum. She will make an opening keynote speech about the future of Europe, in which she will insist on the need to support and protect people and businesses online and discuss European values of openness, sustainability, inclusiveness, and entrepreneurship in the context of the digital economy and society. Commissioner **Gabriel** will also highlight the achievements of the [Digital Single Market](#), in particular the EU's successes in tearing down unnecessary barriers in the digital economy, reinforcing investments in [blockchain technology](#), setting a human-centric approach to [Artificial Intelligence](#) and supporting startup ecosystems. Moreover, the Commissioner will speak about the Commission's proposal for a [Digital Europe programme](#), which would be the first ever EU programme dedicated to boosting Europe's strategic digital capacities and deployment of technologies in key areas for the next budgetary period 2021-2027. (*For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tél.: +32 229 67083; Johannes Bahrke – Tél.: +32 229 58615; Marietta Grammenou- Tél.: +32 229 83583*)

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

Antitrust: Commission fines AB InBev €200 million for restricting cross-border sales of beer

The European Commission has fined AB InBev €200 409 000 for breaching EU antitrust rules. AB InBev, the world's biggest beer company, has abused its dominant position on the Belgian beer market by hindering cheaper imports of its Jupiler beer from the Netherlands into Belgium.

Margrethe Vestager, Commissioner in charge of competition policy, said: *"Consumers in Belgium have been paying more for their favourite beer because of AB InBev's deliberate strategy to restrict cross border sales between the Netherlands and Belgium. Attempts by dominant companies to carve up the Single Market to maintain high prices are illegal. Therefore we have fined AB InBev €200 million for breaching our antitrust rules."*

Anheuser-Busch InBev NV/SA (AB InBev) is the world's biggest beer brewer. Its most popular beer brand in Belgium is **Jupiler**, which represents approximately 40% of the total Belgian beer market in terms of sales volume. AB InBev also sells Jupiler beer in other EU Member States, including the Netherlands and France. In the Netherlands, AB InBev sells Jupiler to retailers and wholesalers at lower prices than in Belgium due to increased competition.

In [June 2016](#), the Commission opened an antitrust investigation to assess whether AB InBev abused its dominant position on the Belgian beer market by hindering imports of its beer from neighbouring countries, in breach of EU antitrust rules. In [November 2017](#), the Commission issued a Statement of Objections.

Today's decision concludes that **AB InBev is dominant on the Belgian beer market**. This is based on its constantly high market share, its ability to increase prices independently from other beer manufacturers, the existence of barriers to significant entry and expansion, and the limited countervailing buyer power of retailers given the essential nature of some beer brands sold by AB InBev.

Market dominance is, as such, not illegal under EU antitrust rules. However, dominant companies have a special responsibility not to abuse their market power by restricting competition, either in the market where they are dominant or in separate markets.

AB InBev abused its dominant market position in Belgium by pursuing a deliberate strategy to **restrict the possibility for supermarkets and wholesalers to buy Jupiler beer at lower prices in the Netherlands** and to import it into Belgium. The overall objective of this strategy was to maintain higher prices in Belgium by limiting imports of less expensive Jupiler beer products from the Netherlands. AB InBev used four different ways to achieve this:

- 1) AB InBev changed the packaging of some of its Jupiler beer products supplied to retailers and wholesalers in the Netherlands to make these products harder to sell in Belgium, notably by removing the French version of mandatory information from the label, as well as changing the design and size of beer cans.
- 2) AB InBev limited the volumes of Jupiler beer supplied to a wholesaler in the Netherlands, to restrict imports of these products into Belgium.
- 3) A number of AB InBev's products are very important for retailers in Belgium as customers expect to find them on their shelves. AB InBev refused to sell these products to one retailer unless the retailer agreed to limit its imports of less expensive Jupiler beer from the Netherlands to Belgium.
- 4) AB InBev made customer promotions for beer offered to a retailer in the Netherlands conditional upon the retailer not offering the same promotions to its customers in Belgium.

