

Daily News 04/08/2017

Migration: Commission awards €9.3 million in emergency funding to UNHCR to support refugees in Greece

The European Commission has awarded an additional €9.3 million in emergency assistance to UNHCR to provide targeted support to refugees and migrants in Greece. The grant, which will ensure continuity of services on the islands, covers activities including the provision of transportation, accommodation and auxiliary services to relocation candidates, protection and non-formal education for children (including support to a pilot guardianship network for unaccompanied minors), interpretation, core relief items and support for victims of sexual and gender-based violence and abuse. The overall amount of emergency funding allocated to the Greek authorities and international organisations operating in Greece now stands at €371.16 million, in addition to the €509.5 million allocated to Greece under the national programmes for the period 2014-2020. Overall, the European Union has mobilised over €1.3 billion of support (until 2020) to Greece to help manage migration and the external borders, through various kinds of funding. *(For more information: Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456; Kasia Kolanko – Tel.: +32 229 63444)*

L'UE intensifie son aide humanitaire au Mali et en République Centrafricaine

La Commission européenne a annoncé aujourd'hui l'octroi d'un soutien supplémentaire de 9 millions d'euros en réponse aux crises au Mali et en République Centrafricaine, portant l'assistance humanitaire de l'UE à l'Afrique Occidentale et Centrale à environ 254 millions d'euros depuis le début de l'année. Le commissaire chargé de l'aide humanitaire et de la gestion des crises, Christos **Stylianides** a déclaré à ce sujet: *"Les conflits au Mali et en République Centrafricaine continuent de générer beaucoup de souffrance parmi les personnes qui sont contraintes de fuir leur pays. L'UE s'engage à les aider. Aujourd'hui, nous renforçons notre soutien humanitaire pour sauver des vies dans ces deux pays. Cette aide va contribuer à pourvoir des biens de première nécessité tels que de la nourriture et des médicaments aux populations, et soutenir les organisations humanitaires qui travaillent dans les zones touchées par les conflits."* Cette enveloppe de 9 millions d'euros comprend deux volets: 5,5 millions d'euros seront attribués aux besoins urgents des populations affectées par la crise en République Centrafricaine; 3,5 millions d'euros vont aider à répondre à la situation préoccupante du Nord et du centre du Mali ainsi que dans les régions voisines du Burkina Faso et de la Mauritanie. L'UE et ses Etats-membres sont les principaux donateurs d'aide humanitaire en Afrique avec 1,5 milliards d'euros pourvus par la Commission ces deux dernières années. Plus de détails sont disponibles [ici](#). *(pour plus d'information: Carlos Martin Ruiz De Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)*

EU assists Albania in fighting forest fires

The European Commission has helped mobilise two firefighting planes from Greece through the [EU's Civil Protection Mechanism](#), following a request for assistance from Albania to battle forest fires in the country. In addition, the EU's emergency [Copernicus Satellite mapping system](#) has also been activated to help the Albanian civil protection authorities. *"The European Union stands in full solidarity with Albania at this time of need. Our thoughts are with all those affected and the local first responders working to tackle the blazes. I thank Greece for this concrete expression of European solidarity. The planes have been operating in the affected areas and will continue to do so today,"* said Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides**. The Commission's [Emergency Response Coordination Centre](#) is closely monitoring the situation in Albania and the forest fire risk across Europe. [Photos](#) and [video](#) stockshots of the Emergency Centre are available, as well as a [MEMO](#) 'Fighting forest fires in Europe – how it works'. *(For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz De Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)*

Commission launched consultation on EU initiative to develop Europe's supercomputers

With the aim of creating a European initiative on [high performance computing](#), the Commission launched yesterday afternoon a consultation calling for opinions on the future development of supercomputing. The results of the consultation will help support the development of the next generation computing and data infrastructure in Europe. High performance computing carries enormous potential for science, society, and investment in the European Union because of its ability to analyse vast quantities of data in real time. It can effectively address societal and scientific challenges in areas such as the development of personalised medicine, decoding the human brain, forecasting climate change and mitigating large-scale industrial and natural disasters. In the 2017 [Mid-Term Review](#) of the Digital Single Market Strategy and in the 2016 [European Cloud Initiative](#), the Commission announced proposals for a European high performance computing initiative, underlining it as crucial element for the future of European research and industry. Major investments are needed to develop the next generation of supercomputers. It is therefore essential that EU Member States, the public and private sectors join forces through a European initiative. Support for the development of an integrated world-class high performance computing and data infrastructure in Europe was boosted this year by the 'EuroHPC' Declaration signed by nine EU Member States so far: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain. All other Member States are invited to sign the declaration. The consultation runs until 5 September 2017. The results will be used to prepare the European high performance computing initiative. The Commission intends to adopt the initiative in 2018. Everyone interested – academic and researchers, private and public sector representatives and associations – can participate in the consultation [here](#). More information is available [online](#). *(For more information: Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Julia Bräuer – Tel.: +32 229 80707)*

Commission launches consultation to help law enforcements to combat crime in

the digital age

Today the European Commission is launching a public consultation on improving cross-border access to electronic evidence. Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, Vera **Jourová**, already presented three legislative options to improve access to e-evidence at the last Justice Council (8/06). Based on the discussion between Justice Ministers and input of the public, the Commission will prepare a legislative proposal.

