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Closing the loop: Commission delivers on Circular Economy Action Plan

The European Commission today published a comprehensive report on the implementation of the [Circular Economy Action Plan](#) it adopted in December 2015. All 54 actions under the plan have now been delivered or are being implemented. This will contribute to boost Europe's competitiveness, modernise its economy and industry to create jobs, protect the environment and generate sustainable growth. The report presents the main results of implementing the action plan and sketches out open challenges to paving the way towards a climate-neutral, competitive circular economy where pressure on natural and freshwater resources as well as ecosystems is minimised. First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans**, responsible for sustainable development, said: *"Circular economy is key to putting our economy onto a sustainable path and delivering on the global Sustainable Development Goals. This report shows that Europe is leading the way as a trail blazer for the rest of the world. At the same time more remains to be done to ensure that we increase our prosperity within the limits of our planet and close the loop so that there is no waste of our precious resources."* Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for jobs, growth, investment and competitiveness, said: *"This report is very encouraging. It shows that Europe is on the right track in creating investment, jobs and new businesses. The future potential for sustainable growth is huge and Europe is indeed the best place for an environmentally-friendly industry to grow. This success is the result of European stakeholders and decision-makers acting together."* The findings of the report will be discussed during the annual [Circular Economy Stakeholder Conference](#) taking place in Brussels on 6 and 7 March. Today Eurostat is also publishing Euro-indicators on the circular economy, which can be found [here](#). A [press release](#) and [MEMO](#) are available online. (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: + 32 229 56172; Daniela Stoycheva – Tel.: +32 229 53664)

Plan Juncker : 300 millions d'euros pour le déploiement de la fibre optique en France

Le Plan d'Investissement pour l'Europe – le Plan Juncker – soutient un prêt de la Banque européenne d'investissement (BEI) de 300 millions d'euros au groupe Iliad, propriétaire de Free, l'un des acteurs français de la fibre optique. Iliad compte plus d'un million d'abonnés fibre dans plus de 90 départements et confirme son objectif de disposer de 20 millions de prises raccordables à la fibre à fin 2022. Pierre **Moscovici**, commissaire européen en charge des affaires économiques et financières, de la fiscalité et des douanes, a déclaré: *"Je me réjouis de la signature de cet accord dans le cadre du Plan Juncker, qui soutient l'un des acteurs français de la fibre. Cet accord va contribuer à améliorer le déploiement du numérique en France, et par là même la cohésion de nos territoires."* Un communiqué de presse est disponible [ici](#). Le Plan Juncker a déjà généré près de 380 milliards d'euros d'investissement, dont près de 62 milliards en France, et soutenu 842 000 entreprises dans toute l'Europe. (Pour plus d'informations: Annika Breidhardt – Tél.: +32 229 56153; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tél.: +32 229 56169)

The Coalition for Vaccination holds first meeting in Brussels

Accurate and transparent information on vaccination must be made available to patients and to the general public and the EU is taking action. Delivering on the key actions adopted by the [Council Recommendation](#) on 7 December 2018, the European Commission hosts today in Brussels the first Coalition for Vaccination's meeting, bringing together European associations of healthcare workers as well as relevant students' associations in the field. The Coalition is also being set-up as the World Health Organisation ([WHO](#)) declared vaccine hesitancy one of the major global threats and confirming that 1.5 million deaths could be avoided if immunisation coverage improved. The Coalition further aims to increase confidence in vaccines and improve the uptake of vaccination by citizens. Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Vytenis **Andriukaitis**, said: *"I am very proud to see so many healthcare professionals participating today at the kick-off meeting of the Coalition for Vaccination – the first fruit of the Council Recommendation. By being the first interlocutors in delivering correct information on vaccination to their patients, the role of healthcare workers in making the lives of all of us safer is immense. I strongly welcome the commitment of the Coalition to make vaccination the easiest choice, and wish them success in their valuable work."* (For more information: Anca Paduraru – Tél.: +32 229 91269; Aikaterini Apostola – Tél.: +32 229 87624)

