

# Press release: New figures reveal 1 in 11 anglers are junior anglers

Fishing licence sales show a huge increase in popularity among children with 1 in 11 anglers being juniors according to new figures released by the Environment Agency today.

The introduction of free fishing licences for children in 2017 has led to a 53% increase with more than 79,000 junior licences issued last year.

The figures were welcomed by the agency in light of challenges in attracting juniors to the sport given the popularity of game consoles, TV and social media.

Kevin Austin, Head of Fisheries at the Environment Agency, said:

While today's figures are welcomed and encouraging, we mustn't rest on our laurels. Today's children are the anglers of tomorrow and it's important we attract them to the sport early. We're really pleased to see that a growing number of young people are taking up the offer of a free junior licence, helping them to enjoy the great outdoors and this great sport.

Children today have a wealth of technology at their fingertips, and coupled with the costs parents face, it's easy to see why fewer children are enjoying outdoor activities. Through our continued investment into fishing, our aim is to ensure the sport continues for generations to come.

From April, the age of free junior licences change from 12-16 to 13-16. Junior fishing licence work will continue to be supported by Environment Agency partners such as Angling Trust, Get Hooked on Fishing and National Fishing Month. Those under thirteen will not be required to purchase a licence.

All fishing licence income is used to fund work to protect and improve fish stocks and fisheries. The Environment Agency works in partnership with the Angling Trust, Get Hooked on Fishing and National Fishing Month to offer free fishing events and activities.

To find an event close to you take a look at get fishing. To buy a licence online visit: [www.gov.uk/get-a-fishing-licence](http://www.gov.uk/get-a-fishing-licence)

Notes to editor

- Figures quoted are for England and Wales
- Juniors still need to get a licence in order to fish but the licence will be free at get a fishing licence.

- These changes have also been implemented across Wales. Natural Resources Wales is the lead.

#### 1. Junior sales

- 2015/16: 60,762
- 2016/17: 52,117

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## New Deal for Consumers

### IP/18/3041

#### **What is the New Deal for Consumers?**

The EU currently has some of the strongest consumer protection rules in the world. Consumers can, for example, return products bought online within 14 days or have products repaired or replaced within a guarantee period. For businesses, these common rules across the EU foster consumer trust, which boosts trade and nurtures growth and jobs.

The Commission's New Deal for Consumers is a proposal that will guarantee that all European consumers fully benefit from their rights. It will also strengthen the public and private enforcement of these rules, ensuring that authorities have the power to impose deterrent sanctions and consumers can access compensation if their rights are breached.

#### **Why is the Commission proposing the New Deal for Consumers?**

The Juncker Commission has done a lot to adapt consumer rules to the fast moving marketplace:

- under the Digital Single Market Strategy, the Commission ended roaming charges and unjustified geoblocking, as well as ensuring cross-border portability of online content services;
- modernised the [Consumer Protection Cooperation Regulation](#) which will help enforce the existing consumer rules through better cooperation amongst national consumer authorities.

In 2017 the European Commission carried out a thorough evaluation of existing consumer rules. It showed that the current EU consumer legislation works well, but stressed that the rules were not applied and enforced effectively across the EU. There is also a need to raise awareness among consumers and businesses about their rights and obligations. The review identified targeted revisions to eliminate unnecessary costs for traders and to modernise the rules in the light of

today's global trends and new business practices (see [press release](#)).

Recent cross-border consumer cases, such as the "Dieselgate" scandal which affected consumers all over the EU, have confirmed that European consumer law should be strengthened, for example by introducing collective redress systems.

This is why the European Commission is proposing the New Deal for Consumers. It will ensure that all European consumers fully benefit from their rights, by helping Member States to enforce existing rights better, and by modernising redress systems.

### **Which legislative proposals does the New Deal consist of?**

Concretely, the New Deal for Consumers will update the following four existing Directives:

The New Deal also contains a legislative proposal replacing the current [Injunctions Directive](#), proposing representative actions for the collective interest of consumers. The proposal aims to improve tools for stopping illegal practices and facilitating redress for consumers where there are widespread infringements on their rights where many of them are victims of the same infringement of their rights in mass harm situation.

### **How will such representative actions work in practice?**

Under the existing rules, a court or an administrative authority can put an end to illegal practices when a company does not respect its duties towards several consumers, without individual consumers being obliged to act.

Under the New Deal, it will also be possible for consumers to get redress, such as compensation or repair without any cost on their side, following a legal action to stop such illegal practices.

