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Preparation of the Eurogroup and ECOFIN meetings, 4-5 December 2017

Vice-President **Dombrovskis** and Commissioner **Moscovici** will represent the European Commission at today's Eurogroup meeting. The ministers will take stock of the progress made on the third review of the stability support programme for Greece. The Eurogroup will be debriefed on the post-programme surveillance mission to Cyprus and Spain. The ministers will hold a thematic discussion on jobs and growth, with a particular focus on the tax wedge. The meeting will include a discussion on the overall budgetary situation and prospects in the euro area as well as the [Commission's assessment of euro area Member States' Draft Budgetary Plans](#). The Eurogroup is scheduled to elect a new President and adopt its work programme for the first half of next year. Continuing the meeting in an "inclusive format" open to 27 Member States, ministers will prepare the Euro Summit that will take place on 15 December and exchange views on the key policy priorities and the progress towards deepening the [Economic and Monetary Union](#) (EMU). Commissioner **Moscovici** will participate in the press conference following the meeting. At tomorrow's ECOFIN meetings, Vice-President **Dombrovskis** and Commissioner **Moscovici** will represent the European Commission. At the ECOFIN breakfast meeting, [European Fiscal Board](#) Chairman Thygesen will present the Board's [2017 annual report](#). Ministers are due to come to a final decision on the countries that should be included on the [common EU list of non-cooperative tax jurisdictions](#). Member States are also expected to adopt the Commission's proposals [to make life easier when it comes to VAT](#) for businesses that sell goods online. To complete the taxation file, the Council should adopt conclusions on the way forward for the taxation of the digital economy following the [Commission's Communication on this issue in September](#). On the financial services front, ministers will discuss the state of play of discussions on the Banking Union, including the possible way forward suggested by the Commission in its October [Communication on Completing the Banking Union](#). Moreover, ministers will take stock of the progress achieved on the [comprehensive EU banking reform](#) package launched a year ago as part of the Commission's risk-reduction agenda. The Commission will present the [Annual Growth Survey 2018](#), the [Alert Mechanism Report 2018](#), and a [Recommendation for a Council Recommendation on the economic policy of the euro area](#). As [proposed by the Commission](#) the Council is expected to close the [excessive deficit procedure for the United Kingdom](#) as well as to find that Romania has failed to take effective action to correct a significant budgetary deviation, and to issue a new recommendation under the [significant deviation procedure](#). Vice-President **Dombrovskis** will participate in the press conference following the ECOFIN. *(For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Juliana Dahl – Tel.: +32 229 59914; Letizia Lupini – Tel.: +32 229 51958; Patrick McCullough – Tel.: +32 229 87183)*

R&D: les entreprises européennes augmentent leurs investissements plus rapidement que la moyenne mondiale

Les entreprises européennes ont augmenté de 7% leurs investissements dans la recherche et le développement (R&D) l'an dernier, soit un rythme nettement supérieur au taux moyen de croissance mondiale (5,8%). Les secteurs des TIC, de la santé et de l'automobile sont dans le trio de tête en termes de croissance des investissements en R&D dans l'UE, révèle encore le [tableau de bord de l'investissement industriel dans la R&D](#) de 2017, publié aujourd'hui par le Centre commun de recherche de la Commission (JRC). Tibor **Navracsics**, commissaire en charge de l'éducation, de la culture, de la jeunesse et du sport, et responsable du JRC, a déclaré: "Le tableau de bord montre que l'innovation est de nouveau en pleine effervescence en Europe. Pour maintenir l'avance de notre industrie, nous devons continuer à investir et à réformer nos systèmes d'éducation. Ce sont les piliers de l'économie de la connaissance et de la prospérité en Europe". Carlos **Moedas**, commissaire en charge de la recherche, de la science et de l'innovation, a ajouté: "Le tableau de bord montre que les entreprises européennes continuent d'être des acteurs majeurs de l'investissement en R&D, avec plus du quart du total des investissements mondiaux. Mais pour rester à la pointe de l'innovation, l'Europe doit s'assurer que de nouvelles entreprises renforcent cette tendance. C'est pourquoi nous soutiendrons les meilleures innovations grâce au projet pilote du Conseil européen de l'innovation d'Horizon 2020, notre programme de recherche et d'innovation." Les 2 500 principaux acteurs industriels mondiaux ont investi au total 741,6 milliards d'euros en 2016, dont 192,5 milliards ont été investis par 567 entreprises européennes. Selon le rapport, 2016 est la sixième année consécutive d'augmentations significatives des investissements mondiaux en R&D. Ce tableau de bord est publié chaque année depuis 2004 par le JRC et fournit des données économiques et financières sur les principaux investisseurs européens et mondiaux en R&D. Des chiffres plus détaillés sont disponibles [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Lucía Caudet – Tél.: +32 229 56182, Nathalie Vandystadt – Tél.: +32 229 56172, Victoria von Hammerstein – Tél.: +32 229 55040, Maud Noyon – Tél.: +32 229-80379; Joseph Waldstein – Tél.: +32 229 56184)

