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Cohesion Policy upgrades road networks and wastewater systems in Hungary

The Cohesion Fund is investing €218.5 million in two projects in Hungary. €203.5 million will finance the construction of a section of the M8 expressway in the country, which will contribute to better connecting Hungary and Graz, in Austria. €15 million will help improve the wastewater collection systems in Budapest and the city of Budaors. Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina **Crețu** said: *“These two Cohesion Policy projects clearly show the added value of the EU in Hungary. With major investments in road and water infrastructure, the EU is actively working to boost regional development and growth in the country, while improving the citizens’ everyday lives.”* The M8 expressway project will better link the Hungarian Vas region with the Austrian state of Burgenland. It will contribute to completing the core Trans-European Transport Network. The road should be completed in 2021. Then, some 33,000 people will benefit from an improved wastewater system in Budapest and Budaors, with 1,410 homes newly connected to the network. This project, in which the EU already invested €61 million in the previous EU budget period, should be operational in June 2020. For the period 2014-2020, the EU is investing €25 billion worth of European Structural and Investment Funds in the country, i.e. an average of €2,532 per Hungarian over the 7-year period. (For more information: Christian Spahr – Tel.: +32 2 295 00 55; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)

Foreign Investment Screening: new European framework to enter into force in April 2019

Today the Council of the EU approved a new framework to screen foreign direct investments coming into the European Union, thus concluding the legislative process. Based on a Commission proposal presented by President Juncker in his 2017 State of the Union Address, the new framework will help safeguarding Europe’s security, public order and strategic interests. In reaction to the Council’s decision President Jean-Claude **Juncker** said: *“Today’s decision is a proof the EU is able to act quickly when strategic interests of our citizens and economy are at stake. I committed to work for a Europe that protects, in trade as in other areas; with this new legislation in place we are delivering on a crucial part of our promise.”* Commissioner for Trade Cecilia **Malmström** said: *“I’m very pleased with the Council’s decision today. The EU gains a lot from foreign investment and it plays a vital role in our economies. However, we have seen a recent increase in investment in our strategic sectors and this has led to a healthy public debate on the issue. With this new framework we are in a much better position to monitor foreign investments and safeguard our interests. I now look forward to working closely with Member States to implement this new legislation effectively.”* Following today’s approval by Member States in the Council and the [positive vote by the European Parliament](#) on 14 February, the new EU legislation establishing an EU-wide investment screening framework is now set to enter into force in the coming weeks. For more information see the [press release](#) and a [factsheet](#) presenting the new framework. (For more information: Daniel Rosario – Tel.: +32 229 56185; Kinga

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Roundtable with EU Mayors: ensuring gender equality in our cities

Ahead of the International Women's Day, on 7 March Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina Crețu is hosting a roundtable on gender equality in cities. Women only account for 15% of all EU mayors today. Enabling women to take public office positions can challenge the structural power dynamics that perpetuate gender inequality and can ultimately improve the everyday life of citizens. The roundtable will therefore focus on ways to ensure gender equality at local level. It will gather Maimunah Mohd Sharif, UN-Habitat Executive Director, Yordanka Asenova Fandakova, Mayor of Sofia (BG), Marie-Louise Rönmark, Mayor of Umeå (SE), Marta Mazurek, City councillor of Poznań (PL), Maria Stratigaki, Vice-Mayor of Athens (EL), Geneviève Letourneux, Vice President of the Rennes Metropolis (FR), Barbara Hackenschmidt, Member of the State Parliament of Brandenburg (DE), Ibon Uribe, Mayor of Galdakao (ES), Djida Techtach, Vice-Mayor of Villiers-le-Bel (FR), Carola Gunnarsson, Lord Mayor of Sala (SE), Sirpa Hertell, City Councillor of Espoo (FI), as well as Tamar Taliashvili, Member of the Tbilisi Assembly in Georgia. Discussions will focus in particular on innovative practices in equitable urban planning and governance and on how cities can take the lead to support gender equality. They will be based on three reports: one on "[Gender Equal Cities](#)" financed by the Commission under the [URBACT programme](#), the "[Regional Gender Equality Monitor](#)" report, developed by the Commission's department for Regional and Urban policy and the Joint Research Center and UN-Habitat's [Gender Equality Enhancer](#) report. The roundtable, which will take place in the Commission's Berlaymont building, is open to accredited journalists. If you wish to register, please send an email to sophie.dupin-de-saint-cyr@ec.europa.eu (For more information: Christian Spahr – Tel.: +32 2 295 00 55; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)

