

## Daily News 06 / 04 / 2018

### **European Research Council invests €653 million in ground-breaking research**

€653 million of EU funding will go to 269 senior researchers across Europe, giving them a chance to realise innovative ideas and produce results that will have a major impact on science, society and the economy. Carlos **Moedas** European Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, said: *“This grant scheme has supported outstanding and established research leaders since 2007. It is a great example of how EU funding can help expand the frontiers of scientific knowledge, providing the resources necessary to continue ground-breaking, high-risk projects, and ensure Europe’s global competitiveness.”* Advanced researchers will explore among many other topics innovative heart regeneration treatments, the aggressiveness of different bacteria and the effects of air pollution on the development of babies. The grants of up to €2.5 million per project are selected by the [European Research Council](#) (ERC) and financed through [Horizon 2020](#), the EU Research and Innovation programme. More information including project examples and statistics is available in a [news item](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Victoria von Hammerstein – Tel.: +32 229 55040; Maud Noyon – Tel. +32 229-80379)

### **The EU aims to generate €1.5 billion investments in Lebanon over 3 years**

Today the European Union has announced a package of up to €150 million to support the revitalisation of the Lebanese economy as part of its longstanding commitment to the economic development of [Lebanon](#). This support could generate up to €1.5 billion loans for Lebanon until 2020, on condition that the country’s financial institutions identify and propose projects that are bankable and adopt relevant reforms. This package includes up to €50 million in grants funding that could be mobilised in each of the coming three years (2018-2020) to provide technical assistance and ensure a sufficient level of concessionality of loans. High Representative/Vice-President Federica **Mogherini** said: *“The European Union has always been on the side of Lebanon and the Lebanese people. A strong and resilient Lebanon is in our collective interest, in the interest of the entire region. [...] With this new package, the European Union reconfirms its support to the Lebanese economy, [...] and encourages the Government to pursue the path of structural reforms it has started to undertake.”* Commissioner for Enlargement Negotiations and Neighbourhood policy Johannes **Hahn** added: *“The EU contribution is a signal of our support for the Government of Lebanon, whose tasks include now taking forward a road map of structural reforms to boost economic development in the country for the benefit of all. We will support and accompany this effort through the [External Investment Plan](#)”*. The full press release is available [here](#). (For more information: Maja Kocijančič – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Alceo Smerilli – Tel.: +32 229 64887; Lauranne Devillé – Tel.: +32 229 80833)

### **EU supports South Africa with €62 million**

Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development Neven **Mimica** is

visiting South Africa, where he is meeting the Minister of Finance, Mr Nhlanhla Nene, and the Minister for Small Business Development, Ms Lindiwe Zulu. The new EU programme “Employment Promotion through small, micro and medium enterprises Support Programme for South Africa” worth €52 million will help to boost job creation in South Africa, while the new Enhancing Legislature Oversight Programme of €10 million will strengthen democracy and good governance. On the occasion, Commissioner **Mimica** said: *“Ten years after the establishment of a strategic partnership with South Africa, the European Union remains very much engaged with the country as a crucial regional and global player. We are looking forward to enhancing our relations with President Ramaphosa and his administration. The fight against unemployment, poverty and inequality are at the heart of our common agenda and I am happy to launch two programmes, worth a total €62 million, in line with those priorities, during my visit. We look forward to continuing our joint work beyond 2020 with new and innovative approaches.”* The [press release](#) is available online. (For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz de Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)

### **State aid: Commission approves €44 million Italian scheme to support economic recovery in regions affected by earthquakes in 2016 and 2017**

The European Commission has found a €43.9 million Italian aid scheme to support investments in regions affected by earthquakes in 2016 and 2017 to be in line with EU State aid rules. The aid will contribute to the economic recovery of central Italy without unduly distorting competition in the Single Market. In 2016 and 2017, four major earthquakes hit central Italy, affecting around 600,000 people in an 8,000 km<sup>2</sup> area. Today, the region is still being affected by abnormal seismic activity, leading to a progressive desertification of the affected areas. This is unlikely to be addressed by compensation measures alone. The Italian aid scheme approved today aims at complementing such measures, to mitigate the economic and social damages in the areas which have been affected by i) a significant drop of GDP, ii) a substantial loss of employment, iii) a reduction of economic activity by more than 50%, and iv) a significant decline in companies’ turnover compared to pre-earthquakes levels. This concerns 140 municipalities in the Italian regions of Lazio, Umbria, Marche and Abruzzo. Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *“The people and economy of Central Italy are still recovering from the dramatic effects of several earthquakes over the past years. The Italian authorities want to support this recovery with a measure contributing to the economic recovery of these areas. We found this measure to be well targeted to support affected businesses and the people living in these regions.”* A full press release is available in [IT](#), [EN](#), [FR](#), [DE](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889)

