

[News story: £135M infrastructure contract marks milestone in UK F35 programme](#)

The work will deliver a new aircraft hangar capable of housing 12 of the new fast jet aircraft, from which they will deploy to our Queen Elizabeth Class carriers giving the UK world class carrier strike capability. It will improve existing facilities, including resurfacing two existing runways and taxiways, while the Station remains operational. Vertical Landing Pads will also be added to RAF Marham, accommodating the F-35B's ability to land vertically, a capability previously covered by the Harrier jets.

Defence Secretary, Sir Michael Fallon, said:

Flying from our new Queen Elizabeth Class carriers, the F-35B aircraft will provide the UK with the ability to project our influence globally. This contract will ensure that RAF Marham has the facilities to match this world-class aircraft when it arrives next year.

Throughout the F-35 programme, British firms have won major contracts creating thousands of jobs. The contract to improve the runways and taxiways as well as installing new landing pads will bring local jobs to Marham.

The major investment in RAF Marham is the last of seven projects worth £250m undertaken to ready the Station for the arrival of the aircraft in 2018. The contract has been awarded to a joint venture of Galliford Try and Lagan Construction Ltd, creating local jobs at RAF Marham and across East Anglia.

The F-35 Programme is the world's largest single defence programme and the UK has played a major role from the outset. The F-35B Lightning aircraft is an advanced, 5th generation aircraft that the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy will fly from Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carriers or from Operating Bases such as RAF Marham.

It will be operated initially by 617 Squadron, Royal Air Force, followed by 809 Naval Air Squadron. Combined, they will transform the UK's ability to project UK influence overseas. Initial flight trials for F-35 jets from HMS Queen Elizabeth Class are on track to begin in 2018, building towards delivering a Carrier Strike capability for the UK from 2020.

[ESMA calls experts to join post-trading panel](#)

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[Speech by Commissioner Pierre Moscovici at the press conference on the Commission's proposal on tax intermediaries](#)

Mesdames et Messieurs,

Il y a un peu plus d'un an, les "Panama Papers" révélaient au grand jour un vaste réseau de fraude d'évasion fiscale.

Ces révélations nous ont tous choqués de par l'ampleur de la fraude, qui avait été dévoilée à l'époque par certains de vos confrères.

Mais ces révélations, je l'ai toujours dit, nous ont offert une opportunité; elles nous ont permis, en très peu de temps, et vous le savez, de faire pression sur les Etats membres sur un sujet majeur. Elles ont donné, il faut le dire, un nouvel élan politique à notre lutte en faveur d'une fiscalité plus juste, plus transparente, au sein de l'Union européenne comme à l'extérieur.

Nous avons en vérité deux armes contre l'évasion fiscale et son opacité: d'abord rendre les acteurs responsables de leurs actes et ensuite introduire

de la transparence tout au long des procédures fiscales.

Depuis le début de cette Commission, la Commission Juncker, nous avons fait d'immenses progrès et nous avons proposé une série de mesures absolument sans précédent pour rendre les Etats membres, les administrations fiscales, les entreprises, les pays tiers plus responsables. Il nous manquait un maillon décisif, le maillon des intermédiaires. Et c'est à celui-ci que nous nous consacrons aujourd'hui.

Nous avons engagé aussi cette révolution de la transparence.

Par exemple, il y a désormais une plus grande coopération entre les États membres lorsqu'il s'agit d'échanger des informations sur les rescrits fiscaux octroyés par les administrations fiscales à certaines multinationales. C'est, vous le savez, une directive qui nous avons faite adopter à la suite de ce qu'on avait appelé le scandale de Luxleaks.

Nous avons aussi mis en place des mesures anti-abus contraignantes, pour lutter contre les formes les plus courantes de planification fiscale agressive et pour supprimer les vides juridiques exploités par les multinationales, à la fois à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur de l'Union Européenne. Cette Commission a fait adopter deux directives anti-évasion fiscale depuis qu'elle est en place.

