

Daily News 06 / 07 / 2018

€100 million of Juncker Plan financing for research and development at Antolin Group in Spain

The European Investment Bank (EIB) has signed a €100 million loan with Spanish car interior supplier Antolin Group to support the company's research and development activities. The loan is guaranteed under the **Juncker** Plan's European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI). Antolin will use the financing to develop new lightweight vehicle interior components for energy-efficient, connected and autonomous vehicles. The activities will be carried out in Spain, Germany and France. Carlos **Moedas**, Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, said: *"Investing in research and innovation is investing in Europe's future. With this €100 million EIB loan under the Juncker Plan signed today, the Antolin Group will develop innovative products to enhance its competitiveness in Europe. I'm pleased that the EU is supporting a highly innovative project in a traditional sector such as the automotive sector. It's vital that our companies receive the financial help they need to carry out research and innovation."* (Full press release is found [here](#). For all the latest EFSI results see the [Investment Plan website](#) or contact Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Siobhán Millbright – Tel.: +32 229 57361)

Politique de Cohésion: plus de flexibilité, moins de formalités et des synergies plus faciles avec le Plan Juncker

La Commission salue le vote hier du Parlement européen sur [sa proposition](#) de révision des règles sur les fonds européens 2014-2020, qui a pour but de réduire de moitié le corpus de règles actuel en les rendant également plus claires et plus simples à appliquer à tous les niveaux. La Commissaire à la politique régionale, Corina **Crețu**, a déclaré: *"La simplification est l'un des grands chantiers du budget européen 2021-2027, mais la Commission Juncker s'y est déjà attelée pour la période actuelle, avec comme objectif de rendre la vie plus simple pour les autorités locales et les bénéficiaires des fonds, notamment les PME."* Voici ce qui changera lorsque les règles révisées entreront en vigueur à la fin du mois de juillet: 1. davantage de possibilités de combinaisons entre le Fonds européen pour les investissements stratégiques (EFSI), le cœur du [Plan Juncker](#), et les fonds de la politique de Cohésion: plus besoin de cofinancement national quand ces derniers seront investis dans un projet EFSI et possibilité d'y couvrir la première tranche de risque; 2. moins de formalité pour les bénéficiaires des fonds: ils pourront plus facilement faire rembourser leurs frais par l'UE. Les bénéficiaires et les autorités de gestion pourront se concentrer sur les résultats plutôt que sur la collecte et le contrôle de documents financiers. Le principe de 'l'audit unique' est étendu et la Commission pourra davantage s'appuyer sur des évaluations réalisées par ses partenaires internationaux et les États membres. Enfin, les règles révisées permettent aux États membres de financer plus facilement des projets visant à intégrer les migrants avec

leurs budgets cohésion de la période 2014-2020. (*Pour plus d'informations: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615 – Tel.: +32 229 50595; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169*)

Trade: EU to implement provisional safeguard measures on steel following US tariffs

The Commission yesterday presented its intention to Member States to introduce provisional safeguard measures on steel under the form of a Tariff Rate Quota (TRQ). The Commission's plan received overwhelming support by Member States gathered in the Safeguards Committee and the new measures will enter into force once formally adopted by the Commission in July. Additional duties will be levied only after a tariff rate quota, based on the level of traditional imports, is reached. The adoption of safeguard measures was part of the three-pronged EU's response to the unilateral US decision to impose tariffs on steel and aluminium. This is intended to prevent the negative effects of trade diversion, but at the same time maintain traditional supply and effective competition on the EU market. An investigation towards possible imposition of safeguard measures on steel was launched on 26 March. On the basis of the investigation to date, the Commission considers that provisional measures are warranted. The most recent import statistics show trade diversion of steel products into the EU as a result of the additional 25% tariff on steel imposed by the US. The investigation continues at least until the end of 2018. The Commission has also put in place a surveillance system for imports of aluminium to be prepared in case action will be required in that sector. The EU has also decided to adopt rebalancing measures by imposing duties on a list of US products and legal proceedings were launched against the US in the WTO on 1 June. (*For more information: Daniel Rosario – Tel.: + 32 229 56185; Clémence Robin – Tel.: +32 229 52509*)

