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President Juncker participates in EU-Turkey Leaders' Meeting in Varna, Bulgaria

Today the Leaders' Meeting on EU-Turkey relations is taking place in Varna (Bulgaria). Hosted by Prime Minister Borissov, representing the Bulgarian Presidency of the EU, President Juncker, President Tusk and President Erdoğan will meet for a working dinner to discuss all aspects of current and future EU-Turkey relations. The main points of discussion will be cooperation in energy, security, the fight against terrorism and migration management and the EU's assistance for refugees in Turkey as the EU-Turkey Statement continues to deliver results. Earlier this month, two years on from the launch of the Facility for Refugees in Turkey, the Commission proposed to mobilise the second €3 billion tranche after the first part of the Facility was fully committed and contracted by the end of 2017. The visa liberalisation process and the inextricably linked domestic political situation and security matters in Turkey will also feature high on the agenda. The meeting takes place after European Leaders condemned Turkey's continued illegal actions in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean Sea during the European Council last week as undermining regional stability and security. Energy cooperation will also be prominent in the leaders' discussion where EU leaders will once again stress that good neighbourly relations with all EU Member States are key for an enhanced energy security. Finally, counterterrorism actions and cooperation will also be part of this evening's dialogue. Ahead of the summit, following the European Council meeting last week where Turkey featured high on the agenda, President Juncker said: "The differences in views between the EU and Turkey are many. It will be a frank and open debate where we will not hide our differences but where we will seek to improve our cooperation". A press conference will follow this evening, timing to be confirmed. Watch live on EbS here. (For more information: Margaritis Schinas - Tel.: +32 229 60524; Mina Andreeva - Tel.: +32 229 91382)

Commission launches safeguard investigation into steel products to prevent trade diversion into the EU [Updated on 26/03/2018 at 15:30]

The European Commission today initiated a safeguard investigation on imports of a number of steel products into the EU. The safeguard investigation is one of the three types of measures the Commission announced in response to the US restrictions on steel and aluminium. It concerns products of all origin and its opening does not prejudge its results. However, the procedure can also result in imposition of import tariffs or quotas that would shield EU producers from excessive imports, if this proves necessary. The surveillance system for imports of steel — in place since March 2016 — has provided evidence that imports of certain steel products have been increasing. This trend may be even stronger now that the access to the US market has been limited and steel products from other parts of the world previously destined

to the US may be redirected to Europe, disturbing the market and skewing prices. The investigation launched today covers 26 steel product categories. It will in principle be concluded within 9 months; should provisional measures prove necessary, they can be adopted at short notice. The Commission continues to further examine the market situation and is prepared to react as appropriate. Safeguards are one of trade defence tools recognised by the World Trade Organisation. The EU investigation procedure follows strictly multilateral rules in this respect. (For more information: Kinga Malinowska – Tel.: +32 229 51383; Daniel Rosario – Tel.: +32 229 56185)

State aid: Commission concludes Dutch guarantee scheme to support fast growing medium and large-companies involves no aid

The European Commission has found that the "Extended Growth Facility" (also known as "GO"), a Dutch guarantee scheme to support medium and large companies, does not involve State aid. The objective of the GO scheme is to improve access to finance for companies with a considerable growth potential. Under the scheme, the Dutch State guarantees 50% of new loans to companies, for up to 8 years. It will run until the end of 2023, with the maximum annual amount of loan guarantees fixed at €400 million. Loans guaranteed can range from €1.5 million to €150 million, for which a guarantee fee is paid to the Dutch State by the banks issuing the loans. The Dutch authorities expect that this scheme will encourage banks to issue these loans on a larger scale than currently. The Commission found that the guarantees give the Dutch State an appropriate remuneration level, ensuring that the scheme is self-financing, including administrative costs and the remuneration of virtual capital. Therefore, the Commission concluded that the Dutch State guarantee scheme does not constitute State aid to the banks, nor to the borrowing companies. A full press release is available in EN, FR, DE, NL. (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso - Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou - Tel.: +32 229 13740)

Mergers: Commission approves joint venture between IBM and Maersk

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the proposed creation of a joint venture between International Business Machines (IBM) of the US and A.P. Møller Mærsk group (Maersk) of Denmark. The joint venture will engage in the development and commercialisation of a new digitisation solution intended to provide end to end shipment visibility and document management for global trade. IBM is active in the development, production, and marketing of information technology solutions, comprising software, systems and IT services. Maersk is active in container shipping, terminal services, harbour towage, logistics and energy. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns given the limited overlap between the joint venture's digitisation solution and the companies' activities. 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 (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso - Tel.: +32 229 80100; number M.8742. Maria Sarantopoulou — Tel.: +32 229 13740)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of sole control over Wyndham Vacation Rentals Europe by Platinum Equity Group