This is already the case in some Member States, but the New Deal introduces these rights across the EU. This will help individual consumers all over the EU to secure their rights, especially those who cannot afford to pursue redress or who shy away from individual litigation.

### **Who will act on behalf of consumers in representative actions?**

Only qualified entities, such as consumer organisations and independent public bodies, designated by the EU Member States, will be able to bring representative actions for redress. These entities must be non-profit and will have to respect a number of criteria (see details below).

EU Member States will monitor on a regular basis whether the designated qualified entities continue to comply with the criteria. Failure to do so will lead to the loss of the status of qualified entity.

**What are the features of representative action specific for the EU model?  
Will there be a risk of US style class actions?**

No. Thanks to numerous safeguards, the EU representative actions will be different from the US style class action. We want a system that cannot be misused and that bring more fairness to consumers, not more business for law firms.

Under the EU representative actions system, qualified entities representing consumers will have strict obligations of transparency regarding the origin of the funds they use for their activity. This rule is a strong safeguard as it enables the court or authority to assess whether there may be a conflict of interest between any third party funder and the qualified entity. Such a conflict of interest could lead to abusive litigation for example between competitors as one company could use a qualified entity to launch a frivolous action against another company.

Other safeguards are the following:

- only qualified entities (such as consumer organisations and independent public bodies) designated by the EU Member States according to strict criteria, including their non-profit making character and their legitimate interest in ensuring the provisions of relevant Union law are complied with, can bring representative actions for redress;
- representative actions for redress will be possible only based on a final decision of a national court or authority which establishes that the trader has breached the law. This can be for example a final injunction order or a final decision of a national enforcement authority. Thus, no frivolous claim can be brought;
- EU Member States will monitor on a regular basis whether the designated qualified entities continue to comply with the criteria. Failure to do so will lead to the loss of the status of qualified entity;
- no punitive damages should be awarded. Consumers will be compensated for the actual harm suffered.

The proposal introduces strong information obligations for the benefit of consumers, who will need in any case to be clearly informed about their rights and the modalities at their disposal to benefit from the redress awarded further to the representative action.

The proposal is principle-based and sets out a general framework for collective injunctions and redress, while respecting subsidiarity, the procedural autonomy and legal traditions of Member States. For example, the proposal leaves the freedom to Member States to choose between opt-in or opt-out systems in order to allow consumers to be represented by the action.

**Will it be possible to organise one representative action on behalf of**

## **consumers from several EU countries?**

Yes. Cross-border actions could become more efficient since it will be possible for qualified entities representing consumers from different Member States to join forces within a single representative action on behalf of consumers from those countries, making a joint case against a company on the same breach of consumer law.

## **What will happen if another mass harm case like the 'Dieselgate' scandal emerges in Europe where a product does not respect the relevant standards?**

Should a Dieselgate-type scandal happen again, victims of unfair commercial practices, such as misleading advertising about environmental claims, by car manufacturers will be able to obtain remedies collectively through a representative action under this Directive even if the Union regulatory framework for type approval of vehicles is not covered as such by Annex I. This was not possible previously across the EU.

## **Why should there be stronger penalties for violations of EU consumer law?**

The availability of effective and deterrent penalties is especially important for the good functioning of the enforcement co-operation in cross-border cases under the recently revised Consumer Protection Cooperation (CPC) Regulation.

The new CPC Regulation requires Member States to take enforcement measures, including fines, in a coordinated manner regarding widespread infringements and widespread infringements across the EU. This is clearly not possible with the current disparities amongst national rules on fines.

Currently, for example, in France, Poland and the Netherlands, fines for misleading the consumers (infringing the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive) may reach 10% of a company's annual turnover. In contrast, fines for similar breaches of EU consumer law are capped at € 8,688 in Lithuania, € 13,157 in Croatia and € 32,000 in Estonia.

## **How will new penalties for violations of EU consumer law work in practice?**

Under the proposal, national authorities will have the power to impose effective, proportionate and dissuasive penalties in a coordinated manner.

For widespread infringements that affect consumers in several EU Member States, the available maximum fine will be at least 4% of the trader's annual turnover in the respective Member State. Member States are free to provide for higher maximum fines.

The actual level of penalties in a case will have to be determined by the relevant national authority, taking into account aggravating and alleviating factors set out in the updated directives.

## **Who will enforce the new rules under the New Deal for Consumers?**

Consumer protection authorities and courts in the EU countries will enforce the rules provided in the proposals of the New Deal. This is the same way EU consumer law is enforced today. The European Commission does not have powers to intervene in concrete disputes between traders and consumers.

