# [Eurogroup statement on the updated draft budgetary plans of Slovenia for 2019](#)

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# [EU modernises consumer rights and improves their enforcement](#)

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# Daily News 28 / 02 / 2019

**Facts matter: European Commission responds to Hungarian government campaign**

Following the College meeting, the Commissioners have decided to issue today a response following the launch by the Hungarian government of a campaign – complete with billboards, full-page newspaper advertisements and a letter from the Prime Minister addressed to all Hungarian citizens – entitled "You too have the right to know what Brussels is planning!". The European Commission agrees, citizens do deserve to know the truth about what the EU is doing. But we believe they deserve fact not fiction. The Hungarian government campaign distorts the truth and seeks to paint a dark picture of a secret plot to drive more migration to Europe. The Commission would therefore like to set the record straight, point by point. The Commission's full response is available online. *(For more information: Margaritis Schinas – Tel.: +32 229 60524; Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456)*

**Journée des maladies rares: Une nouvelle plateforme de l'UE à l'appui des diagnostics et des traitements [updated on 28/02/2019 at 12:37]**

À l'occasion de la Journée des maladies rares, la Commission européenne lance aujourd'hui une nouvelle plateforme de partage de connaissances en ligne destinée à soutenir l'amélioration du diagnostic et du traitement de plus de 30 millions d'Européens atteints d'une maladie rare. À l'heure actuelle, une multitude de données sur les patients atteints de certaines maladies sont dispersées à travers toute l'Europe, dans quelque 600 « registres ». La nouvelle plateforme européenne d'enregistrement des maladies rares permettra de rassembler ces données, permettant ainsi une recherche de qualité capable d'accroître les résultats en matière de diagnostic et de traitement – ce qui contribuera à améliorer la vie des patients et de leur famille. Vytenis **Andriukaitis**, commissaire en charge de la santé et de la sécurité alimentaire, a déclaré à ce sujet: « *Cette nouvelle plateforme de l'UE sur l'enregistrement des maladies rares permettra de remédier à la fragmentation des données sur les maladies rares, de promouvoir l'interopérabilité des registres existants et aidera à en créer de nouveaux. La plateforme sera également utile pour les travaux des réseaux européens de référence, véritable réussite de l'Union européenne, car elle leur permettra d'utiliser les informations anonymisées d'une vaste base de patients et d'offrir un meilleur traitement aux personnes en souffrance.* » Tibor **Navracsics**, commissaire chargé de l'éducation, de la culture, de la jeunesse et du sport, responsable du Centre commun de recherche, s'est exprimé en ces termes: « *Cette plateforme aidera les scientifiques, les décideurs politiques et les patients à tirer le meilleur parti de données sur les maladies rares qui, jusqu'à présent, étaient restées largement inexploitées. En établissant des normes au niveau de l'UE pour la collecte et l'échange des données, la*

*plateforme permettra également de comparer plus facilement les informations collectées à l'avenir aux quatre coins de l'Europe. Et que les patients se rassurent, leurs données privées le resteront, tandis qu'eux-mêmes bénéficieront de diagnostics et de traitements améliorés. »* A [press release](#) and a [factsheet](#) are available online. (*Pour plus d'informations: Anca Paduraru – Tél.: +32 229  91269; Nathalie Vandystadt – Tél.: +32 229 67083;* Aikaterini Apostola – Tél.: +32 229 87624; *Joseph Waldstein – Tél.: +32 229 56184*)


**The Juncker Plan supports the cultural sector in Denmark**

Today, the Juncker Plan is backing an agreement in Denmark, where the European Investment Bank (EIB) Group signed an agreement with the public investment fund Vaekstfonden. The agreement aims to provide financing worth €40 million to 80 small and medium businesses active in the creative and cultural sectors such as design, architecture, visual arts and music. Mariya **Gabriel**, Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society said: *"Europe is recognised throughout the world for its cultural wealth, but the full potential of its cultural and creative industries for job creation and growth remains untapped. It is high time to reverse that trend. This is why I welcome this agreement under the Juncker Plan, which will allow creative Danish businesses to access the financing they need to express their talents as well as create value and jobs."* A press release is available [here](#). As of February 2019, the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), at the heart of the Juncker Plan, has already mobilised €380 billion of additional investments, including €4.7 billion in Denmark. *(For more information: Annika Breidthardt – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)*