State aid: Commission opens in-depth investigation into tax exemptions for companies in the Madeira Free Zone

The European Commission has opened an in-depth investigation to examine whether Portugal has applied the Madeira Free Zone regional aid scheme in conformity with the [2007](#) and [2013](#) Commission decisions approving it. The Madeira Free Zone (Zona Franca da Madeira, "ZFM") was created by Portugal in 1987 to support economic development in its outermost region Madeira. Its objective is to attract investment to and create jobs in Madeira. In this context, Portugal put in place a regional aid scheme providing support to companies establishing themselves in the ZFM through certain corporate income tax reductions on profits resulting from activities performed in Madeira; and other tax reductions, such as an exemption from municipal and local taxes. The Commission approved successive versions of the ZFM regional aid scheme under EU State aid rules on several occasions between 1987 and 2014. As part of its standard monitoring of the implementation of State aid decisions, the Commission has carried out a preliminary assessment of how Portugal applied the ZFM aid scheme until its expiry at the end of 2014. At this stage, the Commission has concerns that the Portuguese authorities may have failed to respect some of the basic conditions under the 2007 and 2013 decisions and in

particular that tax exemptions granted by Portugal to companies established in the ZFM are not in line with the Commission decisions and EU State aid rules. Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *“Our regional aid rules are particularly flexible when it comes to supporting the EU’s outermost regions, including Madeira. Under these rules, fiscal aid can only be granted if it contributes to the creation of real economic activity and jobs in the assisted region. We will now investigate whether the Zona Franca Madeira fiscal aid scheme approved by the Commission in the past has been applied correctly by Portugal.”* The full press release is available online in [EN](#), [FR](#), [DE](#), [PT](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344)

State aid: Commission approves reductions of nuclear levy for electrointensive users in Slovakia

The European Commission has found Slovakia’s plan to grant reductions on a nuclear levy to certain electro-intensive users to be in line with EU State aid rules. In 2006, Slovakia set up the National Nuclear Fund to finance the costs of decommissioning obsolete nuclear power plants, financed via a levy, which is paid by final electricity consumers. As of 2019, Slovakia intends to grant reductions on the nuclear levy to certain electro-intensive industrial users exposed to international trade, such as companies active in the production of refined petroleum products, basic iron, steel, ferro-alloys and aluminium. The reductions will vary depending on the companies’ electro-intensity and will confer an advantage to these companies, as they will lower their financial burden compared to other companies that will not benefit from them. Slovakia notified this measure to the Commission for review under EU State aid rules. The Commission assessed the measure under the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and found that the reductions are limited to companies that are active in electro-intensive sectors exposed to international trade and are proportionate. On this basis, the Commission concluded that the measure is in line with State aid rules, because it will contribute to the competitiveness of these companies without unduly distorting competition in the Single Market. The full press release is available online in [EN](#), [FR](#), [DE](#), [SK](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344)

State aid: Commission approves compensation to energy-intensive companies in Luxembourg for indirect emission costs

The European Commission has approved, under EU State aid rules, a support scheme to compensate energy-intensive companies in Luxembourg for higher electricity prices resulting from indirect emission costs under the EU Emission Trading Scheme (ETS). The scheme will cover the period 2017-2020, with an overall budget of up to €60 million. The measure benefits companies active in sectors facing significant electricity costs and which are particularly exposed to international competition. The compensation will be granted through a partial refund of electricity costs to eligible companies.