## **How will the New Deal support consumers to fully enjoy their rights in the Digital Single Market?**

The new Deal for consumers gives the right tools to support enforcement of our consumer legislation in particular much has already been achieved in the last years to improve consumer rights and certainty to business in area such as cross-border portability of content, roaming charges and geoblocking as well as the energy sector. This now needs to be fully implemented.

## **What is the Commission doing to tackle the dual quality of food issue?**

In September 2017, the Commission issued [guidelines](#) on the application of EU food and consumer laws to dual quality products. The guidance will help national authorities to determine whether a company is breaking EU laws when selling products of dual quality in different countries.

Following up on these guidelines, the New Deal for Consumers will update the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive in order to make explicit that, it may be illegal to market products as being identical in several EU countries, if their composition is significantly different. Business operators are free to market and sell goods with different composition or characteristics, tailoring their products to local consumer preferences or taking into account the need to respond to different trends. Products under the same brand may exceptionally have different characteristics. However, a substantially different composition in identically branded goods can be a source of concern when those products are marketed in a way that has the potential to mislead the consumer.

In parallel, the Commission's Joint Research Centre, with the support of more than half of the EU Member States and a wide range of stakeholders' organisations, is also currently finalising a common testing methodology and will coordinate a testing campaign focussed on food products in May 2018. This work will be key in helping national authorities to enforce EU rules.

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# A New Deal for Consumers: Commission strengthens EU consumer rights and enforcement

While the EU already has some of the strongest rules on consumer protection in the world, recent cases like the Dieseltgate scandal, have shown that it is difficult to enforce them fully in practice. The New Deal for Consumers will empower qualified entities to launch representative actions on behalf of consumers and introduce stronger sanctioning powers for Member States' consumer authorities. It will also extend consumers' protection when they are online and clarify how EU law to clarify that dual quality practices misleading consumers are prohibited.

First Vice-President **Timmermans** said: *"Today's New Deal is about delivering a fairer Single Market that benefits consumers and businesses. We introduce a European collective redress right for when groups of consumers have suffered harm, like we have seen in the recent past, with proper safeguards so there can be no misuse. Consumers will know who they are buying from online, and when sellers have paid to appear in search results. The majority of traders who play fair will see burdens lifted. The handful of traders who deliberately abuse European consumers' trust will be sanctioned with tougher fines."*

**Věra Jourová**, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality added: *"In aglobalised world where the big companies have a huge advantage over individual consumers we need to level the odds. Representative actions, in the European way, willbring more fairness to consumers, not more business for law firms. And with stronger sanctions linked to the annual turnover of a company, consumer authorities will finally get teeth to punish the cheaters. It cannot be cheap to cheat."*

The New Deal for Consumers will mean:

## **1. Strengthening consumer rights online**

- **More transparency in online market places** –When buying from an online market place, consumers will have to be clearly informed about whether they are buying products or services from a trader or from a private person, so they know whether they are protected by consumer rights if something goes wrong.
- **More transparency on search results on online platforms** –When searchingonline, consumers will be clearly informed when a search result is being paid for by a trader. Moreover, online marketplaces will have to inform the consumers about the main parameters determining the ranking of the results. **New consumer rights for "free" digital services** –When paying for a digitalservice, consumers benefit from certain information rights and have 14 days to cancel their contract (withdrawal

right). The New Deal for Consumers will now extend this right to 'free' digital services for which consumers provide their personal data, but do not pay with money. This typically would apply to cloud storage services, social media or email accounts.

## **2. Giving consumers the tools to enforce their rights and get compensation**

- **Representative action, the European way** – Under the New Deal for Consumers it will be possible for a qualified entity, such as a consumer organisation, to seek redress, such as compensation, replacement or repair, on behalf of a group of consumers that have been harmed by an illegal commercial practice. In some Member States, it is already possible for consumers to launch collective actions in courts, but now this possibility will be available in all EU countries.

For example, in a Dieselgate-type scenario, victims of unfair commercial practices, such as misleading advertising by car manufacturers not in compliance with Union regulatory framework for type approval of vehicles or environmental legislation will be able to obtain remedies collectively through a representative action under this Directive. Such collective redress was previously not provided under Union law.

