

Daily News 16 / 06 / 2017

Commission welcomes agreement reached at the Eurogroup between Greece and the institutions

The European Commission welcomes the breakthrough agreement reached at last night's Eurogroup meeting in Luxembourg, which will act to restore confidence in Greece's recovery, boost growth and investment and allow the country to meet its financing needs. President **Juncker** personally played a crucial role in facilitating this final agreement, with Vice-President **Dombrovskis** and Commissioners **Moscovici** and **Crețu**. It represents an acknowledgment that Greece has delivered on its commitments by adopting a significant reform package. Pierre **Moscovici**, Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs, Taxation and Customs said: *"This is truly good news. After months of discussions, we have reached a comprehensive agreement that will allow Greece to turn over a new leaf after a very difficult period for the Greek people. Last night's success was made possible by all partners taking their responsibilities and acting in the general interest."* The Commission [put forward](#) a set of measures to mobilise up to €35 billion for the period 2014-2020, under various EU funding programmes, €11 billion of which has already been received. The Eurogroup statement on Greece is available [here](#). (For more information: Vanessa Mock – Tel.: +32 229 56194; Enda McNamara – Tel.: +32 229 64976)

Article 50 negotiations with the United Kingdom to begin on 19 June

Michel Barnier, the European Commission's Chief Negotiator, and David Davis, Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, [agreed yesterday](#) to launch Article 50 negotiations on Monday, 19 June. An agenda for the first formal negotiating round is available [here](#). This follows preparatory "talks about talks" this week at civil service level between the European Commission and the United Kingdom. The opening of negotiations at political level next week will focus on issues related to citizens' rights, the financial settlement, the Northern Irish border and other separation issues, as part of the sequenced approach to the talks. Both sides will also discuss the structure of the negotiations and the issues that need to be addressed over the coming months. The European Commission has already provided the United Kingdom with its position papers on citizens' rights and the financial settlement and [published](#) both texts on Monday 12 June, in keeping with the Commission's transparency policy. The opening of the negotiations will take place at the European Commission in Brussels and will be a one-day event, starting at approximately 11am and ending in the late afternoon, with a joint press conference by Michel Barnier and David Davis. Media arrangements will be confirmed on Monday morning. (For more information: Margaritis Schinas – Tel.: +32 229 60524; Mina Andreeva – Tel.: +32 229 9138; Daniel Ferrie: +32 229 86500)

Aviation: Commission is taking the European drone sector to new heights

Following a request by the European Commission, the [Single European Sky Air traffic management Research Joint Undertaking](#) – whose role is to develop the new generation European air traffic management system – has today unveiled its [blueprint](#) to make drone use in low-level airspace safe, secure and environmentally friendly. This “U-Space” covers altitudes of up to 150 metres and will pave the way for the development of a strong and dynamic EU drone services market. Registration of drones and drone operators, their e-identification and geo-fencing should be in place by 2019. Commissioner for Transport Violeta **Bulc** said, *“Drones mean innovation, new services for citizens, new business models and a huge potential for economic growth. We need the EU to be in the driving seat and have a safe drone services market up and running by 2019. The EU needs to take a leading role worldwide in developing the right framework for this market to flourish, by unleashing the benefits for key economic sectors.”* More information is available in a press release in [DE](#), [EN](#) and [FR](#). (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Alexis Perier – Tel.: +32 229 [6 91 43](#))

Maritime Transport: European proposal for the safety of passenger ships endorsed by the International Maritime Organisation

The European Commission welcomes the agreement reached this week within the [International Maritime Organisation](#) (IMO) introducing more stringent requirements for the safety of passenger ships. Upon their entry into force in 2020, all new passenger ships will have to be designed to remain afloat for longer if their hull gets damaged. As a result, it is estimated that the safety level will increase by up to 90% for the largest ships (carrying 1.350 passengers or more). This international agreement follows a proposal made in January 2016 by the European Commission and the EU Member States with the support of the [European Maritime Safety Agency](#) (EMSA). Commissioner for Transport Violeta **Bulc** said, *“With more than 200 million passengers embarking in EU ports each year, passenger safety is at the heart of the Commission’s transport policy. It is a matter of great satisfaction to see that the EU has also successfully contributed to ambitious global standards that will guarantee the safety of passengers across the globe”*. More information is available [here](#). (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Alexis Perier – Tel.: +32 229 [6 91 43](#))

Commission extends its action against dumped steel imports of construction material from Belarus

