

The Conservative government's handling of the HS2 project has not inspired confidence – Andy McDonald

Andy McDonald MP, Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Transport,

responding to the awarding of contracts to build the first phase of HS2, said:

"The last Labour government initiated High Speed 2 and we continue to support the project to increase network capacity and deliver economic benefits.

"Labour will press the Government to ensure that the route causes as little disruption as possible and those affected are appropriately compensated.

"The Conservative government's handling of the project has not inspired confidence, with independent experts already calculating cost over-runs of the initial section of almost twice the official figures. The Transport Secretary must reassure the public that there will be no repeat of the conflict of interest scandal between HS2 and CH2M. He must also clarify what steps he has taken to assure himself of the suitability of the decision to award contracts to Carillion, in light of the company's recent difficulties.

"HS2 must deliver value for money and retain public support, which means ensuring jobs and apprenticeships for the UK workforce and, crucially, securing the best deal for taxpayers by running services under public ownership, not for private profit."

Press release: Water scheme keeps River Slea flowing

The river that gives Sleaford its name is being given a helping hand by the Environment Agency with the switch-on of a groundwater scheme.

Around 1.1 million litres of water a day is being drawn up from an underground limestone aquifer, via a 44-metre deep borehole, and fed into the River Slea, keeping it from drying out.

The 'augmentation scheme' ensures the river continues to flow during its driest months, benefiting local habitat and preserving the look and feel of the town's water environment.

Almost 150 years ago, the river was described as "a never failing source of pure water" but natural and man-made changes to the environment and water cycle saw it dry up for extended periods from the 1960s.

The augmentation scheme was established in 1995 in response to calls from the local community, which values the river as an attractive feature.

For most years since, it has been supplementing the flow during the river's driest months, which tend to be between July and December. Without it, the river would typically run dry during this period.

Claire Anderson, Environment Planning Specialist at the Environment Agency, said:

The Environment Agency exists to create better places for people to enjoy and wildlife to thrive. This scheme achieves both. By supplementing the flow of water, we contribute to the town's cherished water environment and we minimise the environmental impact of dry weather, protecting the habitat in which dozens of species live.

After activating the scheme, Environment Agency officers monitor the Slea between the borehole and Cogglesford Mill, ensuring everything is working as it should.

The Slea augmentation scheme was activated on Saturday 15 July.

[News story: Gold award for DIO's commitment to safety](#)

The Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) was recognised recently for its commitment to accident and ill health prevention with the highly prestigious Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) Gold Achievement Award.

DIO's Chief Operating Officer, Geoff Robson attended the awards ceremony held at the Birmingham Hilton Hotel on 12 July 2017, to accept the highly prestigious award on behalf of DIO.

RoSPA achievement awards are a highly regarded and sought after business accolade. The scheme is open to businesses and organisations of all types and sizes from across the UK and overseas. Judges consider entrants' occupational

health and safety management systems, including practices such as leadership, active performance monitoring and workforce involvement.

To satisfy the strict criteria for the RoSPA Gold Award, DIO was required to provide evidence of a very high level of safety performance, demonstrating well developed occupational health and safety management systems and culture, outstanding control of risk and very low levels of error, harm and loss. In addition, we were required to demonstrate continued and improving performance over the past 5 years.

In accepting the award Geoff Robson said:

It is a great honour to accept this award on behalf of DIO based on evidence of working practices across our whole organisation. Putting safety first is our primary value, and what better evidence of our organisation honouring that commitment than receiving such a prestigious award. Moreover, it demonstrates to those visiting, working or living on the defence estate our commitment to their safety.

The entry was coordinated by Clare Read, Head of Regional Health and Safety Support Team who said:

We are extremely proud of our health and safety achievements and the very real improvements in safety performance across the organisation as evidenced in our award submission. To attain our target of a Gold Award is a fantastic achievement, which places DIO in the health and safety "premier league" and reflects the hard work put into developing and improving our Safety Management System. We look forward to reviewing the RoSPA award panel feedback and will be seeking ways to further develop and improve our process and procedures.

