

### **Le plan Juncker soutient 500 entreprises sociales et start-ups en Espagne**

Le plan d'investissement pour l'Europe – le plan Juncker – soutient un prêt de 50 millions d'euros de la Banque européenne d'investissement (BEI) à MicroBank, une banque espagnole spécialisée dans le microcrédit. Ce financement, soutenu par le Fonds européen pour les investissements stratégiques (EFSI), au cœur du plan Juncker, et par le programme de l'UE pour l'emploi et l'innovation sociale (EaSI), permettra à MicroBank de lancer un nouveau produit destiné à 500 start-ups afin de développer des entreprises sociales en Espagne au cours des deux prochaines années. MicroBank ciblera principalement les start-ups et les entreprises actives dans les domaines de l'intégration sociale et professionnelle, l'autonomie et la gestion du handicap et de la dépendance, la lutte contre la pauvreté et l'exclusion sociale, les activités interculturelles et la protection de l'environnement. Marianne **Thyssen**, commissaire chargée de l'emploi, des affaires sociales, des compétences et de la mobilité des travailleurs, a déclaré: *“Je félicite MicroBank d'avoir saisi l'opportunité offerte par le plan Juncker de promouvoir une Europe plus sociale. Des centaines d'entreprises sociales espagnoles bénéficieront désormais d'un meilleur accès au financement pour lancer des projets d'intégration et contribuer à une société espagnole plus juste et plus inclusive.”* Un communiqué de presse est disponible [ici](#). Depuis février 2019, le Plan Juncker a mobilisé 380 milliards d'euros d'investissements supplémentaires, dont 45,4 milliards en Espagne, et a soutenu 842 000 entreprises en Europe. (Pour plus d'informations: Annika Breidthardt – Tél .: +32 229 56153; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tél .: +32 229 56169)

### **EU Budget: Commission welcomes provisional agreement for funding high-performance infrastructure to better connect Europeans**

The European Commission welcomes the provisional agreement reached by the European Parliament and the Council on the [Connecting Europe Facility \(CEF\) proposal](#), as part of the next [long-term EU budget](#) 2021-2027. Commissioner for Transport, Violeta **Bulc** said: *“The new Connecting Europe Facility is at the heart of European transport. It will deliver on connectivity, accelerate the decarbonisation and digitalisation of the EU's economy and create synergies between the transport, energy and digital infrastructure. Above all it will allow the EU to complete its [core transport network](#) by 2030, which is the backbone of the single market, supporting the needs of logistic operators and passengers.”* Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy, Miguel **Arias Cañete** said: *“Today's agreement will enable us to build the infrastructure needed for the clean energy transition and help achieve our ambitious 2030 climate and energy targets.”* Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society, Mariya **Gabriel** added: *“The new Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) Digital will target strategic infrastructure investments, including 5G corridors along major transport paths, linking users across Europe to high performance computing*

centres, and gigabit connectivity for 5G-ready communities.” The new programme will enable the European Union to lead the way to climate neutrality in line with our [‘A Clean Planet for All’ proposal](#) and support infrastructure for safe, clean, secure and connected mobility, as proposed by the Commission in the [‘Europe on the Move’ package](#). It will also prioritise environmentally friendly modes such as rail and the development of charging points for vehicles using alternative fuels. By making energy systems better interconnected, smarter and safer, the [Connecting Europe Facility \(CEF\)](#) will help complete the Energy Union and support the clean energy transition. This will enable Europe to remain frontrunner in the clean energy transition in line with the Juncker Commission’s political priority to become the [world leader in renewable energy](#). A full press release can be found [here](#). (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Stephan Meder – Tel.: +32 229 13917; Anna Kaisa-Itkonen – Tel.: +32 229 56186; Lynn Rietdorf – Tel.: +32 229 74959; Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Marietta Grammenou – Tel.: +32 229 83583)

### **EU-U.S. Joint Statement: Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) imports from the U.S. continue to rise, up by 181%**

Since their [Joint Statement](#) of 25 July 2018 in Washington D.C., when President Juncker and President Trump agreed to strengthen EU-U.S. strategic cooperation including in the area of energy, EU imports of liquefied natural gas (LNG) from the U.S. have increased by 181%. The first EU-U.S. Energy Council High-Level Forum will take place on 2 May 2019 in Brussels. The release of these new LNG figures coincides with European Trade Commissioner Cecilia **Malmström’s** and Secretary-General Martin Selmayr’s visit to Washington this week for meetings with their U.S. counterparts within the Executive Working Group. The implementation of the different elements of the Joint Statement of Presidents Juncker and Trump was one of the topics addressed. The recent developments on LNG trade attest to the European Union’s continued commitment to deliver on all aspects of the 25 July agreement. The full press release is available [online](#). (For more information: Anna-Kaisa Itkonen – Tel.: +32 229 56186; Lynn Rietdorf – Tel.: +32 229 74959)

