

Daily News 08 / 02 / 2018

Member States to benefit from €98.2 million in investments to improve citizens' quality of life

The European Commission has approved an investment package of €98.2 million to support Europe's transition to a low-carbon, circular economy under the new [LIFE](#) funding programme for the Environment and Climate Action. Today's investment package will contribute towards improving the quality of life for European citizens in five areas: [Nature](#), [Water](#), [Air](#), [Waste](#) and [Climate Action](#). The investment covers 10 projects in Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, Lithuania, Malta, Spain and Sweden. The EU funding will mobilise investments leading to an additional €2 billion, as Member States can make use of other EU funding sources, including agricultural, structural and research funds, as well as national funds and private sector investment. A [press release](#) and [annex](#) with details on the 10 projects are available online. *(For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: + 32 229 56172; Iris Petsa – Tel.: +32 229 93321)*

Trade Defence: Commission imposes definitive anti-dumping duties on Chinese corrosion resistant steel

The Commission today imposed definitive anti-dumping duties on corrosion resistant steel from China. The investigation confirmed that Chinese producers were dumping the product on the EU market, a finding that already led to imposition of provisional duties in August 2017. The measures that will be in place for the next 5 years range from 17.2% to 27.9%. Corrosion resistant steel is mainly used in the construction industry, for mechanical engineering, in the production of welded pipes and tubes and in the manufacturing of domestic appliances. The value of EU market for corrosion resistant steel is estimated for €4.6 billion, 20% of which has been supplied by Chinese producers. Today's measures will counter the downward pressure on sales prices that has been causing financial problems for EU producers, based mostly in Belgium, France, Poland and the Netherlands. The steel sector is a vital industry for the European Union's economy and occupies a central position in global value chains, providing jobs for hundreds of thousands of European citizens. The global surplus in steelmaking capacity has driven down steel prices to unsustainable levels in recent years and had a damaging impact on the steel sector, as well as related industries and jobs. The EU is using therefore the full potential of its trade defence toolbox to ensure a level-playing-field for its producers and their ability to maintain jobs in the sector. 53 measures are now in place on steel and iron products, including 27 on products coming from China. In March 2016 the Commission issued a Communication presenting a series of measures to support competitiveness of the EU steel industry. Enhanced use of trade defence tools was one of the pillars of the strategy. In addition to that, the Commission engaged in the Global Forum on Steel Excess Capacity that agreed last November on an [ambitious package](#) of concrete policy solutions to tackle the pressing issue of global overcapacity in the steel sector. The [regulation](#) is available in the EU Official Journal. *(For more information: Daniel Rosario –*

Tel.: +32 229 56185; Kinga Malinowska – Tel: +32 229 51383)

160 innovation grants to bring frontier research closer to the market

Today, 52 winners of an innovation grant competition have been announced. The so-called ‘proof of concept’ grants, each worth up to €150,000, are dedicated to researchers that explore the innovation potential of their scientific discoveries. This will help researchers to bring the results of their frontier research closer to the market. Today’s winners join 108 others that have already been awarded grants in 2017. In total 160 researchers will now investigate business opportunities, establish intellectual property rights or conduct technical validation to proof their scientific concept. They will for example develop new antibiotics that target drug-resistant bacteria, produce graphene sheets to protect works of art or make thermal-regulating paints that could reduce energy consumption of buildings (see further [project examples](#)). The overall budget of the competition was €24 million. In October last year, the Commission has geared its research and innovation funding towards boosting breakthrough, market-creating innovation. Europe is already a world leader in science and technology. To make Europe also a major innovation driver, the Commission has launched a Pilot for a [European Innovation Council](#) (EIC) to support top-class innovators, entrepreneurs, small companies and researchers with bright ideas. The EIC will mobilise €2.7 billion to support high-risk, high-gain innovation. The ‘proof of concept’ grants, announced today, are awarded by the European Research Council (ERC) and are part of the EU’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (see ERC [news item](#)). The ERC, set up by the European Union in 2007, is the first European funding organisation for excellent frontier research. Every year, it selects and funds the very best, creative researchers of any nationality and age, to run projects based in Europe. *(For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel.: +32 229 56182; Victoria von Hammerstein – Tel.: +32 229 55040; Maud Noyon – Tel. +32 229-80379)*

