

Daily News 02 / 10 / 2018

ECOFIN: Progress achieved on VAT, including agreement on equal VAT treatment for e-books

The European Commission has welcomed the progress made today by Member States on much-needed improvements to how Value Added Tax (VAT) works in the EU, and which should help to shut down fraud and evasion in the sector. Amongst others, ministers agreed to allow Member States to align the VAT rates they set for e-publications, currently taxed at the standard rate in most Member States, with the more favourable regime currently in force for traditional printed publications. They also agreed on new rules to exchange more information and boost cooperation on criminal VAT fraud between national tax authorities and law enforcement authorities, as well as measures to cut VAT compliance burdens for companies. *“New figures released by the Commission just weeks ago show that Member States are still losing €150 billion in VAT each year. Today’s agreements are another step towards addressing that problem and changing VAT rules for the better. Now is the time to seize the momentum and agree on solutions for the more fundamental problems facing the system today.”* said Pierre **Moscovici**, Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs, Taxation and Customs following the agreements. The measures agreed today should individually help in the day-to-day running of an EU VAT system which is in urgent need of further far-reaching reform. The reboot would improve and modernise the system for governments and businesses alike, making the system more robust and simpler to use for companies. More information is available in a [press release](#) issued today and in the [published speech](#) of Vice-President **Dombrovskis** at the press conference following today’s meeting. (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Patrick McCullough – Tel.: +32 229 87183)

L’UE investit pour des connexions internet nouvelle génération en Sicile et un meilleur transport ferroviaire en Slovaquie

La Commission vient d’adopter deux projets cofinancés par les fonds de la politique de Cohésion en Italie et en Slovaquie, pour un montant total de près de 190 millions d’euros. Tout d’abord, le Fonds européen de développement régional (FEDER) investit près de 55 millions d’euros pour établir les infrastructures nécessaires au déploiement du haut débit axé sur le réseau de nouvelle génération (NGN) dans les zones blanches de la Sicile. 142 municipalités sont concernées par ce projet, soit plus de 2,3 millions d’habitants. *“Ce n’est pas seulement le haut débit qui arrivera dans les foyers siciliens, c’est aussi de nouvelles opportunités économiques, des services publics plus accessibles et une ouverture nouvelle sur le monde,”* a commenté la Commissaire à la politique régionale Corina **Crețu**. Ce projet vise à atteindre une couverture quasi complète de la région en haut débit (> 30 Mbits/s). Il permettra également la connexion à très haut débit (> 100 Mbits/s) pour certains utilisateurs de la région aux besoins de connectivité importants, comme les petites et moyennes entreprises. Ce projet financé par l’UE s’inscrit dans le plan national de l’Italie pour le déploiement du haut débit axé sur le réseau de nouvelle génération. Il devrait être achevé en

2020. Sur la période 2014-2020, près de 2 milliards d'euros de fond européens sont investis dans les infrastructures et services numériques en Italie. Ensuite, le Fonds de Cohésion investit 134,5 millions d'euros pour améliorer le transport ferroviaire dans la région de Žilina, au Nord-Ouest de la Slovaquie. Cela permettra l'achat de 25 véhicules modernes et confortables pour le réseau régional. La Commissaire **Crețu** a commenté: *"C'est près de 2 millions de passagers qui devraient bénéficier de cet investissement, qui rendra le transport ferroviaire plus attractif dans ces régions et promouvra donc une mobilité plus propre en Slovaquie."* Ce projet vient compléter les investissements de l'UE dans la modernisation des infrastructures ferroviaires dans la région au cours de la période budgétaire précédente. (Pour plus d'informations: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615, Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)

EU-funded scientist among Nobel Prize winners in Physics

The Nobel Prize in Physics for 2018 has been awarded with one half to Arthur **Ashkin** and the other half jointly to Gérard **Mourou** and Donna **Strickland** for their ground-breaking work in laser physics. In 1985 Gérard **Mourou** and Donna **Strickland** have paved the way towards the shortest and most intense laser pulses ever created by mankind. Such high-intensity lasers are today used for both industrial and medical applications, including the millions of annual corrective eye surgeries. Carlos **Moedas**, Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, said: *"I warmly congratulate Arthur Ashkin, Gérard Mourou and Donna Strickland on their achievement. I am proud to say that EU funding has supported one of this year's Nobel Prize laureates to help perfect laser physics. Their discoveries will help us all to stay at the cutting edge of scientific frontiers."* Gérard **Mourou** has later in his career received EU funding under the previous research and innovation programme. The pioneer of ultrafast lasers was supported from 2012 to 2015 with €500,000 for the ambitious international project ICAN (International Coherent Amplification Network) that unifies laser and high-energy physics. The goal of the project was the development of a new laser system composed of thousands of fibre lasers. Such a system can transform nuclear waste, which today can 'survive' for thousands of years, into materials with much shorter live spans, ultimately alleviating the problem of nuclear waste management. Mr **Mourou** was also the initiator and coordinator of the [Extreme Light Infrastructure \(ELI\)](#), which is part of the [European ESFRI Roadmap](#). More information is available in a [news item](#) and the [press release](#) of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences. (For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel.: +32 229 56182; Victoria von Hammerstein – Tel.: +32 229 55040; Mirna Talko – Tel.: +32 229 87278)

Le Parlement européen approuve les règles révisées pour les médias audiovisuels à travers l'Europe