**Agriculture: the Commission approves protected geographical indication from Mexico**

The European Commission has approved today the addition of '[Tequila'](#) , a Mexican spirit drink, in the register of Protected Geographical Indication (PGI). Tequila is obtained by distilling the juices extracted from the heart of the blue agave that may be enriched and blended with other sugars. The source of the raw material used to make the beverage and the processing are both located in several regions in the Centre and West of Mexico, including the actual town of Tequila in the state of Jalisco. The existence of blue agave and its different uses can be traced back to the pre-Colombian era. The word 'Tequila' is derived from the Nahuatl terms '*tequi'* and '*tlan*', meaning 'cutting place' or 'place of paying tax'. There are currently 31 geographical indications protected in the EU register originating from third countries (food, wines and spirits included), benefitting from the same protection and market added-value than EU protected products. More information: webpages on [quality products](#) and [e-bacchus database](#) of protected wines and spirits. (*For more information: Daniel Rosario – Tel: +32 229 56 185; Clémence Robin – Tel: +32 229 52 509)*

**State aid: Commission opens in-depth investigation into public financing of Øresund fixed rail-road link**

The Commission has today opened an in-depth investigation under EU State aid rules into the aid measures granted by Denmark and Sweden to the consortium owning and operating the Øresund fixed rail-road link, which consists in a toll-funded 16 kilometres long bridge, an artificial island and a tunnel for road and railway traffic from the Swedish coast to the Danish island of Amager. The Øresundsbro Konsortiet, a consortium formed by the Danish and Swedish states, owns and operates the Øresund fixed rail-road link on the basis of an intergovernmental agreement. Under this agreement, Denmark and Sweden guarantee the loans that the consortium secured in order to finance the link. Denmark also foresaw a special tax treatment for the consortium as regards depreciation of assets and fiscal loss carry forward. On [15 October 2014](#), the Commission concluded that the Danish and Swedish support measures were in line with EU State aid rules. On 19 September 2018, following an appeal of the Commission's 2014 decision by Scandlines Øresund I/S, the General Court partially annulled the Commission's decision on procedural grounds (Case [T-68/15](#)). While the General Court did not rule directly on the compatibility of the measures with EU State aid rules, it found that the Commission should have opened a formal investigation to assess the case in-depth before adopting its State aid decision. To comply with the General Court's September 2018 judgment, the Commission has today opened an in-depth investigation under EU State aid rules into the guarantees on the consortium's loans by Denmark and Sweden and the tax support measures implemented by Denmark. The opening of the in-depth investigation gives all interested parties the opportunity to submit their comments. It does not prejudge the outcome of the investigation. Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager,** in charge of competition policy, said: "*The Øresundlink has been instrumental in the cross-border integration of two dynamic regions and brought significant benefits to citizens and businesses on both shores and beyond. The Commission already approved State aid for the building and operating of the link in 2014 but the Court annulled this decision, finding that the Commission should have opened an in-depth investigation. Today's opening of such an investigation is an invitation for all stakeholders to provide their input, which will allow the Commission to adopt a new, well-informed final decision*". The full press release is available [online](#). *(For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344)*

**Mergers: Commission clears the acquisition of StandardAero by The Carlyle Group**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of sole control over StandardAero Holding Corp. ("StandardAero") by The Carlyle Group L.P., both of the US. StandardAero is an independent provider of maintenance, repair and overhaul services ("MRO"), active in aircraft engine and component maintenance. It also manufactures spare parts for aircraft engines. The Carlyle Group is a global alternative asset manager. Its portfolio companies include Chromalloy and Dynamic Precision Group, both active in component maintenance for aircraft engines and in the manufacturing of spare parts for engines. The Commission concluded that the

proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns given the minor horizontal and vertical 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.9264](#). *(For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)*

**STATEMENTS**

**Statement on the Code of Practice against disinformation: Commission asks online platforms to provide more details on progress made**

Today the European Commission published reports by Facebook, Google and Twitter covering the progress made in January 2019 on their commitments to fight disinformation. These three online platforms are signatories of the Code of Practice against disinformation and have been asked to report monthly on their actions ahead of the European Parliament elections in May 2019. More specifically, the Commission asked to receive detailed information to monitor progress on the scrutiny of ad placement, transparency of political advertising, closure of fake accounts and marking systems for automated bots. Vice-President for the Digital Single Market Andrus **Ansip**, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality Věra **Jourová,** Commissioner for the Security Union Julian **King**, and Commissioner for the Digital Economy and Society Mariya **Gabriel** said in a joint statement: *"The online platforms, which signed the Code of Practice, are rolling out their policies in Europe to support the integrity of elections. This includes better scrutiny of advertisement placements, transparency tools for political advertising, and measures to identify and block inauthentic behaviour on their services. However, we need to see more progress on the commitments made by online platforms to fight disinformation. Platforms have not provided enough details showing that new policies and tools are being deployed in a timely manner and with sufficient resources across all EU Member States. The reports provide too little information on the actual results of the measures already taken."* The full statement and more information on the online platforms' reports can be found [here](#). A summary report on the implementation of the Code of Practice can be found [here](#). *(For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Marietta Grammenou- Tel.: +32 229 83583)*