Antitrust: Commission fines car safety equipment suppliers € 368 million in cartel settlement

The European Commission has fined Autoliv and TRW a total of € 368 277 000 for breaching EU antitrust rules. Autoliv, TRW and Takata took part in two cartels for the supply of car seatbelts, airbags and steering wheels to European car producers. All three suppliers acknowledged their involvement in the cartels and agreed to settle the case. Takata received full immunity for revealing the two cartels. Autoliv and TRW benefited from reductions of their fines for their cooperation with the Commission investigation. The three car equipment suppliers addressed in this decision exchanged commercially sensitive information and coordinated their market behaviour for the supply of seatbelts, airbags and steering wheels to the Volkswagen Group and the BMW Group. The cartel is likely to have had a significant effect on European customers, since the customers affected by the cartel, the Volkswagen Group and the BMW Group sell around three of every ten cars bought in Europe. Commissioner Margrethe Vestager, in charge of competition policy said: "This is the second time we fine car safety equipment suppliers for participating in a cartel. Components such as seatbelts and airbags are essential for the safety of the millions of people that use their car to drive to work or take their children to school every day. The three suppliers colluded to increase

their profits from the sale of these life-saving components. These cartels ultimately hurt European consumers and adversely impacted the competitiveness of the European automotive sector, which employs around 13 million people in the EU.” The full press release is available online in [EN](#), [FR](#), [DE](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Viseu car park assets by Saba Portugal and Egis Portugal

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of car park assets located in Viseu (Portugal) by Saba Portugal – Parques de Estacionamento, S.A. (“Saba Portugal”) and Egis Road Operation Portugal, S.A. (“Egis Portugal”), both of Portugal. The Viseu car park assets consist of six car parks and the regulated parking zone, in the municipality of Viseu. Saba Portugal is a company specialised in the operation, maintenance and conservation of car parks and regulated areas (on-street parking). Egis Portugal is specialised in the operation and maintenance of road infrastructures including the electronic and electrical equipment to support those activities. 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 [case register](#) under the case number [M.9083](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Eurostat: Le volume des ventes du commerce de détail en hausse de 1,3% dans la zone euro, hausse de 1,1% dans l’UE28

En janvier 2019 par rapport à décembre 2018, le volume des ventes du commerce de détail corrigé des variations saisonnières a augmenté de 1,3% dans la zone euro (ZE19) et de 1,1% dans l’UE28, selon les estimations d’Eurostat, l’office statistique de l’Union européenne. En décembre 2018, le commerce de détail avait diminué de 1,4% dans la zone euro et de 1,3% dans l’UE28. En janvier 2019 par rapport à janvier 2018, l’indice corrigé des effets de calendrier des ventes de détail a augmenté de 2,2% dans la zone euro et de 2,5% 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-Gesmold – Tél.: +32 229 55040)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Circular Economy: Stakeholder conference takes stock of progress made since 2015

The annual [Circular Economy Stakeholder Conference](#) is taking place in Brussels tomorrow and on Thursday (6 and 7 March). Day 1, hosted by the European Commission and opened by First Vice-President **Timmermans**, Commissioner **Vella**, and Commissioner **Bieńkowska** (via a video message), will explore the [Circular Economy Action Plan](#), taking stock of its [implementation](#). All 54 measures under the plan launched in 2015 have now been delivered or

are being implemented. The speakers at the conference will look at policies to capitalise on the current global momentum, broadening the debate to consider the circular economy as an enabler to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. The day will conclude with an intervention by Vice-President **Katainen** looking ahead at 'what's next' for the circular economy. The Commission also released today the [report "A circular economy for plastics: Insights from research and innovation to inform policy and funding decisions"](#), which describes the current state of play of plastics in the economy, challenges and knowledge gaps, and policy recommendations and priorities for Research and Innovation (R&I) in plastics, drawn up by experts and stakeholder groups. In addition to further support ideas and projects reducing plastic waste and littering, this year's edition of the [Commission's Social Innovation Competition](#) focuses on challenging plastic waste. The 2019 competition was launched on 28 February and applications are open until 4 April noon CET. Three winning projects will each win €50,000. (*For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: + 32 229 56172; Lucía Caudet – Tel.: +32 229-56182; Daniela Stoycheva – Tel.: +32 229 53664; Mirna Talko – Tel.: +32 229 87278*)

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