La session plénière du Parlement européen a approuvé aujourd'hui la directive révisée sur les services de médias audiovisuels (AVMSD). Faisant partie de la [stratégie du marché unique numérique](#), les nouvelles règles ouvrent la voie à un environnement réglementaire plus équitable pour l'ensemble du secteur audiovisuel, y compris les services à la demande et les plateformes de

partage de vidéos. Ces règles soutiennent les productions audiovisuelles européennes et garantissent l'indépendance des régulateurs audiovisuels, renforcent la protection des mineurs et consolident la lutte contre les discours de haine dans tout contenu audiovisuel. La nouvelle directive promeut les œuvres européennes en garantissant une part de 30% d'œuvres européennes dans les catalogues à la demande. Elle maintient également le principe du pays d'origine en tant que pierre angulaire de la réglementation audiovisuelle de l'UE, en précisant plus clairement les règles des États membres applicables dans chaque situation. Le vice-président Andrus **Ansip**, responsable du marché unique numérique, et la commissaire Mariya **Gabriel**, chargée de l'économie et de la société numériques, ont salué le vote positif : *«L'Europe a besoin de règles audiovisuelles adaptées à l'évolution du paysage audiovisuel. Tous les opérateurs feront désormais partie d'un environnement réglementaire plus équitable, dans lequel les Européens, en particulier les enfants, seront mieux protégés contre les discours de haine et les contenus préjudiciables, et où les productions européennes pourront s'épanouir »*. Le Conseil de l'UE adoptera la directive dans les prochaines semaines, avant son entrée en vigueur d'ici à la fin de l'année. Une fois les nouvelles règles officiellement adoptées, les États membres disposeront de 21 mois pour les transposer dans leur législation nationale. Plus d'informations sont disponibles est ce [mémo](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tél .: +32 229 67083; Inga Höglund – Tél .: +32 229 50698)

Mergers: Commission clears the acquisition of sole control over Generali Lebensversicherung by Cinven

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of sole control over Generali Lebensversicherung Aktiengesellschaft ("Generali Lebensversicherung") of Germany, by Cinven of the UK. Generali Lebensversicherung is an insurance company licensed for and primarily active in the provision of life insurance products. Cinven is a private equity business engaged in the provision of investment management and investment advisory services. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns given the minor horizontal overlaps and the lack of vertical relationships between 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 number [M.9081](#). (For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission clears the acquisition of control over a joint venture by Alphabet (Verily) and ResMed

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of control over a newly created joint venture in the US, by Verily Life Sciences ("Verily"), belonging to Alphabet, and ResMed, all of the US. The joint venture will study the health and financial impacts of undiagnosed and untreated sleep apnea and other breathing related sleep disorders, and develop software solutions that enable health care providers to more efficiently identify, diagnose, treat and manage individuals with these types of disorders. Verily, formerly Google Life Sciences, is a

research organisation. ResMedis engaged in the development, manufacturing, distribution and marketing of medical devices and cloud-based software applications that diagnose, treat and manage respiratory disorders and other chronic diseases. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns as the joint venture will be active in the US and has no foreseen activities in the European Economic Area. 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.8991](#). *(For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)*

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of KLX by Boeing

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of KLX Inc. by The Boeing Company, both of the US. KLX is a distributor of aerospace parts and chemicals, including in particular aerospace fasteners. Boeing is active in the aircraft, defence and space industries and related services, and is also a supplier of security systems and provider of aftermarket services for the aerospace market, including the distribution of aerospace parts and chemicals. Both companies are active across the European Economic Area, as well as worldwide. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because the companies' activities in the distribution of aerospace parts are, to a large extent, complementary, and they face the constraint of several alternative competitors. The transaction was examined under the normal merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission's [competition website](#), in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.8985](#). *(For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)*

European Commission study reveals problems with advertising and marketing practices on social media

The European Commission today published a study that identifies unfair and manipulative advertising and marketing practices on social media. Evidence collected shows that consumers are often not aware about the way social media providers target them for marketing purposes. For example, one third of the participants surveyed were unaware of the commercial nature of native advertising, i.e. paid ads in an online publication which resemble the publication's editorial content. Conversely, consumers usually are able to quickly recognise a typical magazine advertisement. Likewise, two thirds of consumers are misled by a common practice on Facebook, which consists of showing "likes" from their friends next to other products than those that they had actually "liked". Practices forbidden under the EU Unfair Commercial Practices Blacklist such as false offers and false prize winning competitions were also found to be commonplace. Věra Jourová, European Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, said: *"This study brings evidence for concerns we already had about social media advertising. Some of the techniques used are unfair and manipulative and we would simply not allow them in the offline world. I will bring this case to the attention of*

national consumer authorities who will see whether coordinated EU level action is necessary. Offline or online, companies must not unfairly trick consumers. They need to fully respect EU consumer rules.” Last week, Commissioner Jourová and national consumer authorities met with Airbnb and Facebook to take stock of the progress made on [two ongoing consumer enforcement actions](#). Today’s study can be found [online here](#). (For more information Christian Wigand– Tel.: +32 229 62253; Mélanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659)

Eurostat: Les prix à la production industrielle en hausse de 0,3% tant dans la zone euro que dans l’UE28 (Août 2018 comparé à juillet 2018)

En août 2018 par rapport à juillet 2018, les prix à la production industrielle ont augmenté de 0,3% tant dans la zone euro que dans l’UE28, selon les estimations d’Eurostat, l’office statistique de l’Union européenne. En juillet 2018, les prix avaient augmenté de 0,7% dans la zone euro et de 0,5% dans l’UE28. En août 2018 par rapport à août 2017, les prix à la production industrielle ont augmenté de 4,2% dans la zone euro et de 4,7% dans l’UE28. Un communiqué de presse Eurostat est à votre disposition [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d’informations: Lucía Caudet – Tél.: +32 229 56182; Victoria von Hammerstein – Tél.: +32 229 55040; Mirna Talko – Tél.: +32 229 87278)

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