The Commission decided today to impose definitive anti-dumping measures against imports of steel rebars from Belarus. The import duties imposed today will shield European producers from unfair Belarusian competition in the next five years. The Commission’s investigation demonstrated that the products from Belarus had been sold in Europe at prices over 58% lower than their normal market price. Based on the initial findings of the investigation opened in March 2016, the Commission imposed already in December last year provisional measures to prevent economic damage to EU rebarproducers. The EU uses all possible legal means to ensure fair trading conditions for European steel industry in the context of the global overcapacity and also works to

address rootcauses of the problem in the global and bilateral EU-China dedicated fora. The EU has currently 42 anti-dumping and anti-subsidy measures on various steel products, with the highest number concerning imports from China. The details of the today's decision can be found as of tomorrow in the [EU official journal](#). (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Kinga Malinowska- Tel.: +32 229 51383)

State aid: Commission approves restructuring aid to Greek railway companies OSE and TRAINOSE

The European Commission has concluded that Greek measures to support the restructuring of OSE, the national rail infrastructure manager, and TRAINOSE, the passenger and freight rail transport operator, are in line with EU state aid rules. Both companies have been facing financial difficulties for several years. In this context, Greece notified to the Commission several support measures in favour of OSE and TRAINOSE in 2011. Concerning OSE, the Commission's investigation found that the measures to support the restructuring, in particular through a debt cancellation of €14.3 billion do not constitute state aid and that the annual grants of up to €340 million implemented before 22 October 2014 are in line with EU state aid rules. Concerning TRAINOSE, the Commission concluded that the measures in its favour worth a total of €1079 million, are also in line with EU state aid rules. Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *"The measures will help the two public rail companies become more efficient and provide better service to Greek passengers and business customers. This fits into the wider context of Greece's efforts to restore its economy's competitiveness and achieve significant growth. The aid will also facilitate the future privatisation of the companies and the opening of the Greek railway sector to competition."* The full press release is available online in [EN](#), [FR,DE](#) and [EL](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889)

State aid: Commission approves public support for Bulgarian railway company BDZ

The European Commission has concluded that Bulgarian support measures in favour of the publicly-owned railway incumbent BDZ are in line with EU state aid rules. The measures will allow the company to address its debt level without unduly distorting competition in the Single Market. Bulgaria notified in 2011 a restructuring plan for BDZ to the Commission for assessment under EU state aid rules. In November 2011, the Commission opened an [in-depth investigation](#), during which, the Commission focused on the cancellation by the Bulgarian state of certain debts incurred by BDZ. The investigation found that the planned cancellation of these debts, amounting to BGN 224 million (around €114 million), is in line with the Commission's [2008 Guidelines on state aid for railways](#). The Commission found no concerns under EU state aid rules for the measures of the reimbursement of certain amounts of VAT paid by BDZ and the repayment of BDZ's debts towards the national railway infrastructure manager. The full press release is available online in [EN](#), [FR, DE](#) and [BG](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100;

Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889)

State aid: Commission approves creation of €24 billion fund for management of radioactive waste in Germany

The European Commission has approved under EU state aid rules the transfer of radioactive waste liabilities to a new public fund in return for the payment of about €24.1 billion by nuclear power plant operators. The Commission concluded that the state support is proportionate to the objective. Germany intends to transfer the liabilities relating to the management of radioactive waste and spent fuel from nuclear power plant operators to the German state. To this end, a new public fund will be set up and the necessary funds secured in it. In return for being released from their radioactive waste liabilities, nuclear power operators in Germany have to make a cash payment to the new public fund of about €24.1 billion. The Commission's assessment concluded that Germany's decision to take over the radioactive waste management liability involves state aid. The Commission has decided that the support granted does not exceed what is necessary to achieve this objective and that the competition distortions created by it are limited. The full press release is available online in [EN](#), [FR](#), and [DE](#). *(For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889)*

Mergers: Commission clears the acquisition of sole control over Shell's Northern North Sea petroleum business by Chrysaor

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of sole control over the Northern North Sea petroleum business of the Shell Group, of the Netherlands, by Chrysaor Holdings Limited, part of EIG Global Energy Partners, of the US. The target assets consist of Shell's Northern North Sea asset portfolio, including shareholdings in a number of oil fields and infrastructure and the relevant licences. Chrysaor develops and commercialises oil and gas incremental resources. EIG is a global investment fund specialising in energy and energy-related infrastructure. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns given the very limited overlap between the companies' activities and the presence of strong competitors. 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.8461](#). *(For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)*