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of sole control over Wyndham Vacation Rentals Europe -a business formed by Wyndham Vacation Rentals UK of the UK, Landal GreenParks of the Netherlands and Novasol of Denmark- by Platinum Equity Group of the US. Wyndham Vacation Rentals Europe is active in the serviced holiday rentals sector. Platinum Equity Group specialises in the merger, acquisition and operation of companies that provide services and solutions to customers in a broad range of businesses, including information technology, telecommunications, logistics, metal services, manufacturing and distribution. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because of the limited impact it would have on the market. The transaction was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission's competition website, in the public <u>case register</u> under the case number <u>M.8825</u>. (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso — Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou — Tel.: +32 229 13740)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Tekfor by KKR

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the proposed acquisition of sole control over Tekfor Global Holdings Ltd of the UK by KKR & Co. L.P. of the US. Tekfor manufactures and supplies components and assemblies for automotive transmissions, engines, drivelines, fasteners, and other special applications. KKR is a global investment firm which offers alternative asset management services to public and private market investors. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because Tekfor is not active in the same product and geographic market as the markets in which KKR and its portfolio companies are engaged, or in any market that is downstream or upstream from the latter. 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.8763. (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso — Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou — Tel.: +32 229 13740)

Eurostat: International trade in goods in 2017: A third of EU trade is with the United States and China. At Member State level, trade within the EU largely prevails

again slightly in 2017. The share of China has almost tripled since 2000, rising from 5.5% to 15.3% in 2017. The share of Russia in total EU trade had been decreasing since 2012 from nearly 10% to around 6% in 2016, and slightly picked up in 2017. The share of trade with Japan has fallen by more than a half since 2000 — from 7.5% in 2000 to 3.5% in 2017. As for Switzerland and Turkey, their respective shares in trade remained relatively unchanged over the entire period. A Eurostat press release is available here. (For more information: Kinga Malinowska — Tel.: +32 229 51383; Daniel Rosario — Tel.: +32 229 56185)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Vice-President Andrus Ansip and Commissioner Thyssen participate in G7 Employment and Innovation Ministerial Meeting in Canada

Vice-President for the Digital Single Market Andrus Ansip and Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Labour Mobility Marianne Thyssen will represent the European Union at the 2018 G7 Employment and Innovation Ministerial Meeting. The meeting, taking place in Montreal, Canada on 27 and 28 March, will be the occasion to discuss how G7 economies prepare for the jobs of the future. G7 Employment Ministers will discuss key topics such as the importance of partnerships with private sector, inclusive growth and supporting workers through transitions. Vice-President Ansip is co-chairing on Tuesday the session on artificial intelligence. He will give a speech on the importance of creating the right conditions for the development and use of new technologies: in Europe, this means the creation of a Digital Single Market. The Vice-President and Commissioner Thyssen will both speak on Wednesday in the joint session of Innovation and Employment Ministers focussing on the impact of transformative technologies on the labour market, the role of industry in supporting workers and policies and programmes for the jobs of the future. Commissioner Thyssen will formally present the European perspective on inclusive growth, stressing the importance of investing in people, a principle that is at the heart of the European Pillar of Social Rights. Representatives of social partners, engagement groups (Women7 and Youth7) and heads of International Labour Organization (ILO) and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) will also contribute to the working sessions of the meeting. On the sidelines of the event, Vice-President Ansip will meet Japanese Parliamentary Vice-Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Masaki Ogushi and Vice-Minister for Policy Coordination Masahiko Tominaga as well as Michael Kratsios, Deputy Assistant to the President and Deputy U.S. Chief Technology Officer. Commissioner Thyssen will hold bilateral meetings with French Minister of Labour Muriel Pénicaud, German Minister of Labour Hubertus Heil and Canadian Minister for Families, Children and Social Development Jean-Yves Duclos. Vice-President Ansip and Commissioner Thyssen will in addition visit Hec Montréal business school to meet local startups on innovation, skills and youth employment. (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt — Tel.: +32 229 56172; Christian Wigand — Tel.: +32 229 62253; Inga Höglund Tel.: +32 229 55040; Sara

Une Europe qui protège: le Commissaire King participera à un exercice de coopération transfrontalière dans le domaine de la lutte contre le terrorisme