The European Union and Qatar reach aviation agreement

The European Union and the State of Qatar initialled today an aviation agreement, the first such agreement between the EU and a partner from the Gulf region. The agreement will upgrade the rules and standards for flights between Qatar and the EU, and will set a new global benchmark by committing to strong, fair competition mechanisms, and including provisions not normally covered by bilateral air transport agreements, such as social or environmental matters. Commissioner for Transport Violeta **Bulc** said: *"We delivered! Qatar was the first partner with whom we launched negotiations following our adoption of the [Aviation Strategy for Europe](#) – now it is also the first one to cross the finish line! More than that – the agreement sets out ambitious standards for fair competition, transparency or social issues. It will provide a level playing field and raise the bar globally for air transport agreements. This is a major upgrade compared to the existing framework, and our joint contribution to making aviation more sustainable!"* The full press release is available [here](#). (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Stephan Meder – Tel.: +32 229 13917)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of FH Investments by Clayton, Dubilier & Rice

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of FH Investments Limited ("FHI") of Jersey by Clayton, Dubilier & Rice, LLC ("CD&R") of the US. FHI is active in the operation of

restaurants, delis and cafes. CD&R is a private investment firm. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, given the lack of horizontal overlaps and vertical relationships between the activities of FHI and CD&R. 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.9261](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Grupo Konectanet and Konecta Activos Inmobiliarios by Intermediate Capital Group

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger regulation, the acquisition of Grupo Konectanet and of Konecta Activos Inmobiliarios (together “Konecta Group”) of Spain by Intermediate Capital Group (“ICG”) of the UK. Konecta Group is active globally in the provision of business process outsourcing and contact centre services to telecommunications, utilities, banking, insurance, public administration and transport companies. ICG is an investment firm active in the structuring and provision of mezzanine finance, leveraged credit and minority equity, managing assets from third party investors and its balance sheet with investment portfolios in Europe, Asia Pacific and the US. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns because there are no vertical or horizontal overlaps between the activities of the companies. 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.9275](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Rolls-Royce Commercial Marine by Kongsberg

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of Rolls-Royce plc.'s commercial marine products, systems and aftermarket services business (“Rolls-Royce Commercial Marine”) of the UK by Kongsberg Gruppen ASA (“Kongsberg”) of Norway. Rolls-Royce Commercial Marine is the commercial marine business within the Rolls-Royce group that supplies components, systems and digital elements primarily for civil marine vessels. It does not include Rolls-Royce's power systems business. Kongsberg is the holding company of the Kongsberg group, which supplies technological systems and solutions for use in the marine, defence, aerospace and oil and gas industries. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns given the minor horizontal and vertical relationships 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.9145](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Eurostat : les prix à la production industrielle en hausse de 0,4% dans la

zone euro, hausse de 0,3% dans l'UE28

En janvier 2019 par rapport à décembre 2018, les prix à la production industrielle ont augmenté de 0,4% dans la zone euro (ZE19) et de 0,3% dans l'UE28, selon les estimations d'Eurostat, l'office statistique de l'Union européenne. En décembre 2018, les prix avaient diminué de 0,8% dans la zone euro et de 0,9% dans l'UE28. En janvier 2019 par rapport à janvier 2018, les prix à la production industrielle ont augmenté de 3,0% dans la zone euro et de 2,9% dans l'UE28. Un communiqué de presse complet est disponible [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Lucía Caudet – Tél. +32 229 56182; Victoria von Hammerstein-Gesmold – Tél.: +32 229 55040)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Citizens' Dialogue linking two universities in Budapest and Milan with Commissioner Navracsics

This morning, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor **Navracsics**, was in Budapest to hold a [Citizens' Dialogue](#) with around 250 participants at Budapest's Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) and the University of Milan in Italy. To facilitate the debate students were connected simultaneously via video link. Bringing together universities across Europe is one of the main aims of the [European Education Area](#) that this Commission started to build with Member States, and in particular the [new European Universities initiative](#) that is currently in its pilot phase. The motto of the debate was 'Cross-border dialogue on Europe's Education and Future'. Participants discussed topics such as the biggest challenges facing youth today, what national governments and the EU could do better to support young people as well as the role of youth in the upcoming European Parliament elections. (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: +32 229 56184)