This model has strong safeguards and is distinctly different from US-style class actions. Representative actions will not be open to law firms, but only to entities such as consumer organisations that are non-profit and fulfil strict eligibility criteria, monitored by a public authority. This new system will make sure European consumers can fully benefit from their rights and can obtain compensation, while avoiding the risk of abusive or unmerited litigation.

- **Better protection against unfair commercial practices** –The New Deal for Consumers will ensure that consumers in all Member States have the right to claim individual remedies (e.g. financial compensation or termination of contract) when they are affected by unfair commercial practices, such as aggressive or misleading marketing. This protection currently varies greatly across the EU.

## **3. Introducing effective penalties for violations of EU consumer law**

EU consumer authorities are not well equipped to sanction practices creating 'mass harm situations' that affect a large number of consumers across the EU. Currently, the level of penalties differs widely depending on the Member State, and is often too low to actually have a deterrent effect, particularly on companies operating cross-border and on a large scale.

Under the proposal, national consumer authorities will have the power to impose effective, proportionate and dissuasive penalties in a coordinated manner. For widespread infringements that affect consumers in several EU Member States, the available **maximum fine will be 4 % of the trader's annual turnover** in each respective Member State. Member States are free to introduce higher maximum fines.



#### 4. Tackling dual quality of consumer products

Following up on the Commission's [guidelines](#) from September 2017, the New Deal for Consumers will update the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive in order to make explicit that national authorities can assess and address misleading commercial practices involving the marketing of products as being identical in several EU countries, if their composition or characteristics are significantly different.

#### 5. Improved conditions for businesses

The New Deal will remove unnecessary burden for businesses, including by lifting obligations on companies as regards the consumer's withdrawal right. For instance, consumers will no longer be allowed to return products that they have already used instead of merely trying them out, and traders will no longer have to reimburse the consumers before actually receiving the returned goods.

The new rules also introduce **more flexibility** in the way traders can communicate with consumers, allowing them to also use web forms or chats instead of e-mail, provided the consumers can keep track of their communication with the trader.

#### Next Steps

The Commission's proposals will be discussed by the European Parliament and the Council.

#### Background

The New Deal for Consumers will build on what the Juncker Commission has already achieved to improve consumer protection. Under the [Digital Single Market Strategy](#), the Commission has delivered on many initiatives that adapt consumer rules to the online world, for instance by putting an end to roaming charges or unjustified geoblocking. Also, the modernised Consumer Protection Cooperation Regulation, adopted in 2017, will improve the public enforcement and cross-border cooperation of consumer authorities.

However the review of EU consumer rules and recent EU-wide breaches of these rules last year showed that there was still room for improvement to better protect consumers.

The New Deal for Consumers is composed of two proposals for Directives:

- A proposal on representative actions for the protection of the collective interests of consumers and repealing the [Injunctions Directive 2009/22/EC](#). This proposal aims to improve tools for stopping illegal practices and facilitating redress for consumers where many of them are victims of the same infringement of their rights, in a mass harm situation.

The accompanying Communication includes an action plan to develop and strengthen coordinated enforcement actions among authorities and their

international cooperation with authorities from key trading partners.

A [study on transparency in online platforms](#), also published today, supports the New Deal's proposals on online market places. It shows that greater online transparency helps consumers take decisions and increases their trust when buying online.

### **More information**

[Proposal & legal documents on the New Deal for Consumers](#)

[MEMO: A New Deal for Consumers: Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[Factsheets on the New Deal for Consumers:](#)

- New Deal benefits for consumers
- New Deal benefits for businesses
- Functioning of the collective redress
- Achievements of the Juncker Commission in the area of consumer protection
- Improved public enforcement with updated Consumer Protection Cooperation rules

[Dual Food Quality](#)

[Information about the evaluation of EU consumer legislation](#)

[Information about collective redress](#)

[Behavioural study on transparency in online platforms](#)

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## **Daily News 11 / 04 / 2018**

### **COLLEGE MEETING: Commission acts to boost trust in scientific studies on food safety**

Today the Commission is responding to the concerns expressed by citizens in a successful European Citizens' Initiative, with a proposal to improve the transparency of scientific studies in the food safety area. The proposal, drawing also on the [Commission's Fitness Check](#) of the [General Food Law](#), which dates back from 2002 and thus needs an update, will: give citizens greater access to information submitted to the European Food Safety Authority ([EFSA](#)) on approvals concerning the agri-food chain; provide the possibility for additional studies to be requested by the Commission and, will involve Member