Le Commissaire Julian King sera demain à Dunkerque, en France, où il assistera à un exercice de coopération transfrontalière dans le domaine de la lutte contre le terrorisme organisé par les autorités françaises avec des observateurs britanniques, belges et néerlandaises. Exprimant sa solidarité avec les victimes de l'attaque de Trèbes, Julian King a dit: "J'aimerais adresser mes condoléances aux victimes et aux familles et proches des de la terrible attaque terroriste qui a à nouveau frappé la France vendredi dernier à Trèbes et Carcassonne. Et je voudrais également saluer le courage extraordinaire du gendarme qui a pris la place d'un des otages. Au niveau européen, nous continuons notre action en soutien aux Etats membres pour renforcer ensemble notre combat contre le terrorisme." L'exercice, simulant une attaque terroriste sur un ferry touristique, vise à mieux renforcer la coopération transfrontalière dans le domaine de la lutte contre le terrorisme et à préparer les forces de l'ordre de la région à une telle éventualité. Cet exercice s'inscrit dans le cadre plus large des efforts de l'UE pour renforcer notre résilience face aux attaques terroristes. En octobre 2017, la Commission a présenté un paquet antiterroriste qui listait un ensemble de mesures à prendre au niveau de l'Union ainsi que des États membres pour renforcer la sécurité de l'UE et de ses citoyens. À la suite de l'exercice, le Commissaire King discutera de la lutte contre la radicalisation et la coopération police-douane avec les autorités locales à Lille. Un point presse aura lieu suivant l'exercice. Pour plus d'informations sur les efforts de la Commission pour construire une Europe qui protège, veuillez consulter la fiche d'information en ligne. (For more information: Natasha Bertaud - Tel.: +32 2 296 74 56; Tove Ernst - Tel.: +32 229 86764; Markus Lammert - Tel.: +32 229 58602)

Le Commissaire Hogan participe à un dialogue citoyen en Belgique sur la future politique agricole commune

Le Commissaire à l'agriculture et au développement rural, Phil Hogan participe aujourd'hui à Wuustwezel en Belgique à un dialogue citoyen sur la future politique agricole commune. Le Commissaire Hogan répondra aux questions des participants aux côtés de M. Joris Relaes, administrateur général de l'institut de recherche pour l'agriculture et la pêche du gouvernement flamand (ILVO), Mme Kirsten Haanraads, responsable des affaires publiques de l'association Natuurmonumenten, M. Hans Huijbers, Président de ZLTO, une organisation représentant des agriculteurs et horticulteurs, et M. Pieter Verhelst, membre du conseil d'administration du Boerenbond. Depuis la présentation des orientations de la Commission sur l'avenir de l'agriculture et de l'alimentation en novembre dernier, le Commissaire Hogan a pris part à de nombreux dialogues citoyens pour écouter les points de vue et attentes des citoyens et parties prenantes et répondre à leurs questions. Les dialogues

citoyens sont une caractéristique régulière du travail quotidien de la Commission Juncker. Depuis le début du mandat, plus de 130 dialogues ont eu lieu dans plus de 80 villes. (Pour plus d'informations: Daniel Rosario- Tél.: +32 229 56 172, Clémence Robin — Tél.: +32 229 52509)

Commissioner Andriukaitis in Italy

On 27 March, Vytenis **Andriukaitis**, Commissioner for Health and food safety will be in Italy. In Milan he will hold a meeting with the representatives of the Italian Observatory of Mediterranean Diet, attend the Inauguration Ceremony at San Raffaele University and visit the Ca' Granda Ospedale Maggiore Policlinico to partake in a meeting with the European Reference Networks. Commissioner will then visit Turin to participate in a Citizens' Dialogue at the University of Turinthat will be webstreamed here. "I am looking forward to engage in a dialogue in Turin about health and food safety, issues that are very close to citizens' hearts. Moreover open discussions are key to bring people into the heart of debates over our common future. The point of democracy is indeed to be able to get together and exchange views", he said ahead of the visit. (For more information: Anca Paduraru — Tel.: +32 229 91269; Aikaterini Apostola — Tel.: +32 229 87624)