A gateway to knowledge on health: a tool to facilitate the implementation of health policies

Today, the European Commission is launching a [Knowledge Gateway on Health Promotion and Disease Prevention](#) to support the implementation of health policies across the EU. The web portal provides reliable, independent and up-to-date information on topics related to the promotion of health and the prevention of non-communicable diseases, such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes or cancer. Speaking at the launch event at the Commission's Joint Research Centre site in Ispra, Italy, Vytenis **Andriukaitis**, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, said: "People's dietary habits and lifestyle have an important impact on their health and quality of life. This is why I strongly encourage Member States and stakeholders to focus more on promoting good health. However, sometimes it can be complicated both for policy-makers and for the general public – we are so often presented with authoritative 'facts' on what constitutes good nutrition or proper physical activity and we have to navigate through a sea of misinformation, opinions, prejudices, and myths to find the truth. Hence, I am delighted to launch today the Health Promotion and Prevention Gateway a 'one-stop shop' for independent and reliable

information to help promote good health and prevent disease. I hope that it will become a reference point for public health policy-makers – in all sectors and at all levels – as well as a source of clear and reliable information for ordinary citizens.” Tibor **Navracsics**, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, responsible for the Joint Research Centre which co-developed the Knowledge Gateway, added: *“This tool was created with and for decision-makers in EU Member States working in the area of public health. Hundreds of research papers, multiple data sources and policy examples were digested and turned into short reference guides on key policy topics which summarise the most important facts for policy makers. The information is tailored to the needs of national policy making bodies and presented in a user-friendly format. This will help to formulate health policies based on rigorous and objective assessment criteria.”* The launch of the Gateway follows the call for a healthy lifestyle made in Tartu, Estonia, on 22 September, which sets out a roadmap for promoting healthy lifestyles in Europe, particular amongst children, over the next two years. (For more information: Anca Paduraru, Tel.: +32 2 299 12 69, Aikaterini Apostola, Tel.: +32 2 298 76 24, Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: +32 229 56184).

The EU supports Central America in the fight against organised crime

The Commission will announce today €20 million to improve cooperation on criminal investigations and the prosecution of cases of transnational crime and drug trafficking across Central America. The regional programme – known as ICRIME – aims to strengthen efforts to fight against cross-border organised crime and will support El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Belize, Costa Rica, and the Dominican Republic. Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development Neven **Mimica** said: *“Cross-border criminal activities are a major challenge for the economic development of Central America. The fight against organised crime concerns as all as criminal activities do not stop at borders. With this new regional action, the EU supports the Central American countries in their efforts to clamp down on transnational organised crime and strengthening regional integration”.* Commissioner Mimica will sign the financing agreement with the Secretary-General of the Central American Integration System, Mr Vinicio **Cerezo** today. The EU will contribute €20 million, while Spain and the Secretariat General of the Central American Integration System (SICA) will contribute €1 million and €500,000, respectively. The programme will help the countries involved in the programme to increase information sharing, use each other’s evidence, and coordinate operations on the ground. Therefore it will support criminal investigations and prosecution chains at different levels, focusing on transnational cooperation between the police, forensic institutes, prosecutors and the judiciary. More information will be available [here](#) at 15:00 today (For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz De Gordejuela, Tel.: +32 2 296 53 22, Christina Wunder, Tel.: +32 2 299 22 56)