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of CWT by HNA

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of sole control over CWT Limited ("CWT" of Singapore) by HNA Group Co. Ltd. ("HNA Group" of China), by way of a voluntary conditional offer. CWT is a corporation that provides integrated logistics solutions and related services ancillary to its core logistics business. In the European

Union, CWT's activities relate mainly to logistics services and commodity marketing. The HNA Group is a conglomerate with investments in companies operating in several areas including airlines, real estate, hotels, shipping and logistics. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would not raise competition concerns, because of its limited impact on the market structure. 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_8474](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Eurovita by Cinven

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of Eurovita Assicurazioni S.p.A of Italy ("Eurovita") by Cinven Capital Management (V) General Partner Limited of Guernsey ("Cinven"). Eurovita is active in the life insurance sector, offering life insurance policies and investment products exclusively in Italy. Cinven is a private equity firm controlling a number of portfolio companies active in a variety of sectors, including the life insurance sector, in many countries. The companies' activities give rise to a minor overlap in the provision and distribution of life insurance products in Italy. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would not raise competition concerns, given the companies' moderate combined market positions resulting from the proposed transaction and the presence of a number of strong players in the market after the merger. 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.8489](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of SB Energy by Softbank, Bharti and Hon Hai

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the proposed acquisition of joint control over SB Energy Holdings Limited (India) by SoftBank Group Corp. (Japan), Bharti Overseas Private Limited (India) and Hon Hai Precision Industry Co. (Taiwan). SB Energy develops, constructs and operates renewable energy projects. SoftBank is an internet company which provides a comprehensive range of telecommunication services and products, primarily in Japan and the USA. Bharti is a holding and investment company which invests and provides services in different sectors, such as telecommunications, hospitality, real estate development and also invests in equities, securities and instruments. Hon Hai provides third-party electronic manufacturing services to original equipment manufacturers of electronic products such as computers, mobile phones, video game consoles and televisions. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns as SB Energy will operate only in India. 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.8502](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of sole control over the petroleum trading and marketing business of Cargill by Macquarie

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of sole control by Macquarie Holdings (U.S.A.) Inc. over the petroleum trading and market business of the Cargill Group, both of the US. Cargill is active in the production and sale of food, agricultural and risk management products, as well as global trading of multiple petroleum products. Macquarie is a global investment banking and financial services group. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would not raise competition concerns given the very limited overlap between the companies' activities and the presence of strong competitors. 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.8506](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Antitrust: Commission re-imposes €4.7 million fine on envelopes manufacturer Printeos for price-fixing cartel

The European Commission has readopted a cartel settlement decision against the envelopes manufacturer Printeos (formerly known as Tompla) and has imposed a fine of €4 729 000 for its participation in a price fixing cartel. Printeos and four other manufacturers [agreed to settle the case](#) in December 2014. In December 2016, the General Court annulled the fine against Printeos due to lack of sufficient reasoning concerning discretionary fine reductions ([case T-95/15](#)). The judgment did not question Printeos' liability for the cartel, which the company had itself acknowledged in the settlement procedure. Today's decision addresses the procedural error identified by the General Court and re-imposes a fine on Printeos. The new fine is identical to the fine imposed in the original decision. The amending decision will be made available under the case number [39780](#) in the [public case register](#) on the Commission's [competition](#) website. More information on the Commission's action against cartels is available in the [cartels section](#) of the competition website. (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Eurostat: La croissance annuelle des coûts de la main-d'œuvre à 1,5% dans la zone euro – À 1,7% dans l'UE28

Les coûts horaires de la main-d'œuvre ont augmenté de 1,5% dans la zone euro

(ZE19) et de 1,7% dans l'UE28 au premier trimestre 2017, par rapport au même trimestre de l'année précédente. Au quatrième trimestre 2016, les coûts horaires de la main-d'œuvre avaient progressé également de 1,5% et 1,7% respectivement. Ces données sont publiées par Eurostat, l'office statistique de l'Union européenne. Un communiqué de presse est disponible [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Christian Wigand– Tel.: +32 229 62253; Sara Soumillion – Tel.: + 32 229 67094)

Eurostat: Le taux d'inflation annuel en baisse à 1,4% dans la zone euro En baisse à 1,6% dans l'UE