The objective of the measure is to avoid an increase in global greenhouse gas emissions due to companies relocating to countries outside the EU with less stringent environmental regulation. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number SA.51097. *(For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344)*

Competition: Commission seeks feedback for conference on competition policy and digitisation

On 17 January 2019, Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, will host a one-day conference in Brussels on 'Shaping competition policy in the era of digitisation'. In this context, the Commission is [seeking feedback](#) from stakeholders who are involved in or affected by the digitisation of the economy. These contributions will serve to inform and feed into the discussions at the conference, which will also feature a keynote speech by Nobel prize winner Professor Jean Tirole. The conference will include three panel discussions, each chaired by one of the Commissioner's special advisers, Professors Heike Schweitzer and Jacques Crémer, and Assistant Professor Yves-Alexandre de Montjoye. As [announced in March 2018](#) the special advisers are working on a report on the future challenges of digitisation for competition policy. The conference and the report are designed to provide input to the Commission's ongoing reflection on how competition policy can best serve European consumers in a fast-changing world and to identify the key upcoming digital challenges and their implications for competition policy. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website. *(For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: [+32 229 80100](#); Giulia Astuti – Tel.: [+32 229 55344](#))*

Mergers: Commission clears offshore windfarm joint venture between Otary, Eneco and Electrabel

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the restructuring of ownership over two offshore windfarms in Belgian waters, known as Seastar and Mermaid. The proposed transaction entails the creation of a joint venture between Otary RS NV of Belgium, the Eneco group of the Netherlands, through Eneco Wind Belgium N.V., and the Engie group of France, through Electrabel NV. Otary is active in the development, construction and operation of offshore wind projects. Eneco is engaged in the production of electricity from sustainable sources and in the supply of electricity and gas. Electrabel is active at all stages of the electricity and natural gas value chain in the Benelux region, as part of the worldwide energy group Engie. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns in particular because of the pre-existing ownership rights of the companies over the windfarm concessions in question and the existence of other similar projects either under development or for which new concessions have been announced. The transaction was examined under the normal merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission's [competition website](#), in the [public case register](#) under the case number [M.8855](#). *(For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100;*

Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344)

Mergers: Commission clears the acquisition of Zentiva group by Advent International Corporation

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of sole control over Zentiva group, based in the Czech Republic and currently owned by Sanofi of France, by Advent International Corporation of the US. Zentiva is a pharmaceutical group focused on the development, manufacturing and marketing of generic pharmaceutical products primarily within Europe. Advent is a global private equity investor, focused on investments in several sectors, namely business and financial services; healthcare; industrial; retail, consumer and leisure; and technology, media and telecom. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns given the lack of horizontal overlaps and the minor vertical relationships 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.8937](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344)

STATEMENTS

Security Union: Commission welcomes the European Parliament's adoption of the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) and a stronger eu-LISA Agency

Yesterday, the European Parliament gave its final agreement to establish the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) and to strengthen the mandate of eu-LISA, the EU Agency for the operational management of large scale IT systems in the area of freedom, security and justice. The legislative proposals for ETIAS and eu-LISA, put forward by the Commission in [November 2016](#) and [June 2017](#) respectively, were identified as political priorities under the [Joint Declaration](#) on the EU's legislative priorities for 2018-2019. Welcoming the adoption, Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris **Avramopoulos** said: "At the beginning of this Commission we committed to deliver a Europe that protects – and now we take one more, important step towards this goal. A stronger eu-LISA will be the nerve centre of our information systems for borders, migration and security, and the new ETIAS will ensure that we no longer have an information gap on visa-free travellers. Anyone who poses a migratory or security risk will be identified before they even travel to EU borders, while the travel of bona fide travellers will be facilitated. I want to thank both rapporteurs for their leadership and commitment to building a safer Union for our citizens". Commissioner **King** added: "Our police officers and border guards need to have the right tools to do their jobs – keeping our citizens safe and our borders secure. ETIAS will pre-screen visa-free visitors for potential security problems, while the reinforced eu-LISA will allow us to continue to modernise EU-wide information systems for law enforcement and border management." The [full statement](#) and the [memo](#) are available online. (For more information: Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 2 296 74 56; Tove Ernst – Tel.: +32 229 86764; Katarzyna Kolanko –Tel.: +32 229 63444)