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**High Representative/Vice-President Mogherini and Commissioner Hahn at the London Initiative conference on Jordan**

High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the Commission Federica **Mogherini** and Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes **Hahn** are attending today the international conference "[Jordan: Growth and Opportunity, the London Initiative 2019](#)". The conference, co-hosted by the Government of Jordan and the UK Government in London, will support investment, growth and jobs for Jordan. The HRVP and Commissioner's participation underlines the

EU's strong political and economic support for Jordan as a key partner of the EU with an important stabilisation role in the region. High Representative/Vice-President **Mogherini** will deliver a keynote speech this afternoon. Commissioner **Hahn** will address the panel "Building an international coalition". The EU welcomes and strongly supports the efforts of Jordan in responding to the Syrian crisis, in particular the hosting of refugees. Since the beginning of the crisis the EU has mobilised over €2 billion in overall assistance to Jordan. Jordan will also be one of the countries of focal attention at the [Brussels III Conference on the Future of Syria and the Region](), hosted by the EU and co-chaired with the UN on 12-14 March 2019. Images of the conference will be available on [EbS](). *(For more information: Maja Kocijančič – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Alceo Smerilli – Tel.:+32 229 64887; Matteo Arisci – Tel.: +32 229 80833)*

## Vice-President Dombrovskis in Ukraine to meet President Poroshenko

Valdis **Dombrovskis**, Vice-President for the Euro and Social Dialogue, also in charge of Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union, will be in Ukraine today and tomorrow, Friday 1 March 2019. He will meet President Petro Poroshenko, Prime Minister Volodymyr Groysman and Minister of Finance Oksana Markarova. Today he will attend a flower-laying ceremony at Maidan Square with Ivanna Klympush-Tsintsadze, Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration and [deliver a speech]() at the Taras Shevchenko University. On Friday he will be in Zaporizhzhya and Berdyansk to participate in a round table at the Berdyansk State Pedagogical University and to attend the opening ceremony of a rehabilitation centre for children with disabilities. *(For more information: Annika Breidthardt – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Annikky Lamp – Tel.: +32 229 56151)*

## Commissioner Stylianides in Greece

Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management, Christos **Stylianides**, is in Athens today to visit the Panagiotis & Aglaia Kyriakou Children's Hospital, one of the 50 hospitals where the EU provides funding to support interpretation services to refugee and migrant patients in 27 languages. *(For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz De Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)*

## The European Commission at the Delphi Economic Forum

European Commissioners and high officials will participate in the 2019 [Delphi Economic Forum](), which will take place between Thursday, 28 February, and Sunday, 3 March. More specifically, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management, Christos **Stylianides** will take part in the official opening ceremony today. Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society, Mariya **Gabriel** will also take part in the opening session and will participate in a meeting on "European elections, false news and democracy" on Friday. Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris **Avramopoulos** will take part in a debate on the Future of Europe on Saturday. Finally, Commission Chief Spokesperson Margaritis **Schinas** will participate on

Saturday in a discussion on "The Road to Sibiu". The Delphi Economic Forum aims at identifying the main global trends of the wider Eastern Mediterranean Region. The main theme of its fourth edition is "The Challenge of Inclusive Growth". For more details, see its [website](). *(For more information: Giorgos Markopouliotis – Tel.: +30 210 7272100)*

**Vice-President Katainen in Finland to address the Parliament's Grand Committee and visit the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats**

European Commission Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, will on Friday 1 March address the Finnish Parliament's Grand Committee on the Future of Europe, the forthcoming Finnish Presidency of the Council of the EU and the Single Market. He will also meet with Mr Matti Alahuhta, Chairman of Finnish investment company DevCo and visit the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats. *(For more information: Annika Breidthardt – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)*

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

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# [Statement on the Code of Practice against disinformation: Commission asks online platforms to provide more details on progress made]()

Today the European Commission published reports by Facebook, Google and Twitter covering the progress made in January 2019 on their commitments to fight disinformation. These three online platforms are signatories of the Code of Practice against disinformation and have been asked to report monthly on their actions ahead of the European Parliament elections in May 2019.