States' scientists more closely in approval procedures. First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** said: "Today we are addressing citizens' concerns, to improve transparency about decision making, to offer better access to relevant information and to ensure that trustworthy, science-based risk assessment remains at the heart of decision making in this sensitive area of food safety." Vytenis **Andriukaitis**, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, said: "The EU's science-based risk assessment for food safety is one of the most stringent in the world. We are now making it even stronger through clearer transparency rules and more effective risk communication throughout the process. With this reform citizens will have immediate access to scientific studies supporting applications for authorisation." [Press release](#) and [MEMO](#) are available. (For more information: Anca Paduraru – Tel.: +32 229 91269; Aikaterini Apostola – Tel.: +32 229 87624)

### **COLLEGE MEETING: A New Deal for Consumers: Commission strengthens EU consumer rights and enforcement**

Today, the European Commission is proposing a New Deal for Consumers to ensure that all European consumers fully benefit from their rights under Union law. While the EU already has some of the strongest rules on consumer protection in the world, recent cases like the Dieselgate scandal, have shown that it is difficult to enforce them fully in practice. First Vice-President **Timmermans** said: "Today's New Deal is about delivering a fairer Single Market that benefits consumers and businesses. We introduce a European collective redress right for when groups of consumers have suffered harm, like we have seen in the recent past, with proper safeguards so there can be no misuse. Consumers will know who they are buying from online, and when sellers have paid to appear in search results. The majority of traders who play fair will see burdens lifted. The handful of traders who deliberately abuse European consumers' trust will be sanctioned with tougher fines." Věra **Jourová**, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality added: "In a globalised world where the big companies have a huge advantage over individual consumers we need to level the odds. Representative actions, in the European way, will bring more fairness to consumers, not more business for law firms. And with stronger sanctions linked to the annual turnover of a company, consumer authorities will finally get teeth to punish the cheaters. It cannot be cheap to cheat." Concretely, the New Deal for Consumers will empower qualified entities to launch representative actions on behalf of consumers and introduce stronger sanctioning powers for Member States' consumer authorities. It will also extend consumers' protection when they are online and clarify that dual quality practices misleading consumers, are prohibited. More information will be made available in this [press release](#) and [memo](#), in addition to a series of factsheets explaining the various elements of the proposal. Commissioner **Jourová** will give a press conference later today, which can be followed on [EbS](#). (For more information: Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Mélanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659)

**Support to peace and development in Colombia: EU signs projects worth €14.3**

## million

The European Union continues to support sustainable development and peace building in Colombia, with ten new projects worth €14.3 million. This assistance underlines the EU's commitment to promote a better quality of life for Colombians, notably for young people, to peace building and to equal sustainable development for all. The new projects, signed yesterday in Bogota, will be implemented by Colombian civil society organisations and will help to strengthen their capacity to contribute to democratic governance, overcome poverty and support equal and sustainable development. For instance, two projects will help to better connect humanitarian aid and development support, while another programme seeks to improve public planning in municipalities, as many of these are located in historical conflict zones and are facing challenges to overcome social inequalities. The projects will reach a total of 355 organisations and around 1.7 million participants in Antioquia, Bolivar, Cauca, Caquetá, Chocó, Meta, Nariño, Tolima, Putumayo, Valle del Cauca and Bogotá. *(For more information: Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Christina Wunder – Tel.: +32 229 92256)*

## **Les étudiants en journalisme sont invités à postuler pour une expérience directe dans le journalisme européen**

Les candidatures pour l'édition 2018 du programme [Youth4Regions](#) sont désormais ouvertes. Les étudiants en journalisme peuvent envoyer leurs meilleurs articles ou vidéos sur un projet cofinancé par le Fonds européen de développement régional (FEDER) ou le Fonds de cohésion et ainsi gagner un voyage à Bruxelles pour couvrir la [Semaine européenne des villes et régions 2018](#), en octobre; il s'agit du principal événement européen sur la politique de cohésion, rassemblant de nombreuses personnalités politiques européennes, nationales et locales ainsi que des journalistes venant de toute l'Europe. Les lauréats pourront également participer à des sessions de formation sur le journalisme, la communication et la politique de cohésion à Bruxelles et verront leurs meilleurs articles sur la Semaine européenne des villes et régions publiés sur le [site web](#) du département de la Commission pour la politique régionale et urbaine (DG REGIO) et dans le magazine [Panorama](#). 28 étudiants (un par Etat membre) seront sélectionnés. Les candidatures sont ouvertes jusqu'au 29 juin 2018. Les étudiants peuvent postuler dans les 24 langues officielles de l'UE. *(Pour plus d'informations: Johannes Bahrke – Tél .: +32 229 58615, Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tél .: +32 229 56169)*