EU and Japan to discuss education, culture and sport at first policy dialogue

This afternoon, in Budapest, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor **Navracsics**, will lead an EU delegation at the first official EU-Japan policy dialogue on education, culture and sport. The Japanese delegation will be led by Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Yoshimasa Hayashi. The meeting takes place ahead of the EU-Japan Summit to be held in Brussels on 11 July. Discussions will focus on major policy priorities in the fields of education, culture and sport including opportunities to enhance cooperation. Among others, joint initiatives to support consortia of excellent universities and staff exchanges are expected to be agreed on. A joint statement will be published [here](#) after the meeting (17.00 CET). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: [+32 229 67083](#); Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: [+32 229 56184](#))

ANNOUNCEMENTS

High Representative/Vice-President Mogherini and Commissioners Hahn and King at the Western Balkans Summit – building stronger links within the region and with the EU

High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission Federica **Mogherini**, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes **Hahn**, and Commissioner for the Security Union Julian **King** will be in London on Monday 9 and Tuesday 10 July for the [2018 Western Balkans Summit](#) organised in the framework of the [Berlin process](#). Leaders and Ministers from ten Member States and from the six Western Balkan partners will attend the Summit. The Summit will focus on increasing economic stability in the region, strengthening security and addressing political and legal issues to foster reconciliation. It will be an opportunity for further advancing the EU perspective of the region. Leading the EU delegation, High Representative/Vice-President **Mogherini** will, together with Commissioner **Hahn**, attend the meeting with the Heads of State or Government on Tuesday afternoon. Commissioner **Hahn** and Commissioner **King** will attend the meetings with Foreign Ministers and Interior Ministers on Monday. Commissioner **Hahn** will participate at a Question Time event with the Foreign Ministers, youth and representatives of civil society organisations on Monday and he will deliver a key-note speech at [Chatham House](#) on Tuesday which will be available on [EbS](#). Commissioner **King** will speak at the session on “Cross-cutting security issues”, focusing in particular on the EU’s cooperation with Western Balkan partners in the area of counter-terrorism, cybercrime and radicalisation. Videos and photos of the visit will be available on [EbS](#). (For more information: Maja Kocijančič – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Tove Ernst – Tel.: +32 229 86764; Alceo Smerilli – Tel.: +32 229 64887; Katarzyna Kolanko – Tel.: +32 229-63444)

Commission kick-starts debate on the EU’s long-term vision for a modern, clean and competitive economy

On 10-11 July, the Commission will organise a high-level stakeholder

consultation event on the EU's long-term strategy for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and building a prosperous, modern, clean and competitive economy. In March this year, EU leaders asked the Commission to present, "by the first quarter of 2019, a proposal for a strategy for long-term EU greenhouse gas emissions reduction in accordance with the Paris Agreement, taking into account the national plans". In preparation for this proposal, the Commission will organise a consultation event for up to 1000 participants, bringing together a broad range of stakeholders from business, research and civil society. Hosted by Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy Miguel **Arias Cañete**, speakers will include Commission Vice-President for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness Jyrki **Katainen**, Vice-President for the Energy Union Maroš **Šefčovič** and Commissioner for the Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs Elżbieta **Bieńkowska**, as well as ministers and high-level representatives from countries, organisations and stakeholders in and outside Europe. Ahead of the event, Commissioner **Arias Cañete** said: *"The EU has put in place the legislation to meet its Paris commitment for 2030. It is now time to look at the longer term perspective and to set out a strategy for where EU climate policy is heading by 2050. This is central to meet the Paris Agreement goals of keeping global temperature rise below 2 degrees Celsius and to pursue efforts to 1.5 degrees Celsius. The EU is committed to doing its part. The clean energy transition will be key, and achieving our climate objectives will require contributions from every part of the economy and society. This conference will be a vital forum for discussions and opinions that will feed into the proposal for a new EU long-term strategy on reducing emissions the European Commission will present by the end of this year."* The event will offer an opportunity for discussions that will then feed in to the Commission's input for the strategy and will be followed by a public consultation seeking further input from citizens and stakeholders. Live web stream and full program on the [event's website](#). (For more information: Anca Paduraru – Tel.: +32 229 91269; Nicole Bockstaller – Tel.: +32 229 52589)

[Calendar](#)

The Commissioners' weekly activities

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