

First European Citizens' Panel took steps to enable citizens to contribute to the creation of the future of Europe

On 5-6 May, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) hosted the first [European Citizens' Panel](#), which was convened to prepare a public consultation on the Future of Europe. A group of 80 European citizens from 27 Member States came to the EESC premises in Brussels to work together and draft a 12-question online consultation. The Citizens' Consultation, initiated by the French president Emmanuel Macron, is organized for the first time in the history of the EU.

Europe must act now before it is too late

The EESC president **Luca Jahier**, who opened the Citizens' Panel, acknowledged that the EU is currently facing hardships. "I can assure you that I am not blind to these challenges," said Mr Jahier, naming issues such as widening inequalities between EU countries, worryingly low levels of trust in democratic institutions, a migration crisis, and environmental challenges.

Mr Jahier stressed that today too many people feel that their opinions are not taken on board. "If this feeling persists, our democratic system will risk collapsing, and so will our project of peace, in which I believe from the very bottom of my heart."

The president drew attention to the efforts of previous generations who restored peace in Europe after the war and emphasized that everything that has been done cannot be swept away. "We get to work now, before it is too late," Mr Jahier said.

12 questions for the future of Europe

Following the series of workshops, where participants discussed the most vital issues concerning the future of the EU, 12 tangible questions for online consultation were presented in the last panel. On 9 May, the Commission will launch in all EU languages the online public consultation co-created by the Citizens' Panel. The Commission will inform the Member States on the results from the first six months of the consultation at the December European Council and will present a final report at the first EU 27 Summit in Sibiu, Romania, on 9 May 2019.

Crucial time to hear the voice of the EU citizens

Addressing the concerns, **Timo Pesonen**, EC Director General for Communication, emphasized in his final remarks that apart from being published online, the questionnaire will be presented in all activities of the Commission. "It is

essential to outreach the whole Europe with these questions in order to have an open debate and listen for citizens' concerns on the future of Europe ahead of the European Parliament elections in May 2019."

The EESC member **Thierry Libaert** noted that the first Citizens' Panel was a historic event and it produced solid and groundbreaking results. "We will ensure that this whole process that begun today will be carried forward," stressed Mr Libaert.

Background: Last March, while attending the EESC plenary session, Nathalie Loiseau, The French Minister for European Affairs, presented the European consultation process put forward by president Emmanuel Macron. In light of this, Georges Dassis (the former EESC president) and Luca Jahier (the new EESC president) proposed that the Committee be actively and closely involved. In 2017, the Committee successfully organized consultations on the Future of Europe in the Member States, in the framework of the White Paper by Jean Claude Juncker, president of the European Commission.

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The portal provides investors with a one-stop-shop register, including for:

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- MiFID Trading venues
- MiFID data reporting service providers
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The portal provides reference to sanctions applied by the competent authorities in the Member States under several European legislations.

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[Tuesday 22 May: International Conference for The Gambia](#)

The news

The International Conference for The Gambia takes place on 22 May in Brussels at the European Commission (Berlaymont).

The conference, jointly organised by the European Union and the Government of The Gambia, will focus on confirming support to The Gambia in its democratic transition, as well as raising additional financial support for the implementation of its National Development Plan. High Representative/Vice-President Federica **Mogherini** and Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development Neven **Mimica** will co-chair the conference together with the President of The Gambia, Adama **Barrow**. President **Barrow** will present the country's reform agenda to high-level attendees from the European Union Member States, the international community as well as international organisations.

In the margins of the conference, a **Business Forum** will take place on 23 May. The forum will bring together interested European, regional and Gambian business representatives for exchanges on sector specific strategies and projects during panel discussions on Energy & Infrastructure, Agricultural Value Chains, and Tourism.

EU support to The Gambia

– **Development assistance:** EU assistance for the period 2017-2020 currently amounts to a total of €225 million. With the establishment of a new government in 2016, development cooperation was immediately stepped up, and in early 2017 a €75 million aid package was released and further €150 million were subsequently allocated supporting governance through budget support, investment facilities for infrastructures and notably boosting job creation and youth empowerment for sustainable growth.