Future of EU finances: Commissioner Oettinger visits Madrid to talk about EU's next long-term budget

Commissioner for Budget and Human resources, Günther H. **Oettinger**, will be in Madrid, Spain, on Monday and Tuesday, 4 and 5 March 2019, to talk about the EU's next long-term budget, the multiannual financial framework for 2021-2027. During his visit on Monday, Commissioner **Oettinger** is meeting several government representatives starting with María Jesús Montero Cuadrado, Minister for the Treasury; Josep Borrell, Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation; and Nadia Calviño, Minister for the Economy and Business. He is also participating in a roundtable discussion with the Chamber of Commerce of Spain, on invitation by its President, José Luis Bonet. On Tuesday, 5 March, Commissioner **Oettinger** will participate in a working breakfast organised by the 'Forum Nueva Economía' together with José

Luis Rodríguez, President of the organisation, and Nadia Calviño, Minister for the Economy and Business of Spain. *(For more information: Alexander Winterstein – Tel.: +32 229 93265; Andreana Stankova – Tel.: +32 229 57857)*

Vice-President Katainen in Malta for a Citizens' Dialogue

Tomorrow, Tuesday 5 March Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen** will be in Valletta, Malta, where he will meet Joseph Muscat, Prime Minister of Malta. He will participate in a [Citizens' Dialogue](#) on the Future of Europe at the G.F. Abela Junior College in Msida. He will also attend a working breakfast with Roberta Metsola, Member of the European Parliament, as well as business representatives on "Bringing Europe's Investment Plan to SMEs and industry in Malta". The Vice-President will then take part in a working lunch with representatives of the Malta Development Bank. *(For more information: Annika Breidhardt – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)*

Commissioner Gabriel in Spain to discuss various digital files and hand over a WiFi4EU voucher

Tomorrow Mariya **Gabriel**, Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society, will travel to Spain, where she will have several meetings, including with Nadia Calviño, Minister for the Economy and Business, Francisco Polo, Secretary of State for Digital Advancement and José Luis Bonet, President of the Spanish Chamber of Commerce. She will discuss various topics related to the [Digital Single Market](#), such as the digitisation of the European industry and the future Digital Europe Programme proposed by the Commission in the context of the next long-term EU budget for 2021-2027. The Commissioner will also participate in the event titled 'España Empresa Digital', organised by the Chamber of Commerce of Spain. Furthermore, she will meet with Elena Biurrun, Mayor of Torrelodones, and will hand over a [WiFi4EU](#) voucher. The municipality of Torrelodones is one of the 2,800 municipalities in Europe that were [recently selected](#) to receive a WiFi4EU voucher worth €15,000. This voucher can be used to set up Wi-Fi hotspots in public spaces, such as town halls, libraries, museums, parks, squares and other places of public interest. *(For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Marietta Grammenou- Tel.: +32 229 83583)*

Migration: Commissioner Avramopoulos in Athens for an inter-ministerial meeting with Greek authorities

Today, Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris **Avramopoulos** is in Athens, Greece, to participate in an inter-ministerial meeting with the Greek Minister of Migration Policy, Dimitris Vitsas, Minister for Citizen Protection, Olga Gerovasili, Minister of Health, Andreas Xanthos, Alternate Minister of Defence Panagiotis Rigas, Alternate Minister for Social Solidarity, Theano Fotiou, Deputy Minister for Education, Research and Religious Affairs Meropi Tzoufi as well as representatives of the Ministry of Economy. Discussions will focus on the coordination of migration management in Greece. *(For more information: Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456; Markus Lammert – Tel.: +32 229 58602)*

[Closing the loop: Commission delivers on Circular Economy Action Plan](#)

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First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans**, responsible for sustainable development, said: *“Circular economy is key to putting our economy onto a sustainable path and delivering on the global Sustainable Development Goals. This report shows that Europe is leading the way as a trail blazer for the rest of the world. At the same time more remains to be done to ensure that we increase our prosperity within the limits of our planet and close the loop so that there is no waste of our precious resources.”*

Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for jobs, growth, investment and competitiveness, said: *“This report is very encouraging. It shows that Europe is on the right track in creating investment, jobs and new businesses. The future potential for sustainable growth is huge and Europe is indeed the best place for an environmentally-friendly industry to grow. This success is the result of European stakeholders and decision-makers acting together.”*

Moving from a linear to a circular economy

Three years after adoption, the Circular Economy Action Plan can be considered fully completed. Its 54 actions have now been delivered or are being implemented. According to the findings of the report, implementing the Circular Economy Action Plan has accelerated the transition towards a circular economy in Europe, which in turn has helped putting the EU back on a path of job creation. In 2016, sectors relevant to the circular economy employed more than four million workers, a 6% increase compared to 2012.