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Debate on the Future of Europe: 1,750 events so far with the potential to reach over 30 million Europeans

In March 2017, the Commission kick-started a debate on the future of Europe with its White Paper offering five scenarios for how the EU could develop over the next decade. First results published today show that to date, over 270,000 citizens have attended over 1,750 events organised or supported by the Commission. On top of this, many more citizens have joined the debate online (see figures [here](#)). President **Juncker** said: *"I am very encouraged to*

see so many people engage in the debate about the future of the European Union, which the Commission launched on 1 March 2017 with our White Paper. We have seen many different views expressed already and a strong positive momentum driving us forward. I will outline my vision in September but in reality Europe's future will be of your design. It is you writing the history books of tomorrow. So continue to engage and make your voices heard!" Events and debates will continue to be organised over the months to come and especially in the run-up to the annual State of the European Union speech on 13 September 2017 – contribute directly [here](#). More information is available in the [press release](#) and [factsheet](#). (For more information: Margaritis Schinas – Tel.: +32 229 60524; Mina Andreeva – Tel.: +32 229 91382; Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 29 67456)

Employment and social developments in Europe: 2017 review shows positive trends but highlights high burden on the young

Today, the Commission published the [2017 edition of its yearly Employment and Social Developments in Europe \(ESDE\) review](#). This year's edition confirms positive labour market and social trends and continued economic growth. With over 234 million people having a job, employment has never been as high as today in the EU and unemployment is at its lowest level since December 2008. But looking beyond the overall social and economic progress, evidence shows that there is a particularly high burden, exacerbated by demographic ageing, on younger generations: they tend to have more difficulties in finding a job, are more often in non-standard and precarious forms of employment and are likely to receive lower pensions, relative to wages. This is why the 2017 ESDE review focuses on intergenerational fairness: we need to make sure that all generations benefit from the current positive economic trends and that young people in Europe will have at least the same opportunities as their parents. Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne **Thyssen**, commented: *"This annual review shows once again that we are firmly on the path towards more jobs and growth. However, today's young and their children may end up worse off than their parents. This is not what we want. Swift action is needed. With the European Pillar of Social Rights we want to preserve and improve our social standards and living conditions for future generations."* The annual Employment and Social Developments in Europe review reports on the latest employment and social trends, and reflects on upcoming challenges and possible policy responses. It is the European Commission's main report to provide evidence and analysis and to review trends and upcoming challenges on the labour market. More information on this year's edition can be found in the [press release](#) and [memo](#) online. Commissioner **Thyssen's** press conference is available on [EbS](#). (For more information: Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Sara Soumillion – Tel.: + 32 229 67094)

EU and Brazil join forces in the WTO for global level-playing field in farm subsidies

The EU and Brazil – two of the world's biggest producers of agricultural products – today submitted to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) a [joint proposal](#) on support for agricultural production and food security measures. The objective is to limit market distortions and ensure a global level-

playing field for farmers while taking into account particular needs of developing countries. Agricultural domestic support is an important issue in the negotiations leading up to the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC11) to be held in Buenos Aires in December. Colombia, Peru and Uruguay have already expressed their support and are co-sponsors of the EU-Brazil initiative. Today's proposal is an example of the EU's work towards a successful ministerial meeting and a rules-based global trading system. The EU is also pushing for new solutions on fisheries subsidies, e-commerce, domestic regulation in services, transparency for smaller companies and investment facilitation. More background on the [EU in the WTO](#) (For more information: Daniel Rosario – Tel.: +32 229 56185; Kinga Malinowska – Tel.: +32 229 51383).

EU report reflects strengthened EU-Egypt cooperation on shared priorities

A joint report released today by the European Commission and the European External Action Service looks at the partnership between the EU and Egypt for the period 2015-2017. It assesses the achievements and policy developments in Egypt over the past two years and notes the EU's active support to the country in a wide range of critical areas including socio-economic development, education, health, energy, transport, environment, climate action, information society, research and innovation. The report comes ahead of the 7th EU-Egypt Association Council, scheduled to take place on 25th July 2017 in Brussels, where EU-Egypt Partnership Priorities will be adopted further to their agreement in December 2016. The new Partnership Priorities will set the basis for strengthening EU-Egypt cooperation for the coming three years, in areas of common interest and concern, notably economic reforms, governance, human rights, rule of law and efforts towards a more open society but also migration and security/counterterrorism, as well as closer dialogue and cooperation on regional issues. The report is available [here](#) and full press release [here](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Catherine Ray – Tel.: +32 229 69921; Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Lauranne Devillé – Tel.: +32 229 80833; Alceo Smerilli – Tel.: +32 229 64887)

European Union reaffirms its leadership on worldwide efforts to achieve sustainable development

Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development Neven **Mimica** participates today in this year's United Nations High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development to reaffirm Europe's global leadership in fighting poverty and supporting sustainable development. At this occasion, he will present to the international community the EU's new joint approach to development cooperation, the [new European Consensus on Development](#). The Consensus is a joint strategic document on the future of European development cooperation, which was agreed by all European institutions and all EU Member States to forge ahead on implementing the universal [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#). At the heart of these efforts will be a reinforced cooperation with partner countries, the United Nations system, International Financial Institutions, civil society and the private sector. Commissioner **Mimica** commented: *"The European Union and its Member States are determined to play a leading role in implementing the ambitious Sustainable Development Goals and eradicating poverty worldwide."*

Our new Consensus on Development lays down how we will do that, building on everything we have achieved during 60 years of development cooperation and promoting new, innovative and more effective types of partnerships. As the world's biggest donor of development assistance, we also want to be the best, and to bring about real change in people's lives." The High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development is the central UN platform to monitor progress towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. (For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz De Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Christina Wunder – Tel.: +32 229 92256)

Antitrust: Commission sends Statement of Objections to Teva on 'pay for delay' pharma agreement

Today, the European Commission sent Statement of Objections to the pharmaceutical company Teva for breaching the EU antitrust rules. Under an agreement with Cephalon, Teva committed not to market a cheaper generic version of Cephalon's drug for sleep disorders, modafinil, until October 2012. In exchange, Teva received a substantial transfer of value from Cephalon through a series of cash payments and various other agreements. In today's Statement of Objections, the Commission takes the preliminary view that the transferred value served as a significant pay-for-delay inducement for Teva not to compete with Cephalon's modafinil worldwide, including in the European Economic Area. Margrethe **Vestager**, Commissioner in charge of competition policy, said: "Market entry and competition by generic drugs is an essential element to improve the affordability of healthcare. In this case, our preliminary finding is that Teva and Cephalon broke EU antitrust rules by agreeing on Cephalon paying Teva to keep its cheaper generic version of Cephalon's sleep disorder drug modafinil out of the market. It's now up to the companies to respond to our concerns." A full press release is available online in [EN](#), [DE](#) and [FR](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

State aid: Commission concludes Dutch state guarantees on loans for energy saving projects involve no aid

The European Commission has found that a Dutch scheme granting guarantees to banks that issue subordinated loans to energy-saving projects does not involve state aid within the meaning of the EU rules. The objective of the Dutch "Energy Transition Financing Facility" is to improve access to finance for projects aiming at easing the transition to a low carbon economy, such as geothermal or energy savings in energy intensive industries, for which demand exceeds the supply that banks can offer. The Dutch scheme will guarantee those subordinated loans for up to 80% of the amount of the loan. The scheme is set to start in 2017, with a budget of €80 million for the first two years. The Commission found that the Dutch authorities will ensure a sufficiently high remuneration on the guarantees on such loans and will only issue guarantees on loans financing viable projects. Therefore, the Commission concluded that the guarantees do not constitute state aid to the banks, nor to the borrowers involved. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the [public case register](#), under the case number SA.47416. (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229

80100; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Forties Pipeline System by INEOS

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of Forties Pipeline System (FPS) of the UK and interests in the North and South Graben Area Export Lines (GAEL spurlines), by INEOS of the Isle of Man. FPS and GAEL spurlines are an integrated oil and natural gas liquids pipeline transportation and processing system located in the UK Northern North Sea. INEOS is a global manufacturer of petrochemicals, speciality chemicals and oil products. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because of its limited competitive impact on the market. 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.8456](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of a parking facility in Berlin by Central and SIGNA

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over Berlin, Passauer Straße 1-3 Immobilien GmbH & Co. KG (JVCo) of Germany, by Harng Central Department Store Ltd. (Central), of Thailand and a subsidiary of SIGNA Prime Selection AG of Austria. JVCo is the owner of a real estate property plot in Berlin that is currently occupied by a multi storey car park. Central is active through subsidiaries in merchandising, real estate, retailing, hospitality and restaurants activities primarily in Southeast Asia including Thailand, Indonesia and Vietnam. SIGNA is engaged in real estate activities, including purchase, rent, lease and management of land and buildings as well as project development. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because of the limited impact of the transaction on the relevant markets. 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.8500](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

Concentrations: la Commission autorise l'acquisition de DomusVi par Intermediate Capital Group

La Commission européenne a approuvé, en vertu du règlement européen sur les concentrations, l'acquisition de CasaVita SAS et de ses filiales (groupe DomusVi) de France, par Intermediate Capital Group (ICG) du Royaume-Uni. Le groupe DomusVi a pour activité la gestion et l'exploitation de maisons de repos médicalisées et non-médicalisées pour personnes âgées ainsi que la prestation de soins gériatriques en France et en Espagne. ICG est un gestionnaire d'actifs investissant dans les dettes privées, les marchés d'action et le crédit en Europe, en Asie -Pacifique et aux Etats-Unis. La