### **State aid: Commission approves Portuguese tonnage tax and seafarer scheme**

The European Commission has approved under EU State aid rules a Portuguese tonnage tax scheme which, together with a scheme to support seafarers, will encourage ship registration in Europe and contribute to the competitiveness

of maritime transport while preserving employment in the sector and promoting high environmental standards. Under the newly introduced Portuguese tonnage tax scheme, maritime transport companies will pay taxes on the basis of the net tonnage (i.e. the size of the shipping fleet) operated in maritime transport activities rather than on the basis of their taxable profits. The tonnage tax scheme requires that if a shipping company wants to benefit from the scheme, a significant part of its fleet must fly the flag of a European Economic Area state. Moreover, the newly introduced Portuguese seafarer scheme exempts seafarers employed on vessels that are eligible under the tonnage tax scheme from paying personal income tax. It also allows them to pay reduced rates of contribution for social insurance. The Commission assessed the measures under EU State aid rules, in particular its [Guidelines on State aid to maritime transport](#). Commissioner Margrethe Vestager, in charge of competition policy, said: *“The Portuguese measures that we approved today will help the EU shipping industry to remain competitive on the global market, while protecting know-how and jobs in the maritime transport sector.”* A full press release is available in [PT](#), [EN](#), [FR](#), [DE](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889)

### **Aides d’État: la Commission approuve la compensation accordée par la France à La Poste pour sa mission de présence territoriale**

La Commission européenne a conclu qu’un abattement fiscal accordé à La Poste pour la période 2018-2022 pour assurer le maintien d’une forte densité de présence postale en France est conforme aux règles de l’UE en matière d’aides d’Etat. Mme Margrethe Vestager, commissaire pour la politique de concurrence, a déclaré: *«Un accès aisé aux services postaux est très important pour tous les citoyens européens. La décision prise aujourd’hui autorise à La Poste à bénéficier de compensations lui permettant de continuer à remplir son rôle économique et social essentiel et à exercer son importante mission de service public, sans fausser de manière indue la concurrence.»* La mission de présence territoriale de La Poste vise à garantir une forte densité de la présence postale, au-delà des contraintes imposées par l’obligation de service universel, notamment dans les régions rurales. Pour le financement de cette mission de présence territoriale, le contrat d’entreprise entre l’Etat français et La Poste pour la période 2018-2022 prévoit que La Poste bénéficiera d’un abattement de fiscalité locale d’environ 900 millions d’euros au maximum sur l’ensemble de la période. L’analyse de la Commission a montré, que la compensation prévue n’excédait pas ce qui est nécessaire pour couvrir le coût net de cette mission de service public. Sur cette base, la Commission a conclu que la mesure est conforme aux règles de l’UE relatives aux aides d’État. Vous pouvez trouver le communiqué de presse en [FR](#), [EN](#), [DE](#). (Pour plus d’informations: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889)

### **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of a joint venture by General Electric and Rosneft**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over a joint venture based in Russia by General

Electric Company (“GE”) of the US and Rosneft Oil Company, through its subsidiary Sibintek LLC, both of Russia. The joint venture will focus on the development, implementation, marketing, licensing and/or operation of industrial Internet of Things (IoT) applications based on the Predix Platform offered by GE. GE is a global, diversified manufacturing, technology and services company active in a variety of sectors including, among others, oil & gas manufacturing, technology, services and digital solutions. Rosneft is active in the exploration, development, production and sale of crude oil and natural gas and the refining and marketing of petroleum products and petrochemicals. Sibintek provides information technology (IT) solutions to Rosneft and other customers in Russia. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because the joint venture has negligible actual and foreseen activities within 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.8820](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889)

### **Eurostat: Le taux d’épargne des ménages en hausse à 12,2% dans la zone euro**

Au quatrième trimestre 2017, le taux d’épargne des ménages a été de 12,2% dans la zone euro, contre 12,0% au troisième trimestre 2017. Le taux d’investissement des ménages a quant à lui été de 8,8% au quatrième trimestre 2017 dans la zone euro, stable par rapport au trimestre précédent. Ces informations, qui proviennent de la première diffusion de données, corrigées des variations saisonnières, sur les comptes européens trimestriels des secteurs, sont publiées par Eurostat, l’office statistique de l’Union européenne, et la Banque centrale européenne (BCE). Un communiqué de presse est disponible [ici](#). (For more information: Christian Spahr – Tel.: +32 229 50055; Annikky Lamp – Tel.: +32 229 56151)