## **Antitrust: Commission confirms unannounced inspections concerning distribution of sports media rights and other related rights**

The European Commission can confirm that on 10 April 2018 its officials carried out unannounced inspections in several Member States at the premises of companies active in the distribution of media rights and related rights pertaining to various sports events and/or their broadcasting. The Commission has concerns that the companies involved may have violated EU antitrust rules

that prohibit cartels and restrictive business practices. Unannounced inspections are a preliminary step into suspected anticompetitive practices. The fact that the Commission carries out such inspections does not mean that the companies are guilty of anti-competitive behaviour nor does it prejudge the outcome of the investigation itself. The Commission respects the rights of defence, in particular the right of companies to be heard in antitrust proceedings. A full [statement](#) is available online. (*For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889*)

### **Concentrations: la Commission autorise l'acquisition du contrôle conjoint de Datix par TA Associates et Rothschild**

La Commission européenne a approuvé, en vertu du règlement européen sur les concentrations, l'acquisition de Datix Holdings Ltd (Royaume-Uni) par TA Associates Cayman Ltd (Îles Caïmans) et Rothschild & CO S.C.A (France). Datix fournit un logiciel de sécurité des patients médicaux et de rapport d'incidents. TA Associates investit généralement dans les services aux entreprises, les produits de consommation, les services financiers, et dans les secteurs de la santé et des technologies en Amérique du Nord, en Europe et en Asie. Rothschild est un groupe de conseil financier indépendant fournissant des conseils en fusions et acquisitions, stratégie et financement, ainsi que des solutions d'investissement et de gestion de patrimoine aux grandes institutions, familles, individus et gouvernements, à l'échelle mondiale. La Commission a conclu que la concentration envisagée ne soulèverait pas de problème de concurrence, compte tenu des chevauchements horizontaux limités entre les activités de Datix et celles des sociétés du portefeuille de TA Associates et Rothschild. L'opération a été examinée dans le cadre de la procédure simplifiée de contrôle des concentrations. De plus amples informations sont disponibles sur le [site internet concurrence](#) de la Commission, dans le [registre public](#) des affaires sous le numéro d'affaire [M.8845](#). (*Plus d'informations: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740*)

### **Concentrations: la Commission autorise l'acquisition de deux locaux commerciaux par AXA et la Caisse des dépôts et consignations**

La Commission européenne a approuvé, en vertu du règlement européen sur les concentrations, l'acquisition du contrôle en commun de trois lots de copropriété qui consistent en deux coques à usage de commerce au sein d'un centre commercial situé dans la région Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, en France, par AXA et la Caisse des dépôts et consignations, toutes deux basées en France. AXA est un groupe d'assurances global actif dans le secteur de l'assurance vie, santé et d'autres formes d'assurance ainsi que dans la gestion d'investissements. La Caisse des dépôts et consignations est un établissement public réalisant des activités d'intérêt général telles que la gestion des fonds privés auxquels les pouvoirs publics souhaitent apporter une protection particulière et des activités ouvertes à la concurrence dans les secteurs de l'environnement, de l'immobilier, de l'investissement et du capital investissement ainsi que des services. La Commission a conclu que l'acquisition envisagée ne soulèverait pas de problème de concurrence compte tenu de son impact très limité sur la structure du marché. L'opération a été examinée dans le cadre de la procédure simplifiée du contrôle des

concentrations. De plus amples informations sont disponibles sur le site internet [concurrence](#) de la Commission, dans le [registre public](#) des affaires sous le numéro d'affaire [M.8853](#). (*Plus d'informations: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740*)

### **State aid: Commission approves €38 million public support for broadband network project in the region of Rivierenland, the Netherlands**

The European Commission has endorsed, under EU State aid rules, €38 million of public support to a newly established public entity of the Rivierenland region in the Dutch province of Gelderland, for the roll-out of a wholesale-only broadband network providing to third party network operators and service providers access on equal and non-discriminatory terms. This network will only cover areas where there is no next generation access broadband infrastructure at present or in the foreseeable future (known as “NGA white areas”). The new entity will provide open access to the physical infrastructure, such as ducts, poles, dark fibre and street cabinets. It will not offer active electronic communication services such as Internet access. The Commission assessed the measure under its [2013 Broadband Guidelines](#) and concluded that the measure is in line with EU State aid rules because the positive effects on competition in the Dutch broadband market outweigh any distortion of competition brought about by the State aid. More information will be available, once potential confidentiality issues have been resolved, on the Commission’s [competition](#) website, in the [State Aid Register](#) under the case number SA.46613. (*For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889*)