Le taux d'inflation annuel de la zone euro s'est établi à 1,4% en mai 2017, contre 1,9% en avril. Un an auparavant, il était de -0,1%. Le taux d'inflation annuel de l'Union européenne s'est établi à 1,6% en mai 2017, contre 2,0% en avril. Un an auparavant, il était de -0,1%. Ces chiffres sont publiés par Eurostat, l'office statistique de l'Union européenne. Un communiqué de presse est disponible [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Vanessa Mock – Tel.: +32 229 56194; Juliana Dahl – Tél.: +32 229 59914)

Eurostat: Économie et société numériques dans l'UE – Nouvelle publication digitale présentant notre monde numérique en chiffres

Naviguer sur internet, dialoguer ou faire des achats en ligne sont autant d'activités quotidiennes reposant sur les technologies de l'information et des communications (TIC), telles que les ordinateurs de bureau, les ordinateurs portables ou les smartphones. Nous passons aujourd'hui une partie considérable de notre temps en ligne et ce, pour diverses raisons, que ce soit au travail, à l'école ou à l'université, à la maison ou lors de nos déplacements. Souvent nous dépendons de nos appareils numériques pour rester en contact avec notre famille et nos amis, pour obtenir l'itinéraire d'un magasin, d'un hôtel ou d'un restaurant ainsi que pour consulter nos comptes bancaires. Un communiqué de presse est disponible [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel. +32 229 67083; Johannes Bahrke – Tel. +32 229 58615)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Vice-President Šefčovič in Bratislava on the future of Europe

On 19 June, in Bratislava Vice-President for Energy Union Maroš Šefčovič will participate in the Conference 'The EU in 2017: How to improve Europe's future' to present the scenarios of the [White Paper on the Future of Europe](#). The White Paper sets out the main challenges and opportunities for Europe in the coming decade. It presents five scenarios for how the Union could evolve by 2025 depending on how it chooses to respond. To encourage this debate,

Vice-President for Energy Union Maroš **Šefčovič** will focus on EU's potential to innovate and modernize: *'Now is the time for us to embrace the transition and make Europe the most digitised continent of the 21st century. We should focus on building a smart and fair society by enticing positive technological trends across sectors such as energy, transport, and agriculture; by modernizing our industry; and by encouraging the work of our researchers and innovators.'* said Vice-President **Šefčovič** ahead of his visit. While in Bratislava Vice-President will participate in the EFEKTIA 2017 Awarding Ceremony of Energy efficiency projects in Slovakia and meet with the Speaker of the National Council of the Slovak Republic Andrej Danko. (For more information: Anca Paduraru – Tel.: +32 229 91269; Nicole Bockstaller – Tel.:+32 229 52589)

Vice-President Katainen in Portugal

Jyrki **Katainen**, Vice-President responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, will be in Lisbon, Portugal on 19-20 June 2017. The visit takes place in the context of the ongoing dialogue on the Future of Europe, following the presentation of the [Commission's White Paper](#) and the series of reflection papers which followed it, as well as to discuss the [Investment Plan for Europe](#), the so-called "Juncker Plan", and the Commission's [proposals to strengthen Europe's security and defence](#). He will meet the Minister of National Defense, José Alberto Azeredo Lopes, Minister of Finance, Mário Centeno and the Minister of Planning and Infrastructure, Pedro Marques. He will also meet with stakeholders, take part in an exchange of views with members of parliament, address an [investment conference](#) and visit projects supported by the Juncker Plan. (For more information: Vanessa Mock – Tel.: +32 229 56194; Enda McNamara – Tel.: +32 229 64976)

Commissioner Malmström to co-host International Forum on Women and Trade, 20 June in Brussels

On 20 June, Cecilia **Malmström**, European Commissioner for Trade, will co-host the [International Forum on Women and Trade](#) in Brussels. Organised in conjunction with the Geneva-based [International Trade Centre](#) (ITC), the forum will look at trade as a lever for women's economic empowerment. The forum aims to stake out the way forward and galvanise support for inclusive trade policy, and to support the ITC's *SheTrades* initiative which aims to connect one million women to markets by 2020. The event has attracted [high-level speakers](#) from around the world, including Director-General of the World Trade Organization Roberto Azevêdo, Canadian Minister of International Trade François-Philippe Champagne and Danish Minister of Equality, Karen Elleman. They will be joined by a range of prominent speakers from government, the European Parliament, business, civil society and international organisations. Commissioner **Malmström** and co-host ITC Executive Director Arancha Gonzalez will open and close the forum. Panellists will examine issues such as the role of the digital economy and trade finance in helping women entrepreneurs. The 300 participants already registered will also reflect on how trade-

related technical assistance can help bring women entrepreneurs into value chains. Women entrepreneurs from a range of countries (Ghana, Brazil, Turkey, etc.) will also share their stories to illustrate the restraints that hamper women from accessing global markets. Register [here](#) and engage in the discussion via the hashtag [#WomenAndTrade](#). (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Kinga Malinowska- Tel.: +32 229 51383)

