

# Press release: Updated measures to protect poultry against Avian Flu

All poultry in England are to be allowed outside from Thursday 13 April 2017 following updated evidence on the risk posed by wild birds, the UK's Chief Veterinary Officer has announced.

The requirement to keep poultry in Higher Risk Areas of England housed or completely enclosed in netting, introduced to minimise the risk of them catching avian flu from wild birds, will be lifted. However, all keepers in England will continue to be required to comply with strict biosecurity measures. A ban on poultry gatherings also remains in force until further notice.

The decision to lift the additional requirements in the Higher Risk areas is based on the latest scientific evidence and veterinary advice, which concludes that the level of risk to poultry in the Higher Risk Areas has now reduced to the same level as that across the rest of England. This is because of changes in the wild bird population: the majority of over-wintering migratory birds have now left the UK, and resident wild waterfowl are at their lowest levels and entering the breeding season when they become less likely to move long distances to forage for food.

The risk of poultry becoming infected from H5N8 remains heightened and countries across Europe continue to experience outbreaks and observe cases in wild birds. Defra is stepping up surveillance of wild birds across the UK to inform our risk assessments.

All poultry keepers must continue to take steps to reduce the risk to their birds, including minimising movement in and out of bird enclosures, cleaning footwear, keeping areas where birds live clean and tidy and feeding birds indoors.

Chief Veterinary Officer Nigel Gibbens said:

We continually review our disease control measures in light of new scientific evidence and veterinary advice. Based on the latest evidence on reduced numbers of migratory and resident aquatic wild birds we believe that kept birds in the areas we previously designated as Higher Risk are now at the same level of risk as the rest of England and may now be let outside.

However, all keepers must still observe strict disease prevention measures to reduce the risk of contamination from the environment, where the virus can survive for several weeks in bird droppings.

This does not mean business as usual: the risk from avian flu has not gone away and a Prevention Zone remains in place, requiring keepers across England to take steps to prevent disease spreading.

We continue to keep measures under review and keepers should check GOV.UK for regular updates.

Lifting the housing requirement in Higher Risk Areas means free range birds across every part of England can now be allowed outside again.

[H5N8 avian flu has been found in wild and farmed birds in the UK since December 2016](#), including chickens, turkeys, ducks and geese. Where avian flu has been confirmed, we have taken swift action to limit the spread of disease with restrictions around affected premises and full investigations to determine the source of infection.

H5N8 can be spread indirectly via the contaminated environment, for example in wild bird droppings, contaminated feed or bedding, as well as being passed from wild birds to poultry directly from bird to bird. All disease control measures continue to be kept under review depending on the latest scientific advice and disease outbreak situation.

### **Further information**

1. Read [guidance on how to continue to comply with the Prevention Zone](#) currently in place across England.
2. Read the [latest veterinary risk assessment for Avian Influenza H5N8 in the UK and Europe](#).
3. Read more [information about the ban on gatherings](#), which remains in place.

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## **[Panda found in wild three years after release](#)**



A picture of a panda is taken at the Yele Nature Reserve in Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture in late February. [Photo/scol.com.cn]

Cameras captured images of a panda in a nature reserve in southwest China's Sichuan Province three years after it was released into the wild, the provincial forestry department said Monday.

The pictures and videos of the panda were taken at the Yele Nature Reserve in Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture in late February.

Researchers identified it as a panda they released into the wild in 2013 named Zhang Xiang. The panda is living in a suitable environment where it can find enough bamboo. After investigating the pictures, videos and samples of the pandas's excrement, researchers found it was in normal physical condition.

The finding also proves that the panda has moved from one population to another and marks an achievement in releasing pandas into the wilderness in China.

Zhang Xiang is a female giant panda born on August 20, 2011. Zhang Xiang was released into the wild in Liziping Nature Reserve in Ya'an City on Nov. 6, 2013 following two years of wilderness training.

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## release



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# [This is too little too late for working families who face Tory cuts to Universal Credit – Debbie Abrahams](#)

**Debbie**

**Abrahams MP, Labour's Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary**, commenting on the Government's reduction to the Universal Credit taper rate, which takes effect today, said:

"This is too little, too late for those working families who face Tory cuts to Universal Credit that will see some worse off by £2,600 a year.

"The Chancellor is stealing pounds with his left hand and paying back pence with his right. For some, including many self-employed workers, these changes will make up less than seven per cent of losses from cuts elsewhere.

"Labour is demanding the Government fully reverse cuts to in-work support that will penalise millions of working families."