Circularity has also opened up new business opportunities, given rise to new business models and developed new markets, domestically and outside the EU. In 2016, circular activities such as repair, reuse or recycling generated almost €147 billion in value added while accounting for around €17.5 billion worth of investments.

EU Strategy for Plastics

The [EU Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy](#) is the first EU-wide policy framework adopting a material-specific lifecycle approach to integrate circular design, use, reuse and recycling activities into plastics value chains. The strategy sets out a clear vision with quantified objectives at EU level, so that *inter alia* by 2030 all plastic packaging placed on the EU market is reusable or recyclable.

To boost the market for recycled plastics, the Commission launched a voluntary pledging campaign on recycled plastics. 70 companies have already made pledges, which will increase the market for recycled plastics by at least 60% by 2025. However, there is still a gap between supply and demand for recycled plastics. To close this gap, the Commission launched the [Circular Plastics Alliance](#) of key industry stakeholders supplying and using recycled plastics.

The rules on [Single-Use Plastics](#) items and fishing gear, addressing the ten most found items on EU beaches place the EU at the forefront of the global fight against marine litter. The measures include a ban of certain single-use products made of plastic (such as straws and cutlery) when alternatives are available and of oxo-degradable plastic, and propose actions for others such as consumption reduction targets, product design requirements and Extended Producers Responsibility schemes.

Innovation and Investments

To accelerate the transition to a circular economy, it is essential to invest in innovation and to provide support for adapting Europe's industrial base. Over the period 2016-2020, the Commission has stepped up efforts in both directions totalling more than €10 billion in public funding to the transition.

To stimulate further investments, the [Circular Economy Finance Support Platform](#) has produced recommendations to improve the bankability of circular economy projects, coordinate funding activities and share good practices. The platform will work with the European Investment Bank on providing financial assistance and exploiting synergies with the action plan on financing sustainable growth.

Turning Waste into Resources

Sound and efficient waste management systems are an essential building block of a circular economy. To modernise waste management systems in the Union a revised [waste legislative framework](#) entered into force in July 2018. This includes, among others, new ambitious recycling rates, clarified legal status of recycled materials, strengthened waste prevention and waste management measures, including for marine litter, food waste, and products containing critical raw materials.

Circular Design and Production Processes

Smart design at the beginning of a product's lifecycle is essential for ensuring circularity. With the implementation of the [Ecodesign Working Plan](#)

[2016-2019](#), the Commission has further promoted the circular design of products, together with energy efficiency objectives. Ecodesign and Energy Labelling measures for several products now include rules on material efficiency requirements such as availability of spare parts, ease of repair, and facilitating end-of-life treatment. The Commission has also analysed, in a dedicated Staff Working Document, its policies for products, with the intention to support circular, sustainable products.

Empowering Consumers

The transition towards a more circular economy requires an active engagement of citizens in changing consumption patterns. The Product Environmental Footprint (PEF) and Organisation Environmental Footprint (OEF) methods developed by the Commission can enable companies to make environmental claims that are trustworthy and comparable and consumers to make informed choices.

Strong Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement is vital for the transition. The systemic approach of the action plan has given public authorities, economic and social players and civil society a framework to replicate in order to foster partnerships across sectors and along value chains. The role of the Commission in speeding up the transition and leading international efforts for circularity was also recognised at the World Economic Forum 2019 where the Commission received [the Circulars Award](#) in the Public Sector Category.