### **Eurostat: Le taux d’investissement des entreprises en hausse à 22,8% dans la zone euro**

Au quatrième trimestre 2017, le taux d’investissement des entreprises s’est établi à 22,8% dans la zone euro, contre 22,5% au trimestre précédent. La part des profits des entreprises s’est quant à elle située à 41,1% au quatrième trimestre 2017 dans la zone euro, contre 41,3% au troisième trimestre 2017. Ces informations, qui proviennent de la première diffusion de données, corrigées des variations saisonnières, sur les comptes européens trimestriels des secteurs, sont publiées par Eurostat, l’office statistique de l’Union européenne, et la Banque centrale européenne (BCE). Un communiqué de presse est disponible [ici](#). (For more information: Christian Spahr – Tel.: +32 229 50055; Annikky Lamp – Tel.: +32 229 56151)

## **STATEMENTS**

### **International Roma Day: Joint Statement**

Ahead of International Roma Day, taking place every year on 8 April, First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** and Commissioners Marianne **Thyssen**, Věra

**Jourová**, Corina **Crețu** and Johannes **Hahn** stated: “Respect for fundamental rights, including equal treatment, is one of the cornerstones of the European Union. Yet, one of the largest minorities in the EU and in its neighbourhood – the Roma community – still does not fully benefit from these rights. Not only do Roma communities suffer prejudice, discrimination and marginalisation, very often they do not even have access to basic provisions such as clean water, sanitation and food. 80% of Roma are at risk of poverty. Such a situation hits Roma first, but it is also a stain on our democratic communities. [...] Roma have been living in Europe for more than 700 years. Roma history and culture form an indispensable part of our diverse European heritage. Roma communities deserve to be treated equally and to enjoy their full rights as Europeans. At the end of the day, the way we include our most vulnerable minorities is an essential test of our European democracy.” The full statement is available [here](#). (For more information: Christian Wigand– Tel.: +32 229 62253; Sara Soumillion – Tel.: + 32 229 67094; Alceo Smerilli – Tel.: +32 229 64887)

### **‘Universal Healthcare for all’: Statement by Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Vytenis Andriukaitis ahead of World Health Day 2018**

“Access to healthcare for all is one of the major achievements of post-Second World War Europe bringing to reality the idea that all human beings, rich or poor, should benefit from quality medical care without worry that their illness would bankrupt their family. As we celebrate World Health Day, we should feel a great deal of satisfaction for the progress made on our continent in protecting EU citizens’ health and in raising the overall life expectancy. As a cardiac surgeon, and having treated many patients, I have seen how important [Universal Healthcare](#) is, especially for the most vulnerable. I have also met many inspiring healthcare professionals, scientists, researchers and social workers who make Universal Healthcare a reality on everyday basis – it strikes pride in my heart to be part of this wonderful union. [...] Making sure that every single person in the EU has access to healthcare should be the priority for all national authorities. Although the success of making healthcare available to all ultimately rests with the Member States who are responsible for defining and organising their health policy, services and budget, the Commission will continue to offer guidance in order to decrease the health gaps among EU countries. Together we will be able to make sure that we are doing our utmost so that universal healthcare is delivered to all, here in the EU and around the world.” Read the full statement [here](#). (For more information: Anca Paduraru – Tel.: +32 229 91269; Aikaterini Apostola – Tel.: +32 229 87624)

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

#### **Vice-President Valdis Dombrovskis in Italy to discuss the future of the Economic and Monetary Union**

Valdis **Dombrovskis**, Vice-President for the Euro and Social Dialogue, also in charge of Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union, is in Italy today and tomorrow. He will attend the European House Ambrosetti Finance Workshop [“The Outlook for the Economy and Finance”](#) in Cernobbio, where he will give a speech on European Banking and Capital Markets Union.

The Vice-President will visit the Milan stock exchange and have a high level working lunch with bank, finance and economic representatives organised by the Italian Institute for International Political Studies. (*For more information: Vanessa Mock – Tel.: +32 229 56194; Annikky Lamp– Tel.: +32 229 56151; Letizia Lupini – Tel.: +32 229 51958*)

## [Calendar](#)

The Commissioners' weekly activities

[Upcoming events](#) of the European Commission (ex-Top News) [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_STATEMENT-18-2868\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STATEMENT-18-2868_en.htm)