Nous avons aussi discuté et puis conclu avec nos partenaires extérieures à l'Union Européenne, mais aussi européens – je pense à la Suisse, Monaco, Andorre, Liechtenstein et à San-Marin –, des accords d'échange automatique d'informations, dont la traduction est très simple: le secret bancaire en Europe, ça n'existe plus. Et nous avons une nouvelle stratégie extérieure, pour veiller à ce que la bonne gouvernance fiscale soit respectée hors des frontières de notre marché unique.

Ainsi la liste des «paradis fiscaux» de l'UE, qui sera publiée avant la fin de l'année, est un élément important de cette stratégie. Elle est en cours de préparation et oui, je peux vous le confirmer, on la connaîtra avant la fin de 2017.

D'autres mesures sont en cours de discussion au sein du Conseil et du Parlement européen, j'ai bon espoir qu'elles soient vite adoptées. Je pense ici aux règles de lutte contre le blanchiment d'argent. Je pourrais poursuivre en citant le Country by Country Reporting dont la Commission espère toujours qu'il deviendra public.

Et je le redis ici, à plusieurs reprises, nous avons appelé de nos vœux le Parlement européen et le Conseil pour qu'ils entament des négociations dans les plus brefs délais sur notre proposition de publicité de ces informations fiscales des multinationales.

Enfin, je citerai un dernière exemple qui est la relance de l'assiette commune consolidée pour l'impôt sur les sociétés (ACCIS) – CCCTB en l'anglais – qui devrait permettre de mettre en place un système d'imposition des sociétés de l'Union Européenne qui soit équitable et efficace à la fois pour

les gouvernements et pour les entreprises.

Si je me permets d'énumérer cette liste que vous connaissez sans doute, c'est surtout pour évoquer le long chemin que nous avons parcouru depuis seulement deux ans et demi. Et pour dire aussi qu'il y a là un fil rouge, une cohérence, qui est cette volonté de transparence. Cette Commission considère que ce n'est pas par l'interdiction qu'on peut agir de manière efficace. Elle considère que la transparence est une partie de la solution. Et pour vous dire aussi que nous ne comptons pas nous arrêter à ce bon chemin.

The fight against tax evasion and avoidance must be a dynamic one.

We must react quickly to new challenges and respond to evolving situations, in Europe and in the global tax environment.

Aggressive tax planners constantly, as you know, look for new and inventive ways to escape paying their fair share of tax.

And we must continuously reinforce our measures to stop them.

What particularly stood out in the Panama Papers was the central role of intermediaries in the opaque world of tax planning.

There are people, companies, institutions that make vast amounts of money from helping others to escape taxation.

These include tax advisors, financial consultants (inside or outside the firm), accountants, banks, lawyers, sport agents – we have some same examples being discussed now – amongst others.

Of course, not everyone in these sectors is involved in aggressive tax planning. The Commission doesn't want to blame a profession or professions as such and as a whole.

Intermediaries offer a wide range of services and they provide essential advice on many financial, legal and administrative issues.

We need advisors to help with tax compliance and they are often an important link between the taxpayer and the tax administrations.

However, there are some intermediaries that have moved beyond such services into, I would say, shadier territory.

Without their help, international tax avoidance simply could not happen in the way it does today.

In some cases, I would even say they are the "masterminds" behind complex, cross-border tax schemes.

Up until now, these intermediaries have succeeded in staying I would say below the radar.

The advice they give is never revealed to the tax authorities – regardless of

how harmful it might be.

Today, I am proposing in the name of the Commission to change that.

I want to create more scrutiny over intermediaries' activities, just as we have done for tax rulings, for offshore bank accounts, for multinationals' tax practices.

We want Member States to have a better overview of tax planning arrangements, so that they can detect and block any possible tax abuse.

And we want to create new deterrents, so that intermediaries think twice before marketing a scheme that could undermine tax fairness.

Under today's proposals, intermediaries will have to report any cross-border scheme which could potentially be used to evade or avoid tax.

They will have to give the details of these arrangements to their tax authorities.

And they will have to do so at a very early stage.

These transparency requirements for intermediaries offer, I'm convinced of that, tax authorities a kind of "early warning system".

They will be able to screen the market and to stop some of the most aggressive tax planning schemes, before they even begin.

They will be alerted to arrangements that need particular scrutiny in a company's tax declaration, so that harmful schemes can no longer be hidden in vast and complex tax returns.