State aid: Commission approves PLN 5 billion Polish support for closing coal mines

The European Commission has found amendments to Poland’s plans to provide public support of PLN 5 billion (approximately €1.25 billion) to alleviate the social and environmental impact of closing uncompetitive coal mines by 2018 to be in line with EU State aid rules. The Commission concluded that potential competition distortions are limited as a result of the support. The Commission had already approved Polish support for the closure of uncompetitive coal mines in [November 2016](#). In line with EU State aid rules, and in particular [Council Decision 2010/787/EU](#) on State aid to facilitate the closure of uncompetitive coal mines, the Commission found that the aid will ease the closure process by providing financial support to workers who have lost, or will lose, their jobs due to the closure of the mines. In particular, the state support will fund severance payments, compensatory pensions and social security benefits for these workers until 2023. Furthermore, it will be used to secure mine shafts and decommissioning of mine infrastructure, repair damage to the environment caused by mining and

re-cultivate land after the mine closures. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the [State Aid Register](#) under the case number SA.46891. *(For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)*

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of OCTE by Avis Budget Group and Koç Holding

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of OCTE of Greece by Otokoç ABG Holland BV of the Netherlands, which will be jointly controlled by Avis Budget Group Inc. ('ABG') of the US and Koç Holding A.S. ('Koç') of Turkey. OCTE trades as Avis Hellas and, since 2010, has been appointed as Avis' franchisee in Greece for the Avis and Budget brands. ABG is a global provider of rental cars and also operates a car sharing network through its Zipcar brand. Koç is an investment holding company which is active in a range of sectors, including energy, consumer durables, cars and finance. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, given the absence of horizontal overlaps or vertical links between the companies' activities in Greece. Although ABG, Koç and OCTE all provide short-term and long-term car rental services, their activities take place in distinct national markets. Moreover, there are no existing supplier or customer relationships between them. The operation was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the [public case register](#) under the case number [M.8756](#). *(For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)*

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Elenia Group by Macquarie Group and Allianz Group

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of Lakeside Network Investments S.à.r.l. ("Elenia Group") of Finland by Macquarie Super Core Infrastructure Fund SCSP ("MSCIF") of the UK and Allianz Infrastructure Luxembourg I S.à.r.l. ("AIL") of Luxembourg. Elenia Group owns and operates electricity distribution networks and district heating businesses in Finland. MSCIF is a fund owned by the Macquarie Group, a global provider of banking, financial, advisory, investment and fund management services. AIL belongs to the Allianz Group, a global provider of insurance and asset management products as well as services to private and corporate customers. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because of the limited combined market position of the companies following the proposed transaction. 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.8776](#). *(For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)*

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of joint control over Lucid Energy by Goldman Sachs and Riverstone

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the proposed acquisition of joint control over Lucid Energy Group II LLC by The Goldman Sachs Group, Inc. and Riverstone Investment Group LLC, all of the US. Lucid Energy provides natural gas gathering, compression and natural gas processing in Texas and New Mexico. Goldman Sachs is a global investment banking, securities and investment management firm that provides a wide range of banking, securities and investment services worldwide. Riverstone is a private equity firm focused on investments in the energy and power sectors. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns as Lucid Energy is not active in 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.8800](#). *(For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)*

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of joint control over PSA Panama International Terminal S.A. by PSA International Pte. Ltd. and Terminal Investment Limited Sàrl

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over PSA Panama International Terminal S.A. of Panama by PSA International Pte. Ltd of Singapore, and Terminal Investment Limited Sàrl of Switzerland. PSA Panama International Terminal S.A. is a company operating a container terminal in the Port of Rodman, Panama. PSA International Pte. Ltd. provides stevedoring services at ports, with a particular focus on terminal services for containerised liner ships. Terminal Investment Limited Sàrl is jointly controlled by MSC Mediterranean Shipping Company Holding S.A. of Switzerland, Global Infrastructure Management and Global Infrastructure Partners, both of the US. Its business is in investment, development and management of container terminals. 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.8695](#). *(For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)*