Commission a conclu que la concentration envisagée ne soulèverait pas de problème de concurrence, dans la mesure où les deux entreprises ne sont pas actives sur le même marché ou sur des marchés liés ou complémentaires. La transaction a été examinée dans le cadre de la procédure simplifiée du contrôle des concentrations. De plus amples informations sont disponibles sur le [site web concurrence](#) de la Commission, dans le [registre public](#) des affaires sous le numéro d'affaire [M.8546](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

Annual inflation down to 1.3% in the euro area

Euro area annual inflation was 1.3% in June 2017, down from 1.4% in May. In June 2016 the rate was 0.1%. European Union annual inflation was 1.4% in June 2017, down from 1.6% in May. A year earlier the rate was 0.1%. These figures come from Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. The lowest annual rates were registered in Ireland (-0.6%), Denmark (0.4%) and Romania (0.7%). The highest annual rates were recorded in Lithuania (3.5%), Estonia and Latvia (both 3.1%). Compared with May 2017, annual inflation fell in eighteen Member States, remained stable in three and rose in six. A Eurostat press release is available [here](#). (For more information: Vanessa Mock – Tel.: +32 229 56194; Juliana Dahl – Tel.: +32 229 59914)

STATEMENTS

Vice-President Ansip and Commissioner Gabriel in Tallinn for a Council meeting and a conference on data economy

This week, Vice-President for the Digital Single Market Andrus **Ansip** and Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society Mariya **Gabriel** participate in Tallinn, Estonia in a [Digital Single Market conference on data](#) as well as in [an informal meeting of the Competitiveness and Telecommunications Ministers](#). The one-day conference taking place today is dedicated to the free movement of data and the speakers discuss the key framework conditions that are necessary to enable the free data flows across borders and sectors in Europe following [Commission's announced measures](#) earlier this year. Commissioner **Gabriel** opened the conference this morning with a speech that is available [here](#). Vice-President **Ansip** will deliver the closing remarks of the conference in the afternoon. His speech will be available at 16:05 CET [here](#). Later this evening Slovenian Minister for Public Administration Boris Koprivnikar, in the presence of Vice-President **Ansip** and Commissioner **Gabriel**, will sign the [EuroHPC declaration](#) on high-performance computing. Slovenia is becoming the ninth Member State signing the EuroHPC declaration, aimed at coordinating efforts with regards to [high-performance computing](#). Discussions on the agenda of the Competitiveness and Telecommunications Council meeting taking place tomorrow, will concentrate on spectrum coordination and the development of the next generation of communication networks (5G). On the competitiveness side, the focus will be on public services and eGovernment. (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel. +32 229 67083; Mirna Talko – Tel. +32 229 87278)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner King in Ireland to participate in Citizen's Dialogue

Commissioner for the Security Union Julian **King** is in Ireland today to participate in a Citizen's Dialogue in Glenties. The event takes place in the context of the Annual MacGill Summer School & Arts Week in Glenties and provides the occasion to engage in open discussions with students and members of the public, as well as representatives of Irish civil society, non-governmental organisations and businesses. Commissioner King will deliver a speech on 'Responding to the security threats against Europe, its democracies and its citizens'. The event will be streamed live [here](#). *Commissioner King will remain in Ireland tomorrow, when he will meet the Irish Minister for Justice and Equality Charles Flanagan in Dublin. (For more information: Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456; Markus Lammert – Tel.: +32 229 58602)*

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

[China's first top-level full flight simulator delivered](#)

An aviation company in Tianjin Monday received China's first top-level full flight simulator.

The simulator was delivered by ACCEL (Tianjin) Flight Simulation, a joint Sino-U.S. venture between Haite High-Tech and Rockwell Collins, established last year.

A flight simulator recreates aircraft flight and the flying environment for pilot training, aircraft design and other purposes. The simulator is level D, meaning it can act as a perfect substitute for real planes in training pilots.

Previously, all simulators at this level in China were imported at a cost of over ten million U.S. dollars per unit.

"The successful delivery of China's first level D simulator has filled the blank in the field domestically," said Li Biao, president of Haite.

The northern municipality of Tianjin has developed a national level aviation industry base due to the rapid development of China's aviation industry and domestic market demand for aviation training.