– **Political support:** The EU has provided strong political support to President **Barrow** ever since his election on 1 December 2016. [Commissioner Mimica visited The Gambia at a very early stage of the transition in February 2017](#) to open a new chapter in bilateral relations. An [EU Election Observation Mission for parliamentary elections in April 2017](#) contributed to foster trust in the democratic process. The EU pursues dialogue with the Gambian

authorities on a broad range of subjects of mutual interest, including governance, human rights, security sector reform, transitional justice, trade, migration, agriculture, fisheries and environment. The EU is also supporting the West African standby force (ECOMIG) deployed to the country, which ensures security together with the Gambian security forces.

The background

After 22 years of authoritarian rule, former The Gambia President Yahya Jammeh lost presidential elections on 1 December 2016 to opposition candidate Adama Barrow. When President Jammeh refused to leave office during several weeks of political stalemate, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) showed strong political leadership to ensure that the election results were respected, paving the way for President Barrow take up power. The political situation has substantially improved since. However, his government has inherited a very difficult financial and economic situation. In order to meet the expectations of the population to see swift and tangible improvements in living conditions, and to consolidate the political progress achieved so far, the country needs strong international support.

The event

The International Conference for The Gambia takes place on 22 May in Brussels at the European Commission (Berlaymont).

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Media accreditation

Journalists must have valid media accreditation to attend any dedicated press events at the conference:

- Journalists **already accredited to the EU institutions** may attend with a valid yellow press badge (e.g. yellow badge from the European Commission, badge from the EU Council) and show the badge upon entering the Berlaymont on the day of the conference.
 - Journalists **that are not accredited to the EU institutions** must register using this link: <http://thegambia.onetec.eu/reg2.html> before 18 May 2018, 12:00 by registering and providing details such as name, media you work for, a copy of a valid national press card and national ID card. Both the valid national press card and national ID card must be shown upon entering the Berlaymont on the day of the conference.
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Daily News 07 / 05 / 2018

Juncker Plan: €250 million for female entrepreneurs in Spain; €500 million for SMEs in Central Europe

The European Investment Bank (EIB) Group has signed two new deals under the Juncker Plan's European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), providing €750 million in financing to small businesses in the EU. The first is a €250 million agreement with Caixa Bank in Spain which will focus on supporting innovative projects led by female entrepreneurs. The second is an agreement with UniCredit to finance SMEs in Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania; as well as in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia (not backed by EFSI). Commission Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, said: *"The geographical reach of the European Fund for Strategic Investments is of paramount importance and under today's agreement with UniCredit, six Central EU countries will benefit. SMEs in those Member States – as well as in two neighbouring countries – can now apply to UniCredit for loans with the EU budget guarantee to start up and scale up their businesses. I'm also glad that with the EFSI support more female entrepreneurs can get financing for their innovative projects."* (Full press releases can be found [here](#). For more information: Christian Spahr – Tel.: +32 229 50055; Siobhán Millbright – Tel.: +32 229 57361)

Snapchat joins the EU Code of Conduct to fight illegal hate speech online

Snap.Inc announced today that it is joining the EU's Code of Conduct on countering illegal online hate speech. It is the seventh major IT platform committing to combat this phenomenon, and the next additional participant after Instagram and Google+ announced their participation in January 2018. Věra **Jourová**, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, said, *"I welcome Snapchat's commitment to tackle illegal online content. The growing number of participants proves that the EU Code of Conduct is an efficient way to make the Internet a safer place. This is particularly important as it will help protect the younger generations that use Snapchat."* To respond to the proliferation of racist and xenophobic hate speech online, the European Commission and four major IT companies (Facebook, Microsoft, Twitter and YouTube) presented a "[Code of conduct on countering illegal hate speech online](#)" in May 2016. Since then, the Commission with the help of NGOs has carefully monitored how the Code is implemented by the companies. The latest monitoring exercise in January 2018 showed that the Code is delivering important progress in the response to hate speech notices: 70% of the content is removed and in more than 81% of the cases this happens within 24 hours ([press release](#)). The Commission has also recently adopted a Recommendation to more generally reinforce the EU response to illegal content online ([press release](#) from 1 March) and will decide whether additional steps are necessary in the coming months. (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tél.: +32 229 67083; Melanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659)