Commissioner Navracsics travels to Bulgaria for cultural heritage events Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor Navracsics, will be in the city of Plovdiv, Bulgaria, on Monday, 26 March, to open a conference on "Cultural Heritage: for a more Sustainable Europe", organised by the Bulgarian Presidency of the EU and the European Commission. The Commissioner will highlight the fact that culture and cultural heritage are high on the EU agenda, as we celebrate the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018, and as discussions on a new EU Agenda for Culture and the funding of cultural initiatives in the post-2020 budgetary period are ongoing. During the conference, Commissioner Navracsics will also participate in the presentation of the <u>European Heritage Label</u> to the nine new sites recently awarded the title for celebrating or symbolising European ideals, values, history and integration. The <u>press release</u> on the launch of the European Year of Cultural Heritage as well as the Eurobarometer results on the cultural heritage are available online. Plovdiv will be a European Capital of Culture in 2019. (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt — Tel.: +32 229 67083; Joseph Waldstein - Tél.: +32 229 56184)

<u>Upcoming events</u> of the European Commission (ex-Top News)

State aid: Commission concludes Dutch

guarantee scheme to support fast growing medium and large-companies involves no aid

Under the GO scheme, the Dutch State guarantees 50% of new loans to companies, for up to 8 years. The GO scheme will run until the end of 2023, with the maximum annual amount of loan guarantees fixed at \leq 400 million.

Loans guaranteed under the scheme can range from €1.5 million to €150 million, for which a guarantee fee is paid to the Dutch State by the banks issuing the loans. The Dutch authorities expect that this scheme will encourage banks to issue these loans on a larger scale than currently.

The Commission found that the guarantees give the Dutch State an appropriate remuneration level, ensuring that the scheme is self-financing, including administrative costs and the remuneration of virtual capital. This is the capital that a company operating on market terms would set aside as a precaution if it issued such a guarantee.

Therefore, the Commission concluded that the Dutch State guarantee scheme does not constitute State aid to the banks, nor to the borrowing companies.

Background

State aid rules are designed to accommodate the specific financing needs of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). In particular:

- SMEs are not considered to be in difficulty if they are less than three years old. They can receive all forms of State aid during that period.
- Small firms can receive start-up aid during their first five years of existence. SMEs can also receive risk finance investments up to seven years after having made their first commercial sale.
- SMEs, like all other companies, can also receive state funding if it is granted on market terms as is the case for the Dutch GO scheme.

The non-confidential version of this decision will be available under the case number SA.48350 in the public <u>case register</u> on the Commission's <u>competition</u> website, once any confidentiality issues have been reso

Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust

fined after deaths of two patients

Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust has been fined £2m after a series of management failings led to the deaths of two vulnerable patients at different facilities owned by the Trust.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) prosecution follows the deaths of 45-year-old Teresa Colvin at a Southampton Mental Health Hospital and the death of 18-year-old Connor Sparrowhawk at a specialist unit in Oxford. Both centres were under the management of Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust.

Oxford Crown Court heard both HSE investigations found a series of management failings leading up to both deaths including a failure to control risks, and failures in planning.

Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust, pleaded guilty to two breaches of Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. For the breach relating to Teresa Colvin, the sentence was a £950,000 fine. For the breach relating to Connor Sparrowhawk's death, the sentence was a fine of £1,050.000.

HSE's deputy director of field operations Tim Galloway said: "These tragic incidents could have wholly been avoided with better supervision and planning. Instead two families are left utterly devastated and let down by those who had a duty of care for their loved ones.

"The Trust was responsible for caring for those suffering with mental health issues and caring for those with learning difficulties. On these two occasions it failed these two patients and their families.

"Our thoughts remain with Connor Sparrowhawk and Teresa Colvin's families as they continue to come to terms with these avoidable tragedies.

"In particular, we would like to pay tribute to Dr Sara Ryan, Connor's mother, for her continued campaigning on these tragic issues."

BACKGROUND OF CASE

Death of Connor Sparrowhawk

On 4 July 2013, 18-year-old Connor Sparrowhawk died after suffering an epileptic seizure in the bath at the Trust's specialist unit, Slade House in Oxford.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that despite Mr Sparrowhawk's vulnerability and previous suspected seizures, he was allowed to use the bath alone with checks from staff taking place every 15 minutes.

Tim Galloway added: "Southern Health was aware of the patient's condition and there had been a number of warning signs prior to the incident taking place.

Allowing Connor to use the bath unsupervised was an obvious risk and a serious management failing."

Death of Teresa Colvin

Following Connor's death, NHS England published the independent Mazars report in December 2015 into the deaths of people with a learning disability or mental health problem at Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust

In response to the report, and following an assessment of all the deaths that occurred on Southern Health premises from April 2011, HSE concluded that one death met the criteria for a full HSE investigation.

On 26 April 2012, Teresa Colvin was found slumped and unconscious at a telephone kiosk at Woodhaven Adult Mental Health Hospital in Southampton. She died a short time later following treatment.