Human Trafficking: Commission sets out priorities to step up EU action

Today, the European Commission has put forward a list of [concrete actions](#) to better prevent the trafficking in human beings. Building on the [EU strategy](#) and in light of recent migratory, economic and security challenges, the

priorities set out by the Commission today identify key areas that require immediate action from the EU and Member States to disrupt the modus operandi of traffickers, strengthen victims' rights and intensify internal and external efforts. Commissioner for Migration, Citizenship and Home Affairs Dimitris Avramopoulos said: "It is not acceptable that in the 21st century human beings are still being trafficked as commodities and exploited – not in Europe, not anywhere. Over the years the EU has developed legal and operational tools against this heinous crime. But more needs to be done as the migration crisis and transnational security threats have rendered people more vulnerable to criminal networks and exploitation. I call on all Member States to urgently step up their investigations and prosecutions against ruthless trafficking criminals, better protect the victims and fully apply the EU rules towards their protection. I also call on all to work more closely with international partners. Human trafficking is not just a European problem – we must do everything to eradicate it everywhere it happens." The Commission will monitor progress on the actions set out in the [Communication](#) presented today and report on progress to the European Parliament and the Council by the end of 2018. (For more information: Tove Ernst – Tel.: +32 229 86764; Kasia Kolanko – Tel.: +32 229 63444)

State aid: Commission endorses reform of Danish support scheme for the horseracing sector

The European Commission has approved the reform of a scheme supporting the horseracing sector in Denmark under EU State aid rules. The sector for horserace betting in Denmark is currently subject to a gambling monopoly but is being liberalised, which will allow the emergence of betting companies. Under the scheme, as of [1 January 2018](#), the horseracing sector will receive a share of the turnover of betting companies from horserace betting through an 8% levy. Currently, the horse racing sector is supported by a share of the revenue of games regulated under the Danish gambling monopoly and other contributions. This support will be gradually phased out by 2026. The Commission has endorsed the reformed scheme, because it recognises that it is essential for the improvement of horse breeding and horseracing without giving rise to undue distortions of competition. The scheme, and in particular the levy on betting companies, will also create a level playing field among betting operators. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number SA.48604. (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889)

Eurostat: Octobre 2017 comparé à septembre 2017 – Les prix à la production industrielle en hausse de 0,4% dans la zone euro et dans l'UE28

En octobre 2017 par rapport à septembre 2017, les prix à la production industrielle ont augmenté de 0,4% tant dans la zone euro (ZE19) que dans l'UE28, selon les estimations d'Eurostat, l'office statistique de l'Union européenne. En août 2017, les prix avaient crû de 0,5% dans les deux zones. En octobre 2017 par rapport à octobre 2016, les prix à la production industrielle ont progressé de 2,5% dans la zone euro et de 2,6% dans l'UE28.