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Hügli by Bell

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of sole control over Hügli Holding AG by Bell Food Group AG, both of Switzerland. Hügli manufactures soups, sauces, ready-to-eat dishes, desserts and meat substitute products for sale to retailers, wholesalers and the food service sector. Bell is active in the production, processing and sale of meat as well as other related products, seafood and convenience products through various distribution channels. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because of the limited overlap between the companies' activities. The operation was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the [public case register](#) under the case number [M.8751](#). *(For more information: Ricardo*

Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

STATEMENTS

Discours de la Commissaire Crețu à la session d'ouverture du Forum urbain mondial des Nations Unies

Aujourd'hui, la Commissaire en charge de la politique régionale et urbaine de l'UE, Corina **Crețu**, a représenté l'UE et ses États membres lors de la session plénière d'ouverture du 9^{ème} [Forum urbain mondial](#). 15 mois après le lancement du [Nouvel Agenda Urbain](#), le Forum se concentre sur la mise en œuvre des objectifs du [Programme de développement durable](#) à l'horizon 2030. La Commissaire **Crețu** a déclaré: *“Le Nouvel Agenda Urbain trace les contours ambitieux du travail qui reste à accomplir pour des milliers de villes, sur les cinq continents. L'UE est fortement attachée à sa mise en œuvre, d'autant plus qu'elle reflète bien la vision européenne d'un développement urbain durable. En effet, nous plaillons pour une approche intégrée, adaptée à la réalité des lieux et des populations, et qui prenne en compte la diversité des villes et leur contexte territorial plus large tout en s'appuyant sur les liens urbains-ruraux. L'Union européenne et ses États membres peuvent être fiers d'avoir contribué à façonner le Nouvel Agenda Urbain.”* Retrouvez l'intégralité du discours en anglais de la Commissaire [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Johannes Bahrke – Tél. : +32 229 58615, Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tél. : +32 229 56169)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Vice-Président Katainen en déplacement à Paris

Le Vice-Président Jyrki **Katainen** chargé de l'emploi, de la croissance, de l'investissement et de la compétitivité est aujourd'hui en déplacement à Paris, France. Il va prononcer un discours à l'occasion du [Capital Markets Summit](#) organisé conjointement par Politico et l'Agefi, évènement auquel Olivier Guersent, Directeur général de la Direction générale Stabilité financière, services financiers et Union des marchés de capitaux (FISMA), participera également. Le Vice-Président **Katainen** évoquera les mesures prises par l'UE pour faciliter l'accès au capital, en particulier pour les petites et moyennes entreprises (PME), notamment via le Marché Unique des Capitaux et le Plan d'Investissement pour l'Europe. Pendant sa visite, le Vice-Président **Katainen** s'entretiendra avec Steven Maijor, Président de l'Autorité européenne des marchés financiers (AEMF), et participera également à un déjeuner de travail avec Sabine Thillaye, Présidente de la Commission des affaires européennes de l'Assemblée Nationale, et les autres membres de la Commission. (Pour plus d'information: Vanessa Mock – Tel.: +32 229 56194; Siobhán Millbright – Tél.: +32 229 57361)

Commissioner Stylianides visits Portugal to present rescEU, the EU's plan to strengthen emergency response

Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides**

is travelling to Lisbon to meet with Prime Minister of Portugal António Costa and Minister of Internal Administration, Mr Eduardo Cabrita. During the visit Commissioner **Stylianides** will present and discuss the state of play regarding the Commission's proposal to strengthen EU disaster management: [rescEU](#). The meetings will serve to enhance the constructive cooperation already established between the Commission and the Portuguese authorities. rescEU aims at creating a more robust [EU civil protection mechanism](#), enabling the EU to better respond to disaster situations and to help citizens when Member States' capacities have been exhausted, as was the case in Portugal last year. The Commissioner will also deliver a speech at a seminar on the [EU Civil Protection Mechanism](#) co-organised by the European Ideas Network. Commissioner **Stylianides** visited Portugal last year, and commended the Portuguese civil protection forces for their work and support for several EU Civil Protection missions. (*For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz De Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140*)

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