On this basis, the Commission concluded that AB InBev abused its dominant position from 9 February 2009 until 31 October 2016 in breach of EU antitrust rules. It deprived European consumers of one of the core benefits of the European Single Market, namely the possibility to have more choice and get a better deal when shopping.

As a result, the Commission decided to impose a fine on AB InBev.



Cooperation with AB InBev

AB InBev has cooperated with the Commission beyond its legal obligation to do so, in particular by expressly acknowledging the facts and the infringement of EU competition rules and by proposing a remedy.

More specifically, the **remedy will ensure that AB InBev provides mandatory food information in both French and Dutch** on the packaging of its products. The remedy will specifically ensure that the packaging of all existing and new products in Belgium, France and the Netherlands will include mandatory

food information in both Dutch and French for the next five years. The Commission decision has made this remedy legally binding on AB InBev.

Therefore, the Commission granted AB InBev a 15% fine reduction in return for this cooperation. Further information on this type of cooperation can be found on the [Competition](#) website.

Fines

The fines were set on the basis of the [Commission's 2006 Guidelines on fines](#) (see [press](#) release and [MEMO](#)). In setting the level of the fine, the Commission took into account several factors, including the value of AB InBev's sales of Jupiler beer in Belgium and the Netherlands, the gravity of the infringement and its duration, as well as the fact that AB InBev cooperated with the Commission during the investigation.

The fine imposed by the Commission on AB InBev amounts to €200 409 000. The infringement of EU competition rules lasted from 9 February 2009 until 31 October 2016.

Fines imposed on companies found in breach of EU antitrust rules are paid into the general EU budget. However, the money is not earmarked for particular expenses, instead Member States' contributions to the EU budget for the following year are reduced accordingly. The fines therefore help to finance the EU by reducing taxpayers' contributions.

Background

Through market monitoring the Commission identified ex-officio restrictions for the imports of consumer goods into Belgium from neighbouring Member States. On [30 June 2016](#), the Commission opened an antitrust procedure to assess whether AB InBev was abusing its dominant position in the Belgian wholesale beer market to illegally restrict imports of cheaper beer into Belgium. On [30 November 2017](#), the Commission adopted a Statement of Objections alleging that AB InBev engaged in restrictive practices constituting an abuse of dominance under EU antitrust rules.

[Article 102](#) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) prohibits the abuse of a dominant position, which may affect trade and prevent or restrict competition.

Today's decision finds that the four abovementioned practices used by AB InBev infringed Article 102 of the Treaty because AB InBev holds a dominant position in Belgium. Such practices restricting imports within the Single Market may also constitute an infringement of Article 101 of the Treaty if they are the result of an agreement or concerted practice between independent companies, whether a supplier is dominant or not.

More information on today's decision will be available on the Commission's [Competition](#) website in the public [case register](#) under the case number AT.[40134](#) once any confidentiality issues have been resolved.

Action for damages

Any person or company affected by anti-competitive behaviour as described in this case may bring the matter before the courts of the Member States and seek damages. The case law of the Court and Council Regulation 1/2003 both confirm that in cases before national courts, a Commission decision that has become final constitutes binding proof that the behaviour took place and was illegal. Even though the Commission has fined the cartel participants concerned, damages may be awarded without being reduced on account of the Commission fine.

The [Antitrust Damages Directive](#), which Member States had to implement in their legal systems by 27 December 2016, makes it [easier for victims of anti-competitive practices to obtain damages](#). More information on antitrust damages actions, including a practical guide on how to quantify antitrust harm, is available [here](#).

Whistleblower tool

The Commission has set up by a tool to make it easier for individuals to alert it about anti-competitive behaviour while maintaining their anonymity. The new tool protects whistleblowers' anonymity through a specifically-designed encrypted messaging system that allows two way communications. The tool is accessible via this [link](#).