

Daily News 06 / 04 / 2017

Juncker Plan now set to trigger more than EUR 183 billion in investments across all 28 Member States

Following this week's meeting of the European Investment Bank's Board of Directors, the [Juncker Plan](#) is now expected to trigger more than EUR 183 billion in investments. This comes under two years after the **Juncker** Commission launched the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) at the heart of the Plan and represents well over half of the EUR 315 billion target of total investments mobilised that was originally earmarked. The operations approved under the EFSI represent a total financing volume of just under EUR 34 billion and are located in all 28 Member States. The EIB has now approved 206 EFSI-backed infrastructure projects worth over EUR 25 billion. The European Investment Fund (EIF) has approved 271 SME financing agreements, with total financing under the EFSI of almost EUR 9 billion. Over 425,000 SMEs and Midcaps are expected to benefit from these agreements. President **Juncker** has made it clear that the [proposal to extend and reinforce the EFSI](#) (the so-called "EFSI 2.0") is among the Commission's top legislative priorities and looks forward to continuing to work closely with co-legislators to ensure its swift adoption. The European Council has already welcomed an [agreement by EU Finance Ministers](#) to give their backing to the proposal and called for the extension to be adopted by the co-legislators. (For more information: Annika Breidhardt – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Enda McNamara – Tel.: +32 229 64976)

Reconfirmed commitment at the Brussels Conference Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region

Yesterday the European Union, Germany, Kuwait, Norway, Qatar, the United Kingdom and the United Nations co-chaired the [Brussels Conference Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region](#). The Conference brought together over 70 countries, international organisations and civil society, that collectively committed to continued engagement and support for Syria and the region. High Representative/Vice President Federica **Mogherini** said "*The international community is committed – today re-commits – to working together to support a peaceful future for Syria and all Syrians in a sovereign, independent, unitary and territorially integral country where all Syrians will be able to live in peace and security. We committed to work for a sustainable inclusive peace while addressing the urgent humanitarian needs inside Syria and supporting the work for neighbouring countries in hosting over five million refugees*". The Conference concluded with Commissioner **Stylianides** [announcing](#) the global commitment of €5.6 billion for 2017, of which €3.7 billion is from the EU and Member States, including €1.275 billion from the European Commission for both humanitarian and resilience support, which reconfirmed the commitment made in London. The European Commission pledged an additional €560 million for 2018 for inside Syria, Jordan and Lebanon, thus maintaining the level of its engagement. The co-chairs,

supported by all participants, adopted a [Joint Declaration](#), including specific annexes on supporting the resilience of host countries and refugees in the context of the Syrian crisis for [Jordan](#) and for [Lebanon](#) and of the [pledging made](#). It reflects the breadth of the continued international community's engagement for Syria for the coming years. This includes both significant political and financial support and will be accompanied by continued coordinated and collective efforts for securing a peaceful future for Syrians and stability in the region. The Conference, with its thematic sessions on [humanitarian](#) and [resilience support](#) to Syrians and hosting communities in neighbouring countries, as well as meeting with [civil society representatives](#) has demonstrated that reaching a political solution to the Syria crisis and meeting needs of the most affected by the crisis is a priority for the European Union and the international community at large. The Conference reconfirmed political impetus, as well as international and regional support and engagement for Syrians today and in the future. Footage of both [Day One](#) and [Day Two](#) of the Conference [here](#). Main results available [here](#). For more information on the Conference, visit the [website](#). For more information on EU response to the Syria crisis, see [here](#). (For more information: Nabila Massrali – Tel.: + 32 229-69218; Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Carlos Martin Ruiz de Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322 ; Lauranne Devillé – Tel.: +32 229-80833; Alceo Smerilli– Tel.: + 32 229 64887; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.:+32 229 69140)