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **Commissioner Thyssen on European Semester visit in the Netherlands**

Tomorrow, 12 April, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne **Thyssen**, will travel to the Netherlands. Aim of the visit is to discuss the Commission’s [country report on the Netherlands, published on 7 March in the context of the European Semester of economic and social policy coordination](#), as well as current social files. Commissioner Thyssen will first meet with members of the standing committee on EU Affairs and Social Affairs and Employment at the Dutch House of Representatives. She will then meet with State Secretary of Social Affairs, Ms Tamara van Ark, to discuss the [European Labour Authority, posting of workers](#), and the [coordination of social security systems](#). The meeting will be followed by a joint meeting with Minister of Social Affairs, Mr Wouter Koolmees and State Secretary for Finance, Mr Menno Snel, to discuss the country-specific recommendations. Commissioner Thyssen will conclude her visit by a meeting with the social partners from the Dutch Social and Economic Council (Sociaal-Economische Raad, SER). (*For more information: Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Sara Soumillion – Tel.: + 32 229 67094*)

### **Commissioner Navracsics in Slovenia to discuss culture and creativity**

Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor **Navracsics**, will

be in Ljubljana, Slovenia, tomorrow to participate in the [Creative Forum](#) and in the [European Festival Associations' Arts Festivals Summit 2018](#). At the Creative Forum, the Commissioner will take part in a political roundtable entitled "Creativity as a tool for regional cooperation". He will highlight the importance of EU cooperation with countries from the Western Balkans and the Southern Mediterranean, notably regarding education exchanges, youth programmes and cultural cooperation fostering direct contacts between people. The theme of this year's Arts Festival Summit is "The (Herit)age of the ARTS – audiences in the heart of the places". Commissioner Tibor **Navracsics** will highlight the role that festivals play in urban and regional development and acknowledge their contribution to the [European Year of Cultural Heritage](#) celebrated throughout 2018. The European Commission will shortly present a revised European Agenda for Culture, which will be instrumental in improving awareness of Europe's common identity and heritage. (*For more information: Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: +32 229 56184*)

### **Vice-President Jyrki Katainen in Ljubljana and Zagreb for European Semester visits**

Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, is in Ljubljana, Slovenia, and Zagreb, Croatia on 12-13 April. The aim of these European Semester visits is to engage with Slovenian and Croatian citizens and high-level political decision makers on the Future of Europe and the reform agendas essential for growth and jobs. In Ljubljana Vice-President **Katainen** will meet Mr Borut Pahor, President of Slovenia, and Mr Miro Cerar, Prime Minister of Slovenia. He will participate in a joint session of the Parliamentary Committees on EU Affairs and on Economic Affairs in the Slovenian National Assembly. The recording of the debate will be broadcast at Slovenian public TV, [Channel 3](#) at 22.00. He will also attend a working lunch with Mr Mateja Vranicar Erman, Minister of Finance. Vice-President **Katainen** will participate in a Citizens' Dialogue at the Faculty of Business and Management Sciences Novo mesto to discuss the Future of Europe, the European Semester, investment, the economy and cohesion funds. The discussion can be followed [online](#) from 16.30 onwards. Vice-President **Katainen** will then visit Zagreb, Croatia, on Friday 13 April. He will meet Ms Kolinda Grabar Kitarovic, President of Croatia. He will also participate in a working lunch with Mr Andrej Plenković, Prime Minister, Mr Zdravko Marić, Minister of Finance and Ms Gabriijela Žalac, Minister of EU Funds and Regional Development. He will deliver a keynote speech at the conference on the Investment Plan for Europe: "Opportunities for Croatia". Vice-President **Katainen** will also participate in a Citizens' Dialogue on Jobs and Growth in Tomorrow's Europe, which is [livestreamed](#) from 11.45 onwards. In addition, he will participate in a meeting at the Croatian Parliament, chaired by the Chair of the European Affairs Committee, with the participation of MPs representing several Committees. (*For more information: Christian Spahr – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Siobhán Millbright – Tel.: +32 229 57361*)

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

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## [News story: £8 million expansion of programme to commercialise research](#)

An £8 million expansion of the Innovation to Commercialisation of University Research (ICURe) pilot programme will allow even more commercially-promising ideas to get to market more quickly.