Un communiqué de presse est disponible [ici](#). (Pour plus d'information: Lucía Caudet – Tel.: +32 229 56182; Victoria von Hammerstein – Tel.: +32 229 55040; Maud Noyon – Tel. +32 229-80379)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Hahn in visit to Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Johannes **Hahn**, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, is in Sarajevo, [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) today to reiterate the EU's engagement to support the country on its EU path and to discuss the implementation of the necessary reforms and measures. Commissioner **Hahn** will meet with key political representatives including the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Mr Denis Zvizdić, the Members of the Presidency, Mr Dragan Čović, and Mr Bakir Izetbegović, as well as representatives of all the main political parties who signed the Written Commitment to jointly pursue EU integration in February 2015. The Commissioner will also inaugurate of the new building hosting the State Prosecutor's Office in Sarajevo, which was funded by the EU. Ahead of this important visit, Commissioner **Hahn** said: *"The European Commission and Member States are deeply concerned about the lack of progress on necessary reforms so far in 2017. While the European Union is more committed than ever to support Bosnia and Herzegovina on its EU path political leaders both in government and in opposition seem more concerned with the usual nationalistic themes and talk about "crisis" instead of focusing on the real work at hand. In my meetings with the authorities I will stress that the Commission expects from Bosnia and Herzegovina's elected leaders to deliver on the Written Commitment they have undertaken in February 2015. The only way to move forward in the EU integration process is to achieve concrete results on reforms. This includes delivering on the Reform Agenda measures, create jobs, strengthening of rule of law and improving the quality and efficient of public administration. It also includes adopting the necessary country-wide strategies, such as on agriculture, in order to benefit from extensive EU financial assistance. This, instead of a divisive rhetoric, will contribute to move the country closer to the EU and, above all will directly benefit citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina."* Videos and photos of the visit will be available on [EBS](#). (For more information: Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Alceo Smerilli – Tel.: +32 229 64887)

Une mobilité propre, compétitive et connectée à l'agenda du Conseil Transports de demain

Violeta **Bulc**, Commissaire en charge des transports, représentera la Commission européenne lors de la réunion des 28 ministres européens des transports qui se tient demain à Bruxelles. Les ministres discuteront de plusieurs dossiers importants récemment présentés par la Commission. Cela inclut notamment les initiatives ["l'Europe en mouvement" du 31 mai](#) dont l'objectif est d'améliorer le fonctionnement du marché du transport de marchandises par route, de renforcer les conditions sociales et d'emploi des travailleurs et d'encourager une tarification routière intelligente. La [proposition de la Commission visant à préserver la concurrence dans le](#)

[domaine du transport aérien](#) figure également à l'agenda. Celle-ci vise à garantir une concurrence loyale entre les compagnies aériennes et le maintien de la connectivité de l'UE. La Commissaire Bulc présentera en outre aux ministres [les mesures prises par la Commission le 8 Novembre pour consolider le premier rang mondial de l'UE dans le domaine de la mobilité propre](#). Plus de renseignements sur le [site du Conseil](#). (*Plus information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Alexis Perier – Tel.: +32 229 [6 91 43](#)*)

Commissioner Vella at UN Environment Assembly “Towards a Pollution-free Planet” in Kenya, 4-5 December

Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Karmenu Vella will lead the EU Delegation at the third meeting of the [UN Environment Assembly](#) (UNEA). It will focus on the fight against pollution, and take place at United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Headquarters in Nairobi from 4 – 6 December, bringing together environment ministers, civil society and business from UN Member States. The European Union has announced [20 commitments](#) to tackle pollution in response to a call from UNEP.

Demonstrating EU leadership these voluntary commitments cover new policy initiatives on plastics and pharmaceuticals in water, measures to tackle marine litter and air pollution, as well as funding initiatives that invest in measures to tackle pollution in Europe and beyond. This is backed up by a proposal for a resolution from the EU and its Member States on environment and health covering the management of chemicals and waste, climate, biodiversity, antimicrobial resistance, and sustainable consumption and production. Commissioner Vella said: “An estimated [9 million people a year die from pollution worldwide](#). With our commitments we want to give a powerful message to the world that we are determined to beat pollution. The decisions at UNEA will be an important landmark. They will set the direction for all those engaged in the fight for a pollution-free world: governments, the private sector, scientists, civil society and individual citizens.” The EU is organising together with UN Environment a side event on the role of the Circular Economy towards a pollution-free planet. The event, opened by Commissioner Vella and closed by the Estonian Presidency, with the participation of Environment Ministers from China, Chile and South Africa, will contribute to frame global action on sustainable consumption and production, exploring how a circular economy can address resource constraints and generate economic opportunities. (*For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: + 32 229 56172; Iris Petsa – Tel.: +32 229 93321*)

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