In short, Member States will have to be able to assess tax arrangements more effectively and to react much more quickly against abusive plans.

If an intermediary fails to report the relevant information, then national penalties will apply.

I expect Member States to ensure that these sanctions are tough enough to dissuade any non-compliance, but this is up to the Member States to decide.

As with our other transparency measures, closer cooperation and greater information sharing between EU tax authorities are central in this proposal.

Member States will automatically exchange the information they receive from intermediaries, every 3 months.

As a result, authorities will have the full picture of how cross-border transactions are set up, as well as the impact on their revenues.

Today's proposal can have a big impact in our fight against tax abuse.

I know it is expected by Member States and also by the European Parliament as a whole. To give you just an example: since the UK introduced national rules

for intermediaries – and so did Portugal and Ireland –, just over a decade ago, it has prevented over £12 billion, EUR 13 billion worth of tax avoidance. So it is a very powerful tool.

EU-wide measures promise to be just as effective in ensuring that all citizens and businesses pay their fair share of tax.

In addition, today's proposal will be a powerful deterrent for those that design and promote tax abuse.

Mainstream intermediaries will not risk their reputation by sharing and reporting these schemes.

And the more dishonest advisors – those that encourage the most abusive tax practices – will face a high risk of being exposed and challenged.

This is the risk and benefit of transparency.

Voilà, mesdames et messieurs,

La proposition d'aujourd'hui, vous l'avez compris, vise à renforcer la transparence, la responsabilité de ceux qui entreprennent de se lancer dans de tels montages fiscaux. Elle offre aussi, parce c'est à eux qu'elle bénéficie, plus de clarté à tous les contribuables.

Elle fait en sorte que nos administrations fiscales, c'est toujours notre démarche, échantent plus d'informations entre elles.

Elle renforce nos défenses contre l'évasion fiscale, en réglementant ce que j'ai appelé ce maillon, maillon faible, maillon manquant, maillon indispensable dans la chaîne de planification fiscale.

Et elle oblige ceux qui réalisent ces montages à rendre des comptes.

Bref, il s'agit d'un nouveau coup porté par cette Commission, un coup contre les pratiques fiscales abusives et une impulsion que je crois décisive pour une fiscalité équitable en Europe. A nous maintenant d'obtenir le soutien de nos États membres pour faire cet objectif une réalité.

Je vous avoue que je suis très confiant parce que cette proposition me paraît être tout simplement une proposition de bon sens. Evidemment, il pourrait y avoir ici et là des réactions, mais je les accueille avec tranquillité. Je ne participerai pas à la manifestation de conseillers militants avec des banderoles pour le secret fiscal. Je doute qu'ils soient très nombreux et je ne suis pas certain qu'ils auront un grand succès populaire.

Ma recommandation, elle est donc simple: c'est d'adopter vite cette proposition, qui est elle aussi simple et directe.

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Beijing on alert for heavy rain

Beijing is bracing for a period of heavy rain, which is expected to last from Wednesday night to Friday.

Beijing meteorological station issued a yellow alert for rain and storms at 4:40 p.m. on Wednesday.

China has a four-tier color-coded system for severe weather, with red being the most serious, followed by orange, yellow and blue.

The office of Beijing flood control headquarters warned of high risks of floods and geological disasters in mountainous areas. It also warned that low-lying areas may be inundated.

The office asked people to keep away from rivers, flooded road sections and mountainous regions.

Beijing Drainage Group has checked its flood control facilities and the drainage systems across the city before the rain.

The district of Tongzhou, in the east of the city and in the lower reaches of Beijing's rivers, is also prepared for the upcoming rainstorm.

The flood control department in Tongzhou has prepared 21 large pumps and

organized 19 emergency rescue teams.

Beijing Municipal Commission of Transport has organized an emergency team of more than 3,800 people. To ensure traffic safety, Beijing has increased highway, mountain, bridge and underground passage patrols.

Beijing Bus Group will dispatch more buses, especially on routes linking major railway stations in the city, to help passengers.

Moreover, Beijing Subway will install water fenders in its stations to prevent rain water from pouring in. The subway stations operated by Beijing MTR will provide raincoats to passengers for free.