### **European Education Area: 54 alliances vying to become the first European Universities**

The first pilot call under the [European Universities Initiative](#) has resulted in applications from 54 alliances, involving more than 300 higher education institutions from 31 European countries including all EU Member States. The institutions include comprehensive and research-based universities, universities of applied sciences, technical universities, as well as art and medical schools. Around 80% of the proposed alliances have between five and eight partners, creating educational bridges across Europe, and ensuring broad geographical coverage. Tibor **Navracsics**, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, said: “I am delighted to see such a great interest in the new European Universities initiative, bringing together a diverse range of higher education institutions from all over Europe. This

*demonstrates that Europe's universities are eager to cooperate more closely than ever before. I am convinced that this initiative, a key building block of the European Education Area, will be a real game changer for a Europe that empowers new generations to cooperate and work within European and global cultures, in different languages, and across borders, sectors and academic disciplines."* €60 million have been set aside for this first pilot within the [Erasmus+](#) programme; and the first 12 European Universities should be selected by summer 2019. A second pilot call is set to follow later this year, with a full roll out of the initiative envisaged under the future Erasmus programme as from 2021. The aim is to build at least twenty European Universities by 2024 in the context of the [European Education Area](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: +32 229 56184)

### **Capital Markets Union: Making it easier for insurers to invest in the real economy**

The European Commission adopted today new rules to help insurers to invest in equity and private debt and to provide long-term capital financing. The insurance industry is well-equipped to provide long-term finance by investing in equity and private debt, including of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), but the actual share of their investments in the real economy remains limited. As a result of today's rules, insurers will have to hold less capital for such investments and will therefore find it more attractive to invest in the economy. This will further help mobilise private sector investment – a key objective of the [Capital Markets Union](#). The newly adopted rules, which take the form of a [Delegated Regulation](#), amend the EU prudential rules for the insurance sector, known as Solvency II, and follow up from the [Mid-term review of the CMU Action Plan](#). Commission Vice-President **Valdis Dombrovskis**, responsible for the Euro and Social Dialogue, also in charge of Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union, said: "One of the main objectives of the CMU is to foster economic growth in Europe by removing barriers to investment. Insurers were highlighting that some of the Solvency II rules were preventing them from investing more in equity and private debt. We have listened to their concerns. The amendments adopted today will make it easier and more attractive for them to invest in SMEs and to provide long-term funding to the economy." Jyrki **Katainen**, Vice-President responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness said: "SMEs can play a crucial role in job creation and sustainable economic growth. To fulfil that role, they need access to a broad range of financing options, including via equity and privately-placed debt. Today's actions will allow SMEs and other companies to have better access to such financing instruments from insurers. I am confident that this change will contribute to growth and prosperity across the Union." Find a press release [online](#). (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Letizia Lupini – Tel.: +32 229 51958)

### **Rapport sur la recherche: la présence des femmes augmente, mais trop lentement**

Le nombre de femmes menant une carrière dans la recherche augmente de façon continue en Europe. Néanmoins, les femmes restent nettement sous-représentées et leur potentiel n'est pas pleinement reconnu et valorisé. Ces résultats figurent dans le rapport «*She Figures 2018*» que la Commission européenne publie aujourd'hui à l'occasion de la Journée internationale de la femme. Le rapport suit les progrès réalisés en matière d'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes dans la recherche et l'innovation en Europe, à l'aide d'indicateurs tels que la rémunération, les conditions de travail et l'accès aux fonds de recherche. Carlos **Moedas**, le commissaire en charge de la recherche, de la science et de l'innovation, a commenté ce rapport: «*Les chiffres démontrent une évolution positive. Cependant, nous devons faire plus et plus vite si nous voulons atteindre une égalité entre les femmes et les hommes dans un avenir proche. Nous avons besoin de tous les talents scientifiques, hommes et femmes, pour faire face aux défis mondiaux tels que le changement climatique et la pollution mondiale.*» Le rapport montre qu'en moyenne, le nombre de femmes parmi les étudiants et les diplômés est aujourd'hui plus élevé que celui des hommes et que les deux sexes sont équitablement représentés au niveau du doctorat. Toutefois, les femmes sont encore sous-représentées aux postes universitaires les plus élevés et leur répartition dans les différents domaines scientifiques diffère considérablement. Publié tous les trois ans et financé par le programme européen de la recherche et de l'innovation [Horizon 2020](#), les «*She Figures*» sont la principale source de statistiques paneuropéennes comparables sur la représentation des femmes dans la science. Plus d'informations sont disponibles [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Ricardo Cardoso – Tél.: +32 229 80100; Lucía Caudet – Tél. +32 229 56182; Victoria von Hammerstein-Gesbold – Tél.: +32 229 55040)