Commission publishes evaluation reports on EU rules on machinery safety and product liability

Technology is developing rapidly and Europe needs to seize the opportunities ahead. In addition to supporting industry modernisation with initiatives such as [measures on artificial intelligence](#) and an upcoming strategy on connected and automated driving, the Commission wants to ensure that EU legislation is apt for emerging digital technologies and innovative products. As part of this exercise, the Commission has evaluated the Product Liability Directive ([Directive 85/374/EEC](#)) and the Machinery Directive ([Directive 2006/42/EC](#)). The results published today show that both Directives are fit for purpose and conducive to innovation. Commissioner Elżbieta **Bieńkowska**, responsible for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, said: *“European industry is competitive, not only because we have great innovative minds, but also because we have a conducive framework. We are happy to see that our existing legislation is fit for purpose in a changing world. It makes our EU products both safe and competitive. Technology changes fast, so we will continue to monitor the situation and are ready to act if the need arises.”* The Machinery Directive sets general health and safety requirements for products, such as robots or 3D printers. Which technical solutions should be deployed to meet the high safety level is then left to manufacturers. For this reason, the Directive functions like an umbrella framework leaving leeway for products to be innovated. The Commission will launch a study to further look into certain aspects of emerging technologies, such as issues arising from human-machine collaboration, which are not explicitly addressed by the Directive. The Product Liability Directive foresees that if a product causes damage to a person or their private property, the producer is liable to pay compensation. The evaluation shows that the Directive continues to strike a good balance between consumer protection and encouraging innovation in the EU. The Commission will publish interpretative guidance in mid-2019 to facilitate a common understanding between Member States and to further clarify to what extent it applies to emerging technologies. Find the evaluation of Product Liability Directive [here](#) and the Machinery Directive [here](#). (For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel.: +32 229 56182; Maud Noyon – Tel. +32 229-80379; Victoria von Hammerstein – Tel.: +32 229 55040)

Festival de Cannes: 18 films soutenus par le programme MEDIA mis à l'honneur

L'édition 2018 du [Festival de Cannes](#), qui ouvre ses portes demain, ainsi que ses sélections parallèles, [La Quinzaine des Réalistes](#) et la [Semaine de la Critique](#), présenteront 18 films cofinancés par [MEDIA](#), le programme de l'UE de soutien au secteur audiovisuel. Quatre films soutenus par MEDIA seront en compétition cette année pour remporter la Palme d'Or: “Dogman”, de Matteo Garrone (France, Italie), “Les filles du soleil”, d'Eva Husson (France, Belgique, Suisse et Géorgie), “Lazzaro Felice”, d'Alice Rohrwacher (Italie, France, Allemagne et Suisse) et “Cold War”, de Pawel Pawlikowski (Pologne, France et Royaume-Uni). Quatorze autres films soutenus par MEDIA seront présentés dans d'autres sélections du festival. Lundi 14 mai, Mariya **Gabriel**, commissaire à l'économie numérique et à la société, ouvrira le [Forum du film européen](#) qui mettra l'accent sur la puissance des réseaux et de la

collaboration afin d'augmenter la visibilité des œuvres européens. A cette occasion, la commissaire a déclaré : *“Le Festival de Cannes consacre la liberté d'expression artistique qui est au cœur de notre démocratie. Je suis très fière d'y présenter les priorités du programme MEDIA qui soutient depuis 1991 la création et la distribution cinématographiques en Europe. Je viens à Cannes pour porter un message fort d'une Commission qui a proposé d'intensifier ses actions futures en faveur d'un modèle européen du cinéma, fondé sur la liberté, la diversité et les collaborations transfrontalières au service du citoyen”*. Dans le cadre de [l'Année européenne du patrimoine culturel 2018](#) et de la stratégie #Digital4Culture de la Commission, la Commissaire participera à une table ronde sur la promotion et l'accès au patrimoine cinématographique européen. Elle animera un déjeuner-débat sur le thème «Les femmes dans l'audiovisuel» en présence de députés européens, de cinéastes et de représentants de l'industrie. Le Forum du film européen sera précédé par une conférence intitulée «Soyez créatifs, parlez à la banque» qui mettra en lumière les premiers résultats de la [Facilité européenne de garantie pour les secteurs culturels et créatifs](#). Plus d'informations sont disponibles [ici](#) et [ici](#), ainsi que dans une [brochure](#) et une [fiche d'informations](#). (Pour plus d'information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Julia-Henriette Bräuer – Tel.: +32 229 80707)