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## [Daily News 10 / 04 / 2017](#)

### **EU Justice Scoreboard 2017: justice systems becoming more effective, but challenges remain**

Commenting on today's presentation of the main findings of this year's EU Justice Scoreboard, Commissioner **Jourová** said: *"The 5th edition of the EU Justice Scoreboard confirms that effective justice systems are essential to build trust in a business and investment-friendly environment in the single market. I encourage Member States to ensure that any justice reform respects the rule of law and judicial independence. This is key for citizens and businesses to fully enjoy their rights. An independent and well-functioning justice system is a fundamental pillar of every democracy."* The EU Justice Scoreboard which gives a comparative overview of the efficiency, quality and independence of justice systems in the EU Member States. Its aim is to assist national authorities in their efforts to improve their justice systems by providing this comparative data. In this fifth edition, the Justice Scoreboard includes, for the first time, information on how consumers can access justice and data on the length of anti-money laundering cases. On the

situation of judicial independence in Member States, this edition presents a new survey on the reasons for the perceived lack of independence of the justice system by citizens and companies and shows new data on safeguards for protecting judicial independence. The Commission also published today the results of Eurobarometers analysing the perceived independence of the national justice systems in the EU among the general public and among companies. You'll find more information in the [press release](#), the full [2017 Scoreboard](#), the [Q&A](#), the [factsheet](#) and the [press conference](#). (For more information: Christian Wigand – Tel: +32 229 62253; Melanie Voin – Tel: +32 229 58659)

## **L'Union européenne renforce son soutien au Tchad**

Le Commissaire européen en charge de la coopération internationale et du développement Neven **Mimica**, en visite à N'Djamena, annonce un soutien supplémentaire de 100 millions d'euros. Le Commissaire Neven **Mimica** a fait la déclaration suivante: *«Ce nouveau paquet de 100 millions d'euros témoigne de la détermination de l'Union européenne à aider le Tchad à faire face à la crise économique et budgétaire, ainsi que soutenir ses efforts de réforme et de lutte contre la pauvreté. Le Tchad est un partenaire important de l'Union européenne, il fait face à de nombreux défis et nous sommes à ses côtés.»* Cet appui vise à soutenir des secteurs essentiels tels que la nutrition, la sécurité alimentaire et la résilience, l'agriculture durable, la gouvernance démocratique, la promotion de l'Etat de droit. Au cours de sa visite, le Commissaire Neven **Mimica** va également signer un engagement financier relatif à la gestion des aires protégées et des écosystèmes fragiles pour un montant de 33 millions d'euros issus du [Fonds Européen de Développement](#). Un second engagement financier concerne un projet pour l'insertion socio-professionnelle des jeunes pour un montant de 10.3 millions d'euros, issus du [Fonds fiduciaire d'urgence pour l'Afrique](#) et mis en œuvre à travers l'Agence Française de Développement. (Pour plus d'information: Carlos Martín Ruiz de Gordejuela – Tel.: + 32 229 65322; Christina Wunder – Tel.: + 32 229 92256)

## **Commission publishes latest round report and EU proposals for trade agreement with Mercosur**

The Commission today published as part of [its commitment](#) to a more transparent trade and investment policy – a report summarising the progress made during the latest round of negotiations for a trade agreement between the EU and Mercosur (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay), which took place in Buenos Aires during the week of 20 March. During the round, the EU tabled textual proposals on trade and sustainable development, transparency, access to energy and raw materials, an annex on technical barriers to trade in the automotive sector, and a proposal on agriculture including provisions on bilateral and multilateral cooperation, wine and spirits, and other topics. These proposals are now also available online on DG Trade's [Transparency in Action](#) portal. The latest round of negotiations included meetings in working groups covering 15 different areas. Parties also agreed to merge their proposals into consolidated texts and, in the area of competition, reached provisional agreement on a full text. After the round, the EU and Mercosur also published a joint communiqué, which is available [here](#). Both sides agreed to hold an inter-sessional round in Buenos Aires at

the end of May. The next full round is scheduled before the summer break. More information on the EU-Mercosur talks is available on the [website of DG Trade](#). (For more information: Daniel Rosario – Tel.: + 32 229 56185; Axel Fougner – Tel.: +32 229 57276)