### **Mergers: Commission opens in-depth investigation into E.ON's proposed acquisition of Innogy**

The European Commission has opened an in-depth investigation to assess the proposed acquisition of Innogy by E.ON under the EU Merger Regulation. E.ON and RWE, which controls Innogy, are both energy companies based in Germany. They are active across the energy supply chain, from generation and wholesale to distribution and retail supply of electricity and gas. The two companies are engaged in a complex asset swap. Following this asset swap, E.ON will focus on the distribution and retail supply of electricity and gas, whereas RWE will be primarily active in upstream electricity generation and wholesale markets. As part of the asset swap, E.ON would acquire the distribution and consumer solutions business and certain electricity generation assets of RWE's subsidiary, Innogy. The Commission's initial investigation has shown that the parties have a strong combined market position in several retail markets on a national or sub-national level in Germany, Czechia, Slovakia and Hungary. The proposed acquisition will remove a significant competitor in the retail supply of energy in these four Member States. At this stage, the Commission is concerned that the remaining competition would be insufficient to constrain the market power of the combined entity and avoid price increases for consumers. The Commission will now carry out an in-depth investigation into the effects of this transaction to determine whether its preliminary competition concerns are confirmed. Commissioner Margrethe

**Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *“European households and business customers should be able to buy electricity and gas at competitive prices. Our in-depth investigation aims to ensure that the acquisition of Innogy by E.ON leaves sufficient competition in the market to allow for this and does not lead to price increases.”* 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)

### **State aid: Commission approves budget increase for support scheme for energy-intensive companies in Spain**

The European Commission has approved, under EU State aid rules, the increase in budget of an aid scheme to compensate energy-intensive companies in Spain, which the Commission originally approved in 2013. With the modification, the budget will reach €200 million per year for the period 2018-2020. The budget increase is justified by the higher electricity prices resulting from indirect emission costs under the EU Emission Trading System (ETS). The scheme benefits companies active in sectors facing significant electricity costs and which are particularly exposed to international competition. The compensation will take the form of a partial refund of electricity costs resulting from indirect emission costs under the EU ETS. The Commission assessed the budget increase under EU State aid rules, in particular its [2014 Guidelines on State aid for environmental protection and energy](#). It found that the budget increase is in line with EU State aid rules. More information will be available on the Commission’s [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number SA.53427. (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344)

### **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Chevron Denmark by Total**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of Chevron Denmark Inc. by Total Holdings USA. Inc. (“Total”), both of the US. Chevron Denmark is active in the exploration and production of crude oil and natural gas originating from the Danish North Sea. Total is an international integrated energy producer and provider, engaged in every sector of the oil and gas industry world-wide. The Commission’s investigation focused on the markets for upstream and downstream wholesale supply of gas in Denmark and neighbouring Member States. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would not raise competition concerns. On the market for upstream wholesale supply of gas, the Commission found that the merged entity would not have an increased market power. In addition, there are no constraints on interconnection capacity between Denmark and neighbouring Member States. On the market for downstream wholesale supply of gas, the Commission found that there are a number of alternative suppliers available to customers and that the transaction would have a limited impact on the market structure in Denmark and in the EEA. The Commission found, among other things, that customers in Denmark already source gas directly from other European hubs located in Germany and the Netherlands. 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.9175](#). *(For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)*

### **Mergers: Commission clears the acquisition of Belfor by American Securities**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of sole control over BELFOR Holdings, Inc. ("Belfor") by American Securities LLC, both of the US. Belfor is active in disaster recovery and property restoration. American Securities is a private equity firm. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns as the companies are not active in the same markets. 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 [M.9281](#). *(For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)*

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **Commissioner Avramopoulos on a visit to Europol**