It became clear during HSE's investigation that the Trust failed to act on the findings of assessments that it could better control the risks associated with the use of phones with cords. There had been a history of patients across the Trust, including those at Woodhaven, using phone cords as a ligature.

Tim Galloway added: "The known risk of patients across the Trust using phone cords as ligature was never sufficiently addressed. This ultimately led to the death of this vulnerable patient."

Notes to Editors:

- 1. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury and ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise. www.hse.gov.uk
- 2. After 1 April 2015, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) took responsibility in England for patient and service user health and safety for providers registered with them. Prior to this date, HSE had enforcement responsibility, hence its investigation and subsequent prosecution on this occasion.
- 3. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: www.legislation.gov.uk/
- 4. HSE news releases are available at http://press.hse.gov.uk

Journalists should approach HSE press office with any queries on regional press releases.

Greece: New EUR 100 million EIB and Piraeus Bank initiative to cut energy bills

Energy bills for companies across Greece will be reduced by new energy efficiency investment backed by a new EUR 100 million initiative by the European Investment Bank and Piraeus Bank. Under the scheme dedicated financing for new investment to reduce energy consumption by small-scale energy users will be provided across the country. Technical and financial expertise gained from energy efficiency investment programmes elsewhere will be used to strengthen new projects in Greece.

This operation is the first initiative in Greece under Private Finance for Energy Efficiency programme and represents the largest engagement in any European country so far.

"New investment to improve energy efficiency reduces energy bills, cuts carbon emissions and creates jobs. The European Investment Bank is committed to supporting transformational investment in Greece and pleased to launch the largest energy efficiency financing initiative to date in any European country under the Private Finance for Energy Efficiency programme. The scale of this new scheme clearly demonstrates the impressive potential for cutting energy bills in the country. This initiative will be strengthened by the local knowledge and professional expertise of colleagues at Piraeus Bank." said Jonathan Taylor, European Investment Bank Vice President.

"This agreement underlines the longstanding commitment of Piraeus Bank, the largest bank in Greece, to the financing of investments with a positive environmental and social impact, and a focus on sustainable development and financial viability. Expanding our long-standing cooperation with the European Investment Bank Group, we have signed a new EUR 100 million agreement to finance energy efficiency projects in Greece, through the dedicated energy efficiency lending scheme, Private Finance for Energy Efficiency (PF4EE). This agreement, the only one in Greece and the largest provided by European Investment Bank under PF4EE in Europe, re-enforces our support for green entrepreneurship and expands our considerable know-how. Piraeus Bank is ideally positioned in the Greek market to take advantage of this particular innovative financing instrument." said Mr. Christos Megalou, Chief Executive Officer of Piraeus Bank.

The European Investment Bank and Piraeus Bank have signed an agreement worth EUR 100 million under the Private Finance for Energy Efficiency initiative. This is a pilot scheme currently being rolled out across Europe intended to increase the availability of debt financing to eligible energy efficiency investment.

The EUR 100 million EIB loan will be used by Piraeus Bank for the financing of new investment improving the energy efficiency in existing buildings,

outdoor lighting and water pumping stations across Greece.

The PF4EE instrument combines three elements. The first consists of an EIB loan to improve the funding conditions of the energy efficiency investments financed by Piraeus Bank. The second element provides partial risk protection on Piraeus Bank's loans. The third element will strengthen Piraeus Bank's lending capacity specifically targeted at energy efficiency investments, by passing on technical and financial expertise gained from similar schemes elsewhere in the European Union.

"The Private Finance for Energy Efficiency financial instrument, deployed under the LIFE programme, will deliver new finance for Greek companies willing to invest in their sustainability." said Miguel Arias Cañete, European Commissioner responsible for Climate Action and Energy.

The risk protection will cover 80% of Piraeus Bank's potential losses under these loans up to a maximum agreed amount. Piraeus Bank will also benefit from the technical and financial expertise of the EIB during the start of the operation for assistance in the identification and appraisal of energy efficiency investments and capacity building support.

The new cooperation with Piraeus Bank in Greece represents the eighth partnership with a European bank to support energy efficiency investments under the Private Finance for Energy Efficiency financial instrument. The European Investment Bank engagement is supported by the European Commission, under the LIFE programme.

In 2017, the European Investment Bank provided more than EUR 4.1 billion for new energy efficiency investment worldwide.

<u>'Diversity training' is not enough to</u> combat racial hatred

From the events of the past few weeks, you would be forgiven for thinking that Scottish Labour's solution to any problem is "diversity training".

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