End of roaming charges: European Parliament approves wholesale roaming prices

Today the European Parliament voted on how to regulate wholesale roaming markets, formally approving the [agreement](#) on wholesale caps reached between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission at the beginning of the year. Welcoming the vote, Andrus **Ansip**, Vice-President for the Digital Single Market said: "As of 15 June 2017 people will be able to switch on mobile services, especially data, without fear of high bills while travelling in the EU. This is a great achievement for all of us. Notwithstanding the final OK from Member States, this agreement on wholesale roaming prices will be the final step to end roaming charges for all travellers in the EU. After nearly ten years, the EU is now putting a definitive end to the roaming anxiety that has plagued Europe since the beginning of the mobile era. Exorbitant roaming prices were an anomaly in a continent where people move freely between countries." The Vice-President's full statement is available [here](#). The political agreement was the final step to make roam like at home work as of 15 June 2017, as foreseen in the [Telecom Single Market \(TSM\) Regulation](#). It means that when travelling in the EU, consumers will be able to call, send SMS or surf on their mobile at the same price they pay at home. More details on end of roaming charges are available in the [frequently asked questions for consumers](#) as well as in the detailed [MEMO and factsheets](#). (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Inga Höglund – Tel.: +32 229 50698)

Commission imposes anti-dumping duties on hot-rolled flat steel from China

The Commission decided today to impose definitive anti-dumping duties on imports of hot-rolled flat steel products from China. The Commission's investigation confirmed that these products had been sold in Europe at heavily dumped prices. The new antidumping duties range between 18.1% and 35.9%, and are higher than the provisional measures already in place since October. These measures will shield the EU steel producers from the damaging effects of Chinese dumping during an initial period of five years. Hot-rolled flat steel is commonly used for the production of steel tubes to be used in construction, and for shipbuilding, gas containers, cars, pressure vessels, and energy pipelines. The EU currently has an unprecedented number of trade defence measures in place targeting unfair exports of steel products from third countries, with a total of 41 anti-dumping and anti-subsidy measures, 18 of which on products originating from China. The Commission has been using the available toolbox of trade defence instruments to the full extent possible, while seeking the approval of Member States and the European Parliament for [its proposals](#) to make these instruments better suited to the current reality of international trade. In addition to that, the EU is tackling the root causes of overcapacity in the global steel industry through active involvement in the [Global Forum on Steel Excess Capacity](#) launched last December and through bilateral dialogue with the relevant partners. More information is available in today's [EU official journal](#). (For more information: Daniel Rosario – Tel.: + 32 229 56185; Axel Fougner – Tel.: +32 229 57276)

Antitrust: Commission publishes report on online hotel booking

The European Commission and ten national competition authorities today published a report on competition in the online hotel booking sector. The report presents the results of a coordinated monitoring exercise carried out by the Belgian, Czech, French, German, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Dutch, Swedish and UK national competition authorities and the European Commission during 2016. The purpose of the exercise was to assess the effects of the antitrust enforcement measures adopted in recent years in this sector, which have led to changes to the so-called 'wide parity clauses' used by online travel agents in their contracts with hotels. These clauses force hotels to give the online travel agent the lowest room prices and best room availability relative to all other sales channels. On the other hand, 'narrow parity clauses' allow hotels to offer lower room prices and better room availability on other online travel agents and offline sales channels, but still prevent hotels from publishing lower room prices on their own websites. The monitoring exercise covered various aspects of the way hotels market and sell their rooms, focusing on room price and room availability differentiation by hotels between sales channels and online travel agent commission rates. The participating authorities sent questionnaires to a sample of 16,000 hotels in the ten Member States, 20 online travel agents, 11 metasearch websites and 19 large hotel chains. The results of the exercise suggest that measures applied to the parity clauses, namely (a) allowing large online travel agents to use narrow parity clauses, and (b) prohibiting online travel agents from using them altogether, have generally improved conditions for competition and led to more choice for consumers. Based on the results, the European Competition Network (comprising the national

competition authorities of all EU Member States and the European Commission) has agreed to keep the online hotel booking sector under review and to re-assess the competitive situation in due course. This will allow the sector more time to make full use of the measures that have already been taken. New enforcement actions or market investigations in the online hotel booking sector will be closely coordinated within the European Competition Network. The report is available at [DG COMP's webpage](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Concentrations: la Commission autorise l'acquisition du contrôle conjoint de trois sociétés françaises par le Groupe Crédit Mutuel et BNP Paribas