Commissioner **Jourová** said: *"It is our duty to keep Europeans safe and make sure that criminals are brought to justice. Crime knows no borders, criminal investigations often do. We will change that. The online world cannot serve as safe haven for criminals."* Crime often leaves digital traces that can serve as valuable evidence in criminal proceedings and provide significant leads for investigators. E-evidence could include subscriber information, traffic or metadata as well as content data, for the purpose of criminal investigations. Although the procedures for gathering this type of electronic evidence are usually defined at national level, obtaining electronic evidence frequently has cross-border implications. Present-day solutions often prove unsatisfactory and can even bring investigations to a halt. The consultation is available [here](#) and will be open until 27 October 2017. (For more information: Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Sara Soumilion – Tel.: + 32 229 67094)

State aid: Commission concludes Dutch state guarantee to finance shipping companies involves no aid

The European Commission has found that a Dutch state guarantee to support the availability of credit for small and medium-sized ship-owners involves no State aid within the meaning of the EU rules. The State guarantee will be granted to the NESEC Shipping Debt Fund ("NSDF"), still to be established. NSDF intends to provide senior secured finance for small and medium-sized ship-owners active in the regional shipping sector. Thereby it will address the financing bottleneck that has arisen since the financial crisis. The NSDF intends to lend approximately €250 million to ship-owners, which it plans to raise from institutional investors. The Dutch State will guarantee up to 80% of the funding from these investors for a period of seven years, with a possibility to prolong the guarantee by two additional years. The Commission found guarantee will give the Dutch State an appropriate remuneration in line with market conditions. The Commission therefore concluded that the guarantee does not constitute State aid to the NSDF. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the [public case register](#), under the case number SA.46664. (For more information: Daniel Rosario – Tel.: + 32 229 56185; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of joint control over Hobas Europe by Wietersdorfer and Amiantit

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over Hobas Europe of Austria by Wietersdorfer of Austria and Amiantit of Saudi Arabia. Both Wietersdorfer and Amiantit are

active in the manufacture and sale of pipes and pipe systems in Europe and worldwide. Hobas Europe, an existing subsidiary of Wietersdorfer, will operate Wietersdorfer's and Amiantit's European businesses in the manufacture and sale of fibre glass reinforced plastic (GRP) pipes and pipe systems. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because the merged entity will continue competing with other GRP pipes manufacturers, as well as manufacturers of pipes of other materials that are used for the same applications. The operation was examined under the normal merger review procedure. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the [public case register](#) under the case number [M.8356](#). *(For more information: Daniel Rosario – Tel.: + 32 229 56185; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini in Manila for EU-ASEAN Ministerial and ASEAN Regional Forum

From Sunday 6 to Tuesday 8 August, the High Representative/Vice-President, Federica **Mogherini**, will be in the Philippines for a visit focussed on the European Union's relations with the Association of South East-Asian Nations (ASEAN). The situation in the Korean Peninsula, the South China Sea, counter-terrorism and climate action, and other regional and international issues will be high on the agenda. On Sunday 6 August, the High Representative/Vice-President will co-chair the annual EU-ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference, which this year marks 40 years of partnership between the two blocs. On Monday 7 and Tuesday 8 August, HR/VP **Mogherini** will represent the European Union at the [ASEAN Regional Forum](#), which brings together 27 participants in total, including the ten ASEAN countries, the European Union and countries such as Australia, Canada, China, India, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Russia and the United States. While in Manila, High Representative **Mogherini** will have a number of bilateral meetings, including notably with the Foreign Minister of Australia, Julie Bishop, with whom she will sign the EU-Australia Framework Agreement. Coverage of the visit will be available on [EbS](#). For more information on EU-ASEAN relations, see the [factsheet](#), and for information on the ASEAN Regional Forum, visit the [website](#). *(For more information: Catherine Ray – Tel.: + 32 229 69921; Adam Kaznowski – Tel.: +32 229 89359; Lauranne Devillé – Tel.: +32 229 80833)*

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