Mergers: Commission clears ArcelorMittal's acquisition of Ilva, subject to conditions

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of Ilva by ArcelorMittal. The decision is conditional on the divestiture of an extensive remedy package to preserve effective competition on European steel markets to the benefit of consumers and businesses. In particular, it is subject to the divestiture of several steel plants, which would be sold to one or more buyers that will continue to operate and develop them, so they can compete effectively with ArcelorMittal. Today's decision follows an [in-depth review](#) of the deal, which combines ArcelorMittal, the largest producer of flat carbon steel in Europe and worldwide, with the main assets of Ilva, notably its steel plant in Taranto, Italy, which is Europe's largest single-site integrated flat carbon steel plant. Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *“Steel is a critical input for many European industries and products we use every day. Today's decision makes sure that ArcelorMittal's acquisition of Ilva, creating the by far largest steelmaker in Europe, does not result in higher steel prices – at the expense of European industries, the millions of people they employ and consumers. ArcelorMittal has proposed to sell a number of steel plants throughout Europe to one or more buyers, who will run them to compete with ArcelorMittal on a lasting basis. This will preserve effective competition on European steel markets. It goes hand in hand with decisive EU action to protect our steel industry from unfair trade distortions from third countries. Finally, the sale of Ilva's assets to ArcelorMittal should also help accelerate the urgent environmental clean-up works in the Taranto Region. This essential de-pollution work should continue without delay to protect the health of Taranto's inhabitants.”* The full press release is available online in [EN](#), [FR](#), [DE](#) and [IT](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100;

Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889)

Mergers: Commission approves acquisition of Rockwell Collins by UTC, subject to conditions

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of Rockwell Collins by United Technologies Corporation (UTC) in the aerospace sector. The decision is conditional on divestment of businesses in actuators, pilot controls, ice protection and oxygen systems. On the basis of its preliminary investigation, the Commission was concerned that the transaction, as originally notified, would have reduced competition in the markets for trimmable horizontal stabiliser actuators (THSA), certain pilot controls, pneumatic wing ice protection and oxygen systems. To address the Commission's preliminary concerns, UTC offered to divest the following activities: i) Rockwell Collins' entire global THSA and pilot control businesses, located at several sites mainly in the US and Mexico; ii) Rockwell Collins' entire global business in ice protection, located in a single facility in the US; iii) UTC's two research projects in oxygen systems. The Commission found that the proposed commitments fully remove the overlaps between UTC and Rockwell Collins in the markets where competition concerns had been identified. Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy said: *"When we take a trip on a plane, we usually don't think about all the different components that go into building the aircraft. UTC and Rockwell Collins are two of the biggest suppliers of these components to aircraft makers worldwide. We need to ensure that competition is preserved for all of them. We can allow this merger to go ahead because in all the markets where we raised concerns, UTC has committed to divest activities covering the entire overlap between the two companies."* A full press release is available in [EN](#), [FR](#), [DE](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Stylianides visits Greece, holds Citizens Dialogue

Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides** is in Greece this week to participate in a series of events to celebrate Europe Day. Today he will hold a [Citizens' Dialogue](#) in Kavala, Greece, to discuss the future of Europe and the Commission's new proposal [rescEU](#) to upgrade the European system of civil protection. He will also meet with officials from the local authorities, and the Rector and the academic community of the Eastern Macedonia and Thrace Institute of Technology. On Europe Day, May 9, the Commissioner will speak at a High Level Breakfast on "Europe in front of Strategic Dilemmas", organised by DIKTIO-Network for Reform in Greece and Europe, and he will visit the premises of the organisation "Smile of the Child". On May 10, he will meet with Greece Migration Minister Dimitris Vitsas and Deputy Minister of Economy and Development Stergios Pitsiorlas. (For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz de Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)

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