### **Mergers: Commission clears 21st Century Fox's proposed acquisition of Sky under EU merger rules**

The European Commission has approved unconditionally under the EU Merger Regulation the proposed acquisition of Sky by Twenty-First Century Fox, a US-based diversified global media company. The proposed transaction would combine Sky plc (Sky), the leading pay-TV operator in Austria, Germany, Ireland, Italy and the UK and Twenty-First Century Fox, Inc (Fox), one of the six major Hollywood film studios (20th Century Fox), as well as a TV channel operator (Fox, National Geographic). The Commission found that the proposed transaction would lead to only a limited increase in Sky's existing share of the markets for the acquisition of TV content as well as in the market for the wholesale supply of TV channels in the relevant Member States. Given that the merging companies are mainly active at different levels of the market, the Commission's assessment focused on whether, as a result of the proposed transaction: (a) Fox would be able to prevent or significantly limit access by Sky's competitors to its films and other TV content, as well as to its TV channels, (b) Sky would have the incentive to cease purchasing content from Fox's competitors and (c) Sky could prevent competing channels from accessing its platform. Based on the results of its market investigation, the Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns. As the Commission's findings concern solely the competition aspects of the proposed transaction, today's clearance decision is without prejudice to the UK's ongoing media plurality review of the proposed transaction. A full press release is available online in [EN](#), [FR](#) and [DE](#) (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

### **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Delta Lloyd by NN Group in Dutch insurance sector**

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of sole control over Delta Lloyd N.V. by NN Group N.V., both of the Netherlands. Delta Lloyd and NN are insurance companies that provide company pension schemes, individual life insurance policies and non-life insurance. They are both also active in banking and asset management. The Commission's investigation focused particularly on the possible effects on competition in pensions in the Netherlands, where the companies have the strongest market position. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would not raise competition concerns either in this or any of the other areas where the companies' activities overlap in insurance and insurance distribution in the Netherlands and Belgium. In the Dutch pensions market, the Commission found that the new entity would continue to face competition from both other major insurance companies and from other pension providers. This is partly due to recent changes on the Dutch pensions market,

which have increased competition by allowing a range of new actors to offer pension solutions. In all other areas, the Commission concluded that the merged entity would continue to face significant competition, and that the transaction would not have any detrimental effect on consumer choice. Following notification of the transaction to the Commission, the Dutch authorities requested a referral of the case to the Dutch Competition Authority. As the transaction does not give rise to any competition concerns, the legal grounds for referral are not met and the Commission therefore rejected the referral request. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.8257](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

## **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Żabka Polska by CVC Capital Partners**

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of Żabka Polska S.A. of Poland by CVC Capital Partners of Luxembourg. Żabka Polska S.A. operates a franchise network of grocery retail stores in Poland. CVC Capital Partners is a private equity company. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would not raise competition concerns because the companies are not active in the same markets and because market shares in all vertically linked markets remain limited. 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.8428](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **L'Union européenne et l'Algérie renforcent leurs relations dans le domaine de l'énergie**

Le 11 Avril, le Commissaire européen chargé de l'Action pour le climat et de l'Energie Miguel **Arias Cañete** rencontra à Bruxelles le Ministre algérien de l'Energie M. Noureddine Boutarfa. Ils discuteront du [Partenariat Stratégique](#) sur l'énergie entre l'Union européenne et l'Algérie. Le Commissaire Miguel **Arias Cañete** a déclaré, avant la rencontre : «Le *Partenariat stratégique euro-algérien sur l'énergie a été lancé il y a deux ans lors de ma première visite à Alger et est maintenant une composante permanente et structurelle des relations euro-algériennes. L'UE et l'Algérie sont dans une relation d'interdépendance: l'Europe s'appuie sur le gaz algérien pour sa sécurité d'approvisionnement et l'Algérie compte sur le marché européen pour la sécurité de la demande. Mais l'Algérie a également un grand potentiel dans les domaines des énergies renouvelables et de l'efficacité énergétique. L'UE est fortement engagée à soutenir l'Algérie dans ces domaines politiques.*» Le Partenariat Stratégique UE-Algérie prévoit une coopération dans les domaines du gaz naturel et du pétrole brut ainsi que de l'électricité, des énergies nouvelles et renouvelables, de l'efficacité énergétique et du développement des infrastructures. Dans le cadre de ce partenariat le premier [Forum d'Affaires Euro-Algérien](#) sur l'énergie a eu lieu en mai 2016. Lors de la réunion de demain le Commissaire **Arias Cañete** et le



ministre Boutarfa examineront les progrès qui ont été faits depuis lors dans la coopération sur l'énergie, surtout en ce qui concerne les investissements européens dans la production et l'approvisionnement de gaz et le secteur de l'énergie renouvelable en Algérie. Un coin VIP aura lieu le 11 Avril à 11:30 CET au Berlaymont avec le Commissaire et le Ministre algérien de l'Energie, il sera retransmis par [Europe by Satellite](#). (*Pour plus d'informations: Anna-Kaisa Itkonen – Tél.: +32 229 56186; Nicole Bockstaller – Tél.: +32 229 52589*)

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