Today, Dimitris **Avramopoulos**, Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship visited Europol Headquarters in The Hague, Netherlands. During his visit, Commissioner **Avramopoulos** met with the Executive Director of Europol, Catherine De Bolle and Europol's Senior Management. The Commissioner took this opportunity also to discuss operational priorities for the Agency in 2019 and beyond. Following the meeting Commissioner **Avramopoulos** and Catherine De Bolle met Europol staff and issued a [joint statement](#) paying tribute to all women in law enforcement, on the occasion of International Women's Day. *(For more information: Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456; Katarzyna Kolanko – Tel.: +32 229 63444)*

### **Commissioners Hogan and Gabriel in Sofia, Bulgaria to discuss about digitisation of agriculture and beekeeping**

Today Phil **Hogan**, Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development and Mariya **Gabriel**, Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society, are participating in the conference [Digital4Bees](#) in Sofia, Bulgaria to discuss the impact of the digital transformation on beekeeping and agriculture at large. Commissioner **Gabriel** presented the opportunities digitization brings to beekeeping and how EU regulation and funding exemplifies this trend. Commissioner **Hogan** highlighted the issue of bee health, which the European Commission takes extremely seriously, and outlined how the Common Agricultural Policy and other key European funds are providing strong tools for positive action. While in Sofia, he will also meet the Bulgarian Prime Minister, Boyko Borissov, and the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Forestry, Rumen Porozhanov, to discuss the proposals for the future Common Agricultural Policy. Apiculture contributes to the sustainable growth and development of the honey sector, which the EU supports through targeted

national programmes aimed at fostering the production and marketing of apiculture products. Moreover, in [Horizon 2020](#), the European Commission is already funding research projects to facilitate the adoption and widespread transfer of ICT-based solutions for agriculture, including apiculture. It is also supporting Large Scale Pilots in [Internet of Things](#) technologies with a budget of up to 100 million €, out of which 30 million € is planned for the pilot of Smart Agriculture and Food Security. For some time now, news about an increase of bee mortality has been concerning various professionals and the wider public alike. The Commission has taken important [steps to diagnose and prevent bees' mortality](#), including [actions on certain pesticides](#) and a comprehensive [study on honey bee colony mortality](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Daniel Rosario – Tel. +32 229 56185; Marietta Grammenou- Tel.: +32 229 83583; Clemence Robin – Tel. +32 229 52509)

### **Commissioner Bieńkowska participates in a Citizens Dialogue on the collaborative economy in Florence**

This morning, Commissioner Elżbieta **Bieńkowska**, responsible for the Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs is in Florence, Italy where she has participated in a discussion on the role and impact of the collaborative economy in Europe. The discussion, where she was joined by Mr Dario Nardella, the Mayor of Florence and Mr Nicola Danti, MEP, focused on the opportunities and challenges offered by this rapidly growing sector. In Europe, the collaborative economy sector already employs about 400 000 people and counts nearly 700 collaborative platforms. The Commission is encouraging a responsible development of the collaborative economy and has issued [guidance](#) in June 2016 on how existing EU law applies to the collaborative economy. The Commission continues to hold close discussions with Member States and stakeholders, for instance, on the organisation of the short-term accommodation rental sector. (For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel.: +32 229 56182; Mirna Talko – Tel.: +32 229 87278)

### **High Representative/Vice-President Mogherini travels to the United States**

From 9 to 12 March, High Representative/Vice-President Federica **Mogherini** will be in the United States where she will attend a number of high-level events. In Seattle, on 9 March, Federica **Mogherini** will convene the third edition of the [Global Tech Panel](#), bringing together global leaders from the private sector and civil society to foster new types of cooperation between diplomacy and technology. In Princeton, on 11 March, Federica **Mogherini** will deliver a keynote speech on the EU's role as a Global Actor at Princeton University (follow the speech [here](#)). On 12 March, High Representative/Vice-President **Mogherini** will address the United Nations Security Council for the Annual Briefing on EU-UN relations at a crucial moment, with five of its members EU Member States. On the same day, on the occasion of the [63rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women](#), she will deliver a speech at the [High-Level Event on 'Women in Power'](#), organised by the President of the United Nations General Assembly, Ms María Fernanda Espinosa. She will also participate in two side events organised by the EU, an EU reception and

a side event on *“Women on the Frontlines: lessons learnt from Yemen and Syria”*. While in New York, High Representative/Vice-President **Mogherini** will have a meeting with the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr Antonio Guterres, to discuss pressing foreign policy issues and reaffirm the EU’s determination to uphold multilateralism with the UN at its core. Photos and videos of her visit will be available on [EbS](#). (*For more information: Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Xavier Cifre Quatresols – Tel.: +32 229 73582*)

[CALENDAR](#) – Commissioner’s weekly activities

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