More specifically, the Commission asked to receive detailed information to monitor progress on the scrutiny of ad placement, transparency of political advertising, closure of fake accounts and marking systems for automated bots. Vice-President for the Digital Single Market Andrus **Ansip**, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality Věra **Jourová**, Commissioner for the Security Union Julian **King**, and Commissioner for the Digital Economy and Society Mariya **Gabriel** said in a joint statement:

*"The online platforms, which signed the Code of Practice, are rolling out their policies in Europe to support the integrity of elections. This includes*

*better scrutiny of advertisement placements, transparency tools for political advertising, and measures to identify and block inauthentic behaviour on their services.*

*However, we need to see more progress on the commitments made by online platforms to fight disinformation. Platforms have not provided enough details showing that new policies and tools are being deployed in a timely manner and with sufficient resources across all EU Member States. The reports provide too little information on the actual results of the measures already taken.*

*Finally, the platforms have failed to identify specific benchmarks that would enable the tracking and measurement of progress in the EU. The quality of the information provided varies from one signatory of the Code to another depending on the commitment areas covered by each report. This clearly shows that there is room for improvement for all signatories.*

*The electoral campaigns ahead of the European elections will start in earnest in March. We encourage the platforms to accelerate their efforts, as we are concerned by the situation. We urge Facebook, Google and Twitter to do more across all Member States to help ensure the integrity of the European Parliament elections in May 2019.*

*We also encourage platforms to strengthen their cooperation with fact-checkers and academic researchers to detect disinformation campaigns and make fact-checked content more visible and widespread."*

**Main outcomes of the signatories' reports:**

- **Facebook** has not reported on results of the activities undertaken in January with respect to scrutiny of ad placements. It had earlier announced that a pan-EU archive for political and issue advertising will be available in March 2019. The report provides an update on cases of interference from third countries in EU Member States, but does not report on the number of fake accounts removed due to malicious activities targeting specifically the European Union.

- **Google** provided data on actions taken during January to improve scrutiny of ad placements in the EU, divided per Member State. However, the metrics supplied are not specific enough and do not clarify the extent to which the actions were taken to address disinformation or for other reasons (e.g. misleading advertising). Google published a new policy for 'election ads' on 29 January, and will start publishing a Political Ads Transparency Report as soon as advertisers begin to run such ads. Google has not provided evidence of concrete implementation of its policies on integrity of services for the month of January.

- **Twitter** did not provide any metrics on its commitments to improve the scrutiny of ad placements. On political ads transparency, contrary to what was announced in the [implementation report in January](#), Twitter postponed the decision until the February report. On integrity of services, Twitter added five new account sets, comprising numerous accounts in third countries, to its Archive of Potential Foreign Operations, which are publicly available and searchable, but did not

report on metrics to measure progress.

## Next steps

Today's reports cover measures taken by online companies in January 2019. The next monthly report, covering the activities done in February, will be published in March 2019. This will allow the Commission to verify that effective policies to ensure integrity of the electoral processes are in place before the European elections in May 2019.

By the end of 2019, the Commission will carry out a comprehensive assessment of the Code's initial 12-month period. Should the results prove unsatisfactory, the Commission may propose further actions, including of a regulatory nature.

## Background

The monitoring of the Code of Practice is part of the [Action Plan against disinformation](#) that the European Union adopted last December to build up capabilities and strengthen cooperation between Member States and EU institutions to proactively address the threats posed by disinformation.

The reporting signatories committed to the Code of Practice in October 2018 on a voluntary basis. In January 2019 the European Commission published [the first reports](#) submitted by signatories of the Code of Practice against disinformation. The [Code](#) aims at achieving the objectives set out by the Commission's [Communication](#) presented in April 2018 by setting a wide range of commitments articulated around five areas:

- Disrupt advertising revenue for accounts and websites misrepresenting information and provide advertisers with adequate safety tools and information about websites purveying disinformation.
- Enable public disclosure of political advertising and make effort towards disclosing issue-based advertising.
- Have a clear and publicly available policy on identity and online bots and take measures to close fake accounts.
- Offer information and tools to help people make informed decisions, and facilitate access to diverse perspectives about topics of public interest, while giving prominence to reliable sources.
- Provide privacy-compliant access to data to researchers to track and better understand the spread and impact of disinformation.

Between January and May 2019, the Commission is carrying out a targeted Monthly Intermediate Monitoring of the platform signatories' actions to implement Code commitments that are the most relevant and urgent to ensure the integrity of elections. Namely: scrutiny of ad placements (Commitment 1); political and issue-based advertising (Commitments 2 to 4); and integrity of services (Commitments 5 & 6).