[Calendar](#)

The Commissioners' Weekly Activities

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

[Aviation: Commission is taking the European drone sector to new heights](#)

Following a request by the European Commission, the [Single European Sky Air traffic management Research Joint Undertaking\[1\]](#) – whose role is to develop the new generation European air traffic management system – has today unveiled its [blueprint](#) to make drone use in low-level airspace safe, secure and environmentally friendly. This “U-Space” covers altitudes of up to 150 metres and will pave the way for the development of a strong and dynamic EU drone services market. Registration of drones and drone operators, their e-identification and geo-fencing should be in place by 2019. Today’s [vision paper](#) is part of the Commission’s drive to deliver on its ambitious [Aviation Strategy](#) and unleash the full economic potential of drones. This requires an effective legislative framework that can foster European leadership and competitiveness, while addressing a number of legitimate concerns, the first of which is safety.

EU Commissioner for Transport, Violeta **Bulc**, said: *“Drones mean innovation, new services for citizens, new business models and a huge potential for economic growth. We need the EU to be in the driving seat and have a safe drone services market up and running by 2019. The EU needs to take a leading role worldwide in developing the right framework for this market to flourish, by unleashing the benefits for key economic sectors.”*

The paper outlines a number of basic principles. The U-Space should be:

- **Safe:** safety at low altitude levels will be just as good as that for traditional manned aviation. The concept is to develop a system similar to that of Air Traffic Management for manned aviation.
- **Automated:** the system will provide information for highly automated or autonomous drones to fly safely and avoid obstacles or collisions.
- **Up and running by 2019:** for the basic services like registration, e-identification and geo-fencing. However, further U-Space services and

their corresponding standards will need to be developed in the future.

What are the next steps?

The [European Aviation Safety Agency](#) (EASA) is working with Member States and industry to produce effective EU-wide safety rules that are proportionate to the risk of the operation. These rules will implement the EU's basic aviation safety regulation which the European Parliament and the Council (i.e. the EU Member States) are expected to adopt in the coming months.

The Commission, through the SESAR Joint Undertaking, will finance a range of drone projects, focusing on the integration of drones into the aviation system.

Finally, an expert group will be established to act as a sounding board for the further development of European drone policy.

Background information:

Delivering services in urban areas, collection of data for a wide range of industries, infrastructure inspections, precision agriculture, transportation and logistics are just some of the possible applications of this technology. The drone services market is expected to grow substantially. Estimates vary between €10bn by 2035 and €127bn for the coming years. A recent forecast predicts that by 2020 the global drone market size will grow by 42% in precision agriculture, 26% in media and entertainment, by 36% in inspection and monitoring of infrastructures, and by 30% for leisure activities^[2].

Current common European rules only cover drones weighing above 150 kilograms. Below this threshold, Member States are responsible to regulate. While national rules allow expertise to grow, they often diverge and cause a fragmentation of the EU internal market. Such fragmentation hampers the development of new products, the swift introduction of technologies and may also create safety risks. In December 2015, the Commission therefore proposed to create an EU-wide framework for drones as part of its [Aviation Strategy](#). This requires the establishment of a regulatory framework, including standards, and the safe integration of drones into the airspace, on which today's blueprint delivers.

For more information:

[U-Space blueprint](#)

[European Aviation Safety Agency: draft technical rules for certain categories of drones](#)

[SESAR Joint Undertaking](#)

[An Aviation Strategy for Europe](#)

[Q&A: The EU drone policy](#) (November 2016)

[1] The [Single European Sky Air Traffic Management Research Joint Undertaking](#)

(SESAR JU) is the European public-private partnership managing and coordinating Research and Development in Air Traffic Management. Founded by the European Union and [Eurocontrol](#), the SESAR JU has 19 members, who together with their partners and affiliate associations represent over 100 companies working in Europe and beyond.

[2]Source: MarketsandMarkets, (2015), "Analysis & Forecast to 2020"

[Aviation: La Commission ouvre de nouveaux horizons au secteur européen des drones](#)

On 23 June 2016 citizens of the United Kingdom (UK) voted to leave the European Union (EU). On 29 March 2017 the UK formally notified the European Council of its intention to leave the EU by...