The funding will see the [University of Warwick](#) and [Queen's University Belfast](#) join the programme, which is supported by Innovate UK, part of the new national funding body [UK Research and Innovation](#).

The universities will work alongside delivery partner, [SETsquared Partnership](#) to run and grow the programme across the UK. Final contracts to run this phase of the pilot will be signed shortly.

### **Additional 48 research teams to be supported**

ICURe's focus is on training early-career researchers to find the right route to commercialisation and helping them develop the necessary business skills, connections and expertise. It aligns with government's [Industrial Strategy](#), which emphasises the importance of research, innovation and skills to develop a strong economy and ensure Britain leads the high-tech, highly-skilled industries of the future.

With this funding boost, the pilot programme will be able to support an additional 48 research teams nationwide.

University researchers can get up to £35,000 to take their ideas out of the lab and validate them in the market.

A total of £3 million of the funding will go towards helping the start-ups that emerge from the programme to establish their businesses and support future growth. This will be competitively awarded by Innovate UK.

It builds on the success of the pilot to date. Research estimates that for every £1 of investment spent through ICURe it generates almost £4 of economic benefits in return. The pilot has engaged 160 university research teams to generate more than 11,000 business links worldwide and create 120 jobs in 44 new companies.

[Read the evaluation of the pilot programme so far.](#)



# Effective translation of research into products

Business Secretary, Greg Clark said:

Britain is famous for its innovations. From the humble toothbrush to hip replacements, the ATM to the World Wide Web – these inventions have had a huge impact on our daily lives.

Up and down the UK, some of the brightest and best talent are undertaking research which can deliver extraordinary innovations that will transform our society for the better.

Through the Industrial Strategy, the 4 grand challenges, and the funding announced today, we are helping turn innovative new ideas into products and services which could help change our lives and keep the UK as a world leader in developing the products of tomorrow.

[Find out more about the Industrial Strategy's 4 grand challenges.](#)

UK Research and Innovation Chief Executive, Sir Mark Walport said:

Supporting the very best talent and bridging the gap between research and commercialisation are 2 of UK Research and Innovation's core objectives. We are a world-leading research nation and we must ensure that our innovation ecosystem supports the effective translation of this research into products with real-world impact.

The ICURe programme enables this translation by providing researchers with the funding to move ideas out of universities and into the marketplace, where they will have the greatest impact.

From converting Medtech discoveries into new treatments to developing portable devices to counter infectious diseases, this additional funding will support ground-breaking projects that will enable us to meet future challenges and remain at the cutting-edge of research and innovation.

[Visit UK Research and Innovation's website for the latest news and updates.](#)

Don Spalinger, Chairman of the SETsquared Partnership, and Director, Innovation and Entrepreneurship at the University of Southampton said:

SETsquared created ICURe to overcome some of the barriers of

getting the outputs from the UK's world class universities research labs into the commercial marketplace.

ICURE's results from its first 3 years of operation go beyond our expectations. This expansion of ICURE's nation roll-out will enable even more research teams at more UK universities to take advantage of its proven capabilities. ICURE enables university research teams to explore all avenues of commercialisation, from collaborative research to consultancy to licensing to spin-outs.

The ICURE experience empowers the university research teams to work more closely with businesses in all of their future activities.

## **The university view**

Professor Stuart Croft, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Warwick, said:

Warwick is renowned for the many ways it acts as a highly effective bridge for innovation between academic research and industry, and we are therefore delighted to be a key part of the national rollout of ICURE with its focus on helping early-career researchers taking their innovations into the marketplace.

Warwick will also draw on the innovation-based partnerships across the Midlands such as Midlands Innovation, the Midlands Engine, and the Midlands Enterprise Universities teams, to ensure that this programme helps create even more innovation-based jobs and business growth across our region.

Brian McCaul, CEO of [Qubis Ltd](#) and Director of Innovation at Queen's University Belfast, said:

Having had 9 teams graduate from ICURE, and having run 3 of our own Lean Launchpad programmes, Queen's and Qubis have been pioneers with lean start-up in tech transfer. The focus on the customer-need is the perfect antidote to tech-push.

We have already seen significant commercial benefits, whether measured by deals done, or learnings achieved, especially with early-career researchers. We are convinced that 'lean changes', change everything.

We're now keen to work with our partners to accelerate ICURE adoption across Northern Ireland, Scotland and the North of England. This is a vital initiative for rebalancing the UK innovation economy.

[Search for innovation funding.](#)