The Code of Practice also goes hand-in-hand with the Recommendation included in the election package announced by President Juncker in its 2018 [State of](#)

[the Union Address](#) to ensure free, fair and secure European Parliament's elections. The measures include greater transparency in online political advertisements and the possibility to impose sanctions for the illegal use of personal data to deliberately influence the outcome of the European elections. As a result, Member States have set up a national election cooperation network of relevant authorities – such as electoral, cybersecurity, data protection and law enforcement authorities – and appointed a contact point to participate in a European-level election [cooperation network](#). The [first meeting](#) of this network took place on 21 January 2019 and a [second](#) one on 27 February 2019.

More information

[Reports of the online platforms](#)

[Press release: A Europe that Protects: The EU steps up action against disinformation](#)

[Factsheet: Action plan against disinformation](#)

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# [Rare Disease Day: a new EU platform to support better diagnosis and treatment](#)

Currently a vast amount of data on patients with specific conditions is scattered across Europe in about 600 'registries' – databases that hold information on patients with specific conditions. Data is not collected EU-wide and there are no shared standards to analyse the information that is available on rare diseases. The new [European Platform on Rare Diseases Registration](#) will bring this data together supporting the quality research that can enhance diagnosis and treatment outcomes – helping to improve the lives of patients and their families.

Vytenis **Andriukaitis,** Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, said: *"Rare diseases present a health challenge where action and collaboration at EU level has clear added value. Connected, we are so much greater than the sum of our parts. This new EU Platform on Rare Diseases Registration will address the fragmentation of rare diseases data, promote the interoperability of existing registries and will help to create new ones Moreover, the Platform will also be useful for the work of* European Reference Networks, *real EU success story, allowing them make use of anonymised information from a large pool of patients and  offer better treatment to those in need."*

Tibor **Navracsics**, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, responsible for the [Joint Research Centre](#), said: *"This platform will help scientists, policymakers and patients alike make the most of data on rare diseases that have, until now, remained largely untapped. By setting EU-wide*

*standards for data collection and exchange, the platform will also mean that information collected in the future can more easily be compared across Europe. And patients can rest assured that their private data will remain private – while benefiting from improved diagnosis and treatment."*

A rare disease can affect someone from birth, like cystic fibrosis, or it can develop later in life, like Huntington's disease. Despite the large total numbers of those affected in Europe, information on effective diagnosis and treatment strategies are not collected in a uniform way and are often not shared among registries or across countries. As a consequence, patients often suffer alone with little or no hope of being cured.

There are in fact very few national rare disease registries in the EU – most are managed by individual hospitals, research institutions, pharmaceutical companies or patient advocacy groups. The type of data collected varies widely. Some are focused on developing medicines for particular diseases, while others may be more interested in tracking instances of rare diseases over time, for example.

The new platform will substantively improve this situation. Available online and open to the public, it merges registry data sources to foster the critical mass of patient data needed to trigger pharmacological, translational or research studies.

The Platform includes a registry infrastructure consisting of:

- the European Directory of Registries, which gives an overview of each participating registry;
- the Central Metadata Repository, which stores all types of variables used by the registries;
- a data protection tool, which makes sure patient data is held under a pseudonym and cannot be traced back to the individual.

By providing EU standards for data collection and data sharing, the platform will for the first time make it possible to search data of rare disease patients. This significant achievement will allow the creation of critical knowledge for a given disease, enabling research and supporting patients, health care providers and policy-makers.

The platform will be an important asset for the [European Joint Programme on Rare Diseases](#)  which aims to establish a research and innovation pipeline for rapid translation of research results into clinical applications and uptake in healthcare. Through this programme, the platform resources can be used in future research projects and disseminated to a wider community of rare disease researchers, clinicians and patients in the EU and beyond.

**Background**

The European Platform on Rare Diseases Registration supports the objectives laid out in the [Commission Communication on Rare Diseases: Europe's challenges](#) and the [Council Recommendation on an action in the field of rare diseases](#). These documents have guided the European response to rare diseases

over the past decade, identifying codification and inventory of rare diseases as elements of such a response.

It also supports the implementation of the [Directive on the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare](), notably the rare diseases-related work of the European Reference Networks. These connect medical specialists and researchers and provide advice to patients based on the principle that the knowledge travels, not the patients.

[Rare diseases have been a priority for EU Framework Programmes for Research and Innovation]() for over two decades. By enhancing the interoperability and re-usability of registry data, the platform also supports EU funded research and innovation to respond to rare diseases-related challenges.

As the European Commission's science and knowledge service, the Joint Research Centre supports EU policies with independent scientific evidence throughout the whole policy cycle.

**Further information**

[European Platform on Rare Diseases Registration]()

[Factsheet on the platform]()

[Commission information on World Rare Diseases Day]()

[Commission activities in the area of rare diseases]()

[European Reference Networks]()