Over the past 20 years, the European Union has put in place some of the highest common asylum standards in the world. And in the past two years, European migration policy has advanced in leaps and...

'Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity.' Robert Schuman 9 May 1950 On 25 March 2017,...

In response to the illegal annexation of Crimea and deliberate destabilisation of a neighbouring sovereign country, the EU has imposed restrictive measures against the Russian Federation. Overview...

European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker delivered his annual State of the Union speech at the European Parliament on 14 September 2016, just two days ahead of the informal meeting of 27...

Enlargement is the process whereby countries join the EU. Since it was founded in 1957, the EU has grown from 6 member countries to 28. Any European country that respects the principles of liberty,...

Five ways the SNP is supporting carers

The contribution that carers make to our society is priceless. It's only right that they're duly valued and properly supported.

Press release: Tesco hit with major £8million fine for pollution incident

Tesco Stores Ltd has been ordered to pay over £8million in fines and costs after pleading guilty to a pollution incident.

The incident, which occurred in July 2014, sparked a huge multi-agency operation involving the Environment Agency, Lancashire County Council, United Utilities, Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service and Lancashire Police.

It had a massive impact on the local community and environment with residents having to leave their homes due to petrol odours coming from the sewer network.

The Environment Agency's joint investigation with partners found that the incident resulted from Tesco's failure to address a known issue with part of the fuel delivery system and an inadequate alarm system and was compounded by poor emergency procedures.

Tesco were fined a total of £8million – £5million for the health and safety offence and £3million for the environmental offence.

Between Wednesday 2 July and Thursday 3 July 2014 approximately 23,500 litres of petrol escaped from a petrol filling tank at a petrol station in Haslingden operated by Tesco.

Petrol entered the sewerage system with the odours affecting residents up to 1km away causing people to seek medical attention with headaches and sickness. The odours remained in the homes for a number of days.

Some of the petrol also entered Langwood Brook and the River Irwell causing a significant environmental impact killing fish and other aquatic life.

Samples taken from the River Irwell detected oil up to three miles downstream. Over 40 dead fish, including brown trout, were found within 1.5 miles of where the pollution entered. Anglers reported dead fish in Bury, over six miles downstream.

About 23,500 litres of unleaded petrol leaked from the tank over a 29 hour

period. Around 7,000 litres was later recovered at the site and the remainder escaped into the sewer system and watercourse.

Mark Easedale, an Environment Manager for the Environment Agency, said:

This pollution incident had a dramatically negative impact on the local community and the environment with Langwood Brook and the River Irwell severely affected. A week after the pollution incident an investigation by Environment Agency officers found fish populations in the River Irwell immediately downstream of Langwood Brook were around 90% lower than those found upstream.

The sentencing today sends out a clear message to anyone whose recklessness causes serious pollution to the environment – we will be relentless in our investigations and take action wherever needed.

Our staff work 24/7 to protect people and wildlife from pollution incidents and we encourage people to report such incidents to the Environment Agency's Incident Hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

This was a joint prosecution with Lancashire County Council and Tesco Stores Ltd also pleaded guilty to an offence under the Health and Safety at Work Act.

County Councillor Albert Atkinson, deputy leader of Lancashire County Council with responsibility for Trading Standards, said:

This was a major leak of fuel in a relatively built-up area and close to a busy superstore. The potential consequences are only too obvious.

The fact that the leak was allowed to continue for more than 24 hours undoubtedly contributed to a risk of harm to people living and working nearby, as well as emergency services and other professionals attending the incident.

- Tesco Stores Ltd were fined a total of £8million at Preston Crown Court – £5million for the health and safety charge and £3million for the environmental offence. They were also ordered to pay Environment Agency costs of £35,434.30 and (approx.) £22,000 to Lancashire County Council.
- Tesco Stores Ltd pleaded guilty to causing a water discharge activity not under and to the extent authorised by an Environmental Permit, contrary to Regulation 12(1)(b) and 38(1)(a) of the Environmental Permitting (England & Wales) Regulations 2010. A guilty plea was entered at an earlier hearing at Burnley Crown Court on 12 September 2016.

- There was a further indictment led by Lancashire County Council:
Contravention of Regulation 6(8) of the Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regulations (DSEAR) 2002 contrary to s.33(1)(c) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. A guilty plea was also entered for this charge.