La Commission européenne a approuvé, en vertu du règlement européen sur les concentrations, l'acquisition du contrôle conjoint de trois sociétés françaises, Fivory SA, Fivory SAS et RMW, par le Groupe Crédit Mutuel et BNP Paribas, aussi françaises. Fivory SA, Fivory SAS et RMW fournissent des services de portefeuille mobile électronique en France. Le Groupe Crédit Mutuel est un fournisseur de services bancaires et financiers, principalement en France. BNP Paribas fournit ces mêmes services dans le monde entier. La Commission a conclu que l'opération envisagée ne soulèverait aucun problème de concurrence compte tenu des faibles parts de marché cumulées des trois sociétés et de leur chiffre d'affaires actuellement négligeable. La transaction a été examinée dans le cadre de la procédure simplifiée du contrôle des concentrations. De plus amples informations sont disponibles sur le site internet [concurrence](#) la Commission, dans le [registre public](#) des affaires, sous le numéro d'affaire [M.8389](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Keepmoat Regeneration Holdings by ENGIE

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of Keepmoat Regeneration Holdings Limited ("KRHL") by ENGIE Services Holding UK Limited ("ESHUL"), both of the United Kingdom. KRHL provides integrated affordable housing development and community regeneration services in the United Kingdom. ESHUL is one of the business divisions of the ENGIE group which is active in the provision of facilities management including energy services, designing and implementing solutions. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would not raise competition concerns, because of the limited overlaps 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.8412](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Preparation of the Eurogroup and informal ECOFIN meetings, Valletta 7-8 April 2017

Vice-President **Dombrovskis** and Commissioner **Moscovici** will represent the

European Commission on 7-8 April at the Eurogroup and informal ECOFIN Council meetings in Valletta. At tomorrow's Eurogroup, Ministers will take stock of progress in the second review of the stability support programme for Greece. The Chairs of the European Central Bank's (ECB) Supervisory Board and the Single Resolution Board (SRB) will update Ministers on the implementation of their tasks. As part of the thematic discussions on jobs and growth, the Eurogroup will hold a second round of discussions on investment in the euro area. As usual, the Eurogroup will also take stock of exchange rate developments over the past months in view of upcoming international meetings. Finally, the European Commission and the ECB will orally debrief Ministers on the main findings of the second post-programme surveillance [mission to Cyprus](#) carried out between 27-31 March. Commissioner **Moscovici** will participate in the press conference following the Eurogroup meeting. On Friday, EU Ministers will exchange views during a working lunch on the future of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). In the afternoon, the Commission along with EU Ministers and Central Bank Governors will explore how to tackle non-performing loans in the European banking sector. On Saturday, Ministers will discuss how to encourage further private investment in North Africa and beyond, given the importance of these neighbouring regions to the EU. In the final working session on Saturday, the ECOFIN will look at ways to improve tax certainty in order to boost EU's attractiveness for businesses and investors. Vice-President **Dombrovskis** will participate in the two press conferences following the ECOFIN sessions on 7 and 8 April. (For more information: Annika Breidhardt – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Vanessa Mock – Tel.: +32 229 64976; Corentin Cassiers – Tel.: +32 229 53208; Letizia Lupini – Tel.: +32 229 51958)

Commission welcomes adoption of new EU rules on medical devices

The European Commission welcomes the coming into law of two new Regulations on medical devices which will ensure better protection of public health and patient safety. The new Regulations on medical and in-vitro diagnostic medical devices were proposed by the Commission in 2012 and adopted yesterday by wide majority votes in the European Parliament. Elżbieta **Bieńkowska**, Commissioner for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, said: "I'm extremely happy that our push for stricter controls of medical devices on the EU market will now become a reality. Whether for medical devices, cars or other products, we must ensure stronger supervision in the interest of our citizens. We should not wait for another scandal to strengthen European oversight over Member States' market surveillance activities." To ensure that all medical devices – from heart valves to sticking plasters to artificial hips – are safe and perform well, the new rules will improve market surveillance and traceability. The rules will also provide more transparency and legal certainty for producers, manufacturers and importers and help to strengthen international competitiveness and innovation in this strategic sector. As the legislative procedure is now closed, the new rules will now start to apply 3 years after publication of the Regulation for medical devices and 5 years after publication or in vitro diagnostic medical devices. A [press release](#), [MEMO](#) and [factsheet](#) are available online. (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 2 298 01 00; Mirna Talko – Tel.: +32 229 87278; Maud Noyon – Tel.: +32 229 80379)