Open Challenges

The circular economy is now an irreversible, global trend. Yet, much is still needed to scale up action at EU level and globally, fully close the loop and secure the competitive advantage it brings to EU businesses. Increased efforts will be needed to implement the revised waste legislation and develop markets for secondary raw materials. Also, the work started at EU level on some issues (like chemicals, the non-toxic environment, eco-labelling and eco-innovation, critical raw materials and fertilisers) needs to be accelerated if Europe wants to reap the full benefit of a transition to a circular economy.

Interaction with stakeholders suggests that some areas not yet covered by the action plan could be investigated to complete the circular agenda. Building on the example of the European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy, many other sectors with high environmental impact and potential for circularity such as IT, electronics, mobility, the built environment, mining, furniture, food and drinks or textiles could benefit from a similar holistic approach to become more circular.

Background

In 2015, the Commission adopted an ambitious new Circular Economy Action Plan to stimulate Europe's transition towards a circular economy, which would boost global competitiveness, foster sustainable economic growth and generate new jobs. It was foreseen that the proposed actions would contribute to

“closing the loop” of product lifecycles through greater recycling and re-use, and bring benefits for both the environment and the economy. The plans would help extract the maximum value and use from all raw materials, products and waste, fostering energy savings and reducing greenhouse gas emissions and would be supported financially by ESIF funding, Horizon 2020, the EU structural funds and investments in the circular economy at national level.

A full state of play of the implementation of the action plan is presented in an accompanying Staff Working Document.

For More Information

[MEMO: Questions and Answers](#)

[Report on the implementation of the Circular Economy Action Plan](#)

[Staff working document with details and references for the 54 actions that were listed in the action plan](#)

[Staff working document on Sustainable Products in a Circular Economy](#)

[Staff working document on the Assessment of the voluntary pledges under Annex III of the Strategy on Plastics](#)

[Eurostat press release on progress in the monitoring framework](#)

January 2019 compared with December 2018 – Industrial producer prices up by 0.4% in euro area – Up by 0.3% in EU28

In January 2019, compared with December 2018, industrial producer prices rose by 0.4% in the **euro area** (EA19) and by 0.3% in the **EU28**, according to estimates from **Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union**. In December 2018, prices decreased by 0.8% in the **euro area** and by 0.9% in the **EU28**.

[Full text available on EUROSTAT website](#)

Central Arctic: EU to enter agreement against unregulated fishing

The **EU** will soon become a **party to** an international **agreement** to prevent unregulated high seas fisheries in the **central Arctic Ocean**.

The Council today adopted a decision on the conclusion of such agreement, which was signed on 3 October 2018 by the five Arctic Ocean coastal states – Canada, Denmark (acting on behalf of Greenland and the Faroe Islands), Norway, Russia, and the United States – together with China, the EU, Iceland, Japan, and South Korea.

I am proud to announce that the EU will soon be a part of this historic agreement that for the first time protects the Arctic Ocean and its fragile ecosystem. It is a vital step towards achieving greater sustainability and strengthening ocean governance.

Petre Daea, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of Romania and President of the Council

The objective of the agreement is to **prevent unregulated fishing** in the high seas portion of the central Arctic Ocean through the application of **precautionary conservation and management measures**, as part of a long-term strategy to safeguard healthy marine ecosystems, and to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of fish stocks.

Under the agreement, the ten parties concerned have agreed to ban commercial fishing in the high seas portion of the central Arctic Ocean for an initial period of **16 years** (to be extended automatically every five years), until scientists confirm that it can be done sustainably and until the parties agree on mechanisms to ensure the sustainability of fish stocks.

This is the **first time** that the Arctic high seas are covered by any international conservation and management regime.

Background and next steps

Until recently ice has covered the high seas portion of the central Arctic Ocean on a year-round basis, thereby making fishing in those waters impossible. However, global warming has significantly reduced ice coverage in that area in recent years.

Although commercial fishing is unlikely to become viable in the high seas portion of the central Arctic Ocean in the near future, the central Arctic Ocean ecosystems will be more and more exposed to human activities and, possibly to illegal fishing.

The decision to conclude the agreement will enter into force on the third day following that of its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union.

The European Parliament gave its consent on the decision on 12 February 2019.

[Visit the meeting page](#)

EU – Morocco: Council adopts sustainable fisheries partnership agreement

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