Report shows evidence of blue economy achievements and potential in the EU

Less than five years since the adoption of the [EU's Blue Growth Strategy](#), the development of the EU's blue economy is tangible. 50% of tidal energy and about 60% of wave energy developers are located in the EU. Medical science has at least 15 novel compounds obtained from the sea to treat, among others, cancer and Alzheimer's disease. Sea-floor maps developed are being used to forecast storms and save lives. The production value of seafood farmed in the EU is up 40% in the past decade and the cruise industries are also on the rise. Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Karmenu **Vella** said: *"If sustainably managed, the oceans offer great potential for new jobs and growth in the EU and beyond. This report shows how the EU and its Member States are removing obstacles to the growth of this promising sector while safeguarding the highest environmental standards."* The [Report on the Blue Growth Strategy – Towards more sustainable growth and jobs in the blue economy](#) takes stock of developments in the blue economy, lists the achievements of the EU's Blue Growth Strategy and identifies remaining obstacles. It will inform the Ministerial Declaration on Blue Growth to be adopted at the [Informal Ministerial Conference on Blue Growth in Malta](#) on 20 April. More information [here](#). (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Iris Petsa – Tel.: + 32 229 93321)

New psychoactive substances: Commission proposes to submit acryloylfentanyl to control measures across the EU

Today, the European Commission has proposed to subject the new psychoactive substance acryloylfentanyl to control measures across the European Union. According to the risk assessment report provided by the [European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction \(EMCDDA\)](#), acryloylfentanyl is a synthetic and potent opioid which may be easily abused and could lead to dependence. The substance is sold as a "research chemical", typically as powder and ready-to-use nasal sprays, and can cause severe harm to health. So far, 47 deaths associated with acryloylfentanyl have been reported by 3 Member States, in addition to more than 20 acute intoxications. Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris **Avramopoulos** said: *"The number, type and availability of harmful new drugs are constantly evolving and their spread across Europe cannot be effectively addressed by Member States on their own. Our proposal to make sure one more new substance undergoes adequate control measures across the EU is part of our efforts to put in place the right safeguards and support Member States in their fight against the rise of these very dangerous substances."* The Commission's [proposal](#) will now be discussed by the Member States in the Council, which, in consultation with the European Parliament, will decide whether to adopt the measures. (For more information: Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456 ; Tove Ernst – Tel.: +32 229 86764; Katarzyna Kolanko – Tel.: +32 229 63444)

Agriculture: the Commission approves new geographical indication from Romania

The Commission has approved today the addition of a new product from Romania to the quality register of Protected Geographical Indication (PGI). The [‘Novac afumat din Tara Bârsei’](#) is a smoked fish fillet obtained from the bighead carp species. The bighead carp is reared for three years in fish farms located in the central-eastern municipalities of Romania: Dumbrăvița, Feldioara, Hălchiu, Bod and Hărman. In this mountainous region, the water running in the rivers is clear and provides an optimal habitat for the bighead carp. To create the product, salting and hot smoking techniques from the ancient times are applied. Most of the production stages are still carried-out by hand and therefore require experience and know-how of local people. As a final product the smoked fish fillet is characterized by a low fat content and a golden skin. The new denomination will be added to the list of 1,390 products already protected. More information: webpage on [quality products](#) and [DOOR database](#) of protected products. *(For more information: Daniel Rosario – Tel.: +32 229 56185; Clémence Robin – Tel: +32 229 52509)*

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of five European infrastructure companies by 3i, APG and ATP.

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of joint control over a portfolio of five European infrastructure companies (‘target companies’) by the 3i Group plc (3i) of the UK, APG Asset Management N.V. (APG) of the Netherlands and Arbejdsmarkedets Tillægspension (ATP) of Denmark. The target companies include: i) Belfast City Airport Limited, airport in the UK; ii) ESP Utilities Group Limited, owner and operator of gas and electricity networks in the UK; iii) Herambiente S.p.A., a company providing waste treatment facilities in Italy; iv) Concesiones de Intercambiadores de Transporte S.L., a company operating two bus terminals in Spain and v) Autovias de Peaje en Sombra S.L., a company operating two shadow toll road concessions also in Spain. 3i is an international investor and investment management business, specialising in core investments markets in Europe and North America. APG is the asset management business unit of APG Group, a collective pension scheme provider. ATP is one of Europe’s largest pension providers and Denmark’s largest lifelong pension plan. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would not raise competition concerns given the transaction’s limited impact on the market structure. 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.8293](#). *(For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)*

EUROSTAT: Les coûts horaires de la main-d’œuvre compris en 2016 entre 4,4 € et 42,0 € selon les États membres

En 2016, les coûts horaires de la main-d’œuvre dans l’ensemble de l’économie (hors agriculture et administration publique) ont été estimés en moyenne à 25,4€ dans l’Union européenne (UE) et à 29,8€ dans la zone euro. Toutefois, ces moyennes masquent des écarts importants entre États membres de l’UE, les

coûts horaires de la main-d'œuvre les plus faibles ayant été enregistrés en Bulgarie (4,4€), en Roumanie (5,5€), en Lituanie (7,3€), en Lettonie (7,5€), en Hongrie (8,3€) ainsi qu'en Pologne (8,6€), et les plus élevés au Danemark (42,0€), en Belgique (39,2€), en Suède (38,0€), au Luxembourg (36,6€) et en France (35,6€). Un communiqué de presse est disponible [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Christian Wigand– Tel.: +32 229 62253; Sara Soumillion – Tel.: + 32 229 67094)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

European Commission hands awards to 28 Europe's best young translators in the 10th annual translation contest 'Juvenes Translatores'

European Commissioner for Budget and Human Resources, Günther H. **Oettinger**, awards a trophy and a diploma to the [28 winners](#) of the European Commission's annual translation contest '[Juvenes Translatores](#)' today. The 28 secondary school students, one from each Member State, won in a competition with over 3 240 participants from 728 schools across the continent. They all translated a one-page text on the subjects of languages and translation. The participants could choose from any of the 552 possible combinations between any two of the EU's 24 official languages. This year, students used 152 language combinations, including translating from Greek into Latvian and from Bulgarian into Portuguese. All winners chose to translate into their strongest language or mother tongue, as the official translators in EU Institutions do. The translations were checked by the Commission's in-house translators. '[Juvenes Translatores](#)' (Latin for 'young translators') is a competition to reward the best young translators in the EU. The Commission's Translation department has been organising the contest every year since 2007 to promote language learning in schools and give young people a taste of what it is like to be a translator. The award ceremony will be [live streamed](#) and the names of the winners are available [online](#). (For more information: Alexander Winterstein: Tel.: +32 229 93265; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

Commissioner Navracsics opens University-Business Forum in Brussels

This morning, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor **Navracsics**, opened the [7th University-Business Forum](#) in Brussels. He was joined by Mr Evarist Bartolo, Minister of Education and Employment of Malta. Bringing together representatives of academia and business as well as policy-makers from across the EU and beyond, the Forum provides a platform for discussion on a number of topics pertinent to higher education and the world of work. Commissioner **Navracsics** said: "Business and higher education need to cooperate to help young people acquire the skills and competences that will be the basis of our future economic growth and competitiveness. The University-Business Forum helps break down barriers between those two worlds by promoting the sharing of good practice, driving innovation and inspiring action. "This year's event, which concludes tomorrow, focuses on the extent

to which qualifications meet the skills employers need, the role of higher education in regional development and its importance for innovation, topics closely related to the Commission's upcoming modernisation agenda for higher education. (*For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel. +32 229 58615; Joseph Waldstein – Tel. +32 229 56184*)

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