

Daily News 09 / 06 / 2017

In defence of Europe: President Juncker makes strong call for greater EU cooperation on defence

President **Juncker** is in Prague where today he is attending the high-level conference on defence and security. He delivered a keynote speech on European defence this morning in which underlined that feeling safe and secure in your own home *"is the most basic and universal of rights"*. The European Union has *"promoted peace, universal values and inclusive growth right around the world"*, President **Juncker** said, *"but it is time to go further"*. In today's world, a strong NATO, a strong European Union and a strong relationship between the two, *"are more important than they ever have been before"* President **Juncker** said, adding that by stepping up their efforts on defence, and by doing so together, the Member States of the Union will strengthen the ties that bind the Allies within NATO. *"The protection of Europe can no longer be outsourced"* President **Juncker** said, *"Europe has no other choice than to defend our own interests in the Middle East, in climate change and in our trade agreements"*. This is why the European Commission has proposed a European Defence Fund, to improve the efficiency of European defence spending, and it is why the Commission has proposed that the Union use the legal means at its disposal to move away from the current patchwork of bilateral and multilateral military cooperation to more efficient forms of defence integration. *"I am talking about permanent structured cooperation, the Sleeping Beauty of the Lisbon Treaty [...] The time to make use of this possibility is now"*, President **Juncker** said, concluding that Europeans are in favour of a common security and defence policy, *"they want their Union to do more to protect them from threats old and new, and it is time we listened"*. The full speech is available [online](#). The press conference by President **Juncker**, Czech Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka and NATO deputy Secretary-General Rose Gottemoeller can be watched on [EbS](#). Today's conference is taking place days after the Commission published a series of proposals on the future of European Defence, including a [proposal for the establishment of a European Defence Fund](#), as well as a [reflection paper](#) on the future of European defence by 2025. The High Representative/Vice-President **Mogherini**, Vice-President **Katainen** and Commissioner **Bienkowska** are also in Prague attending the conference today. Re-watch the press conference with High Representative **Mogherini** and Vice-President **Katainen** on [EbS](#). (For more information: Mina Andreeva – Tel.: +32 229 91382; Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456)

Commission seeks a mandate from Member States to negotiate with Russia an agreement on Nord Stream 2

The European Commission has today adopted a request for the Council of the European Union for a mandate to negotiate with the Russian Federation the key principles for the operation of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline project. The Commission seeks to ensure that, if built, Nord Stream 2 operates in a transparent and non-discriminatory way with an appropriate degree of

regulatory oversight, in line with key principles of international and EU energy law. The Vice-President for Energy Union Maroš Šefčovič said: *“Creating a well-diversified and competitive gas market is a priority of the EU’s energy security and Energy Union strategy. As we have stated already several times, Nord Stream 2 does not contribute to the Energy Union’s objectives. If the pipeline is nevertheless built, the least we have to do is to make sure that it will be operated in a transparent manner and in line with the main EU energy market rules.”* Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy Miguel Arias Cañete added: *“As any other infrastructure project in the EU, Nord Stream 2 cannot and should not operate in a legal void or according to a third country’s energy laws only. We are seeking to obtain a Council mandate to negotiate with Russia a specific regime which will apply key principles of EU energy law to Nord Stream 2 to preserve the functioning of the European internal energy market”*. The Commission is committed to the Energy Union objectives, including energy security. The priority is to create a well-diversified and competitive gas market. The work to consequently dismantle barriers to trade and supporting critical gas infrastructure is ongoing. The full press release is available online in [EN](#), [FR](#) and [DE](#). (For more information: Anna-Kaisa Itkonen – Tel.: +32 229 56186; Nicole Bockstaller – Tel.: +32 229 52589)

The Commission imposes import duties to counter Chinese subsidies on steel

The Commission decided today to impose [definitive anti-subsidy duties](#) of up to 35.9% on Chinese hot-rolled flat steel used in shipbuilding, gas containers, pressure vessels, tubes and energy pipelines. Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström said: *“We are continuing to act, when necessary, against unfair trading conditions in the steel sector, and against foreign dumping. With today’s decision we take another instrument from our trade defence toolbox, to shield our industry from damaging effects of unfair foreign subsidies. I hope our decision and the discussions in the Global Forum dedicated to the problem of steel overcapacity will eventually convince China to remove its unfair schemes to ensure a level playing field for all steel producers”*. As confirmed by the Commission’s investigation, the Chinese industry benefits from preferential lending, tax rebates and other substantial financial injections that allow it to export to the EU at artificially low prices. This creates a threat of imminent economic damage to EU producers, whose profitability sharply decreased. The today’s anti-subsidy measure comes on top of over 40 anti-dumping decisions taken so far by the Commission to re-establish a playing-level field for European steel producers, including [anti-dumping duties](#) imposed on the same product in the beginning of April. The Commission runs also an anti-dumping investigation on imports of hot-rolled steel from [Brazil, Iran, Russia, Serbia and Ukraine](#). (For more information: Alexander Winterstein – Tel.: + 32 229 93265; Kinga Malinowska- Tel.: +32 229 51383)

Commission welcomes Member States’ agreement to make cross border parcel delivery services in the EU cheaper

The Commission welcomes the agreement reached today on its legislative

proposal to ensure that consumers and retailers can benefit from affordable parcel deliveries and convenient return options even to and from peripheral regions in the EU. High delivery and return shipping costs are the most common reasons for not buying online from another EU country – only 18% of consumers do so. Prices charged by postal operators to deliver a small parcel to another Member State are often up to 5 times higher than domestic prices, without a clear correlation to the actual costs. [Proposed by the Commission in May 2016](#) as part of a wider effort to give e-commerce a much needed boost, the new rules will foster competition by increasing price transparency, and give national postal regulators the tools to monitor cross-border markets and check the affordability of prices. Vice-President for the [Digital Single Market](#) Andrus **Ansip** said: *“I warmly thank the Maltese Presidency for the progress made on our proposals to create a Digital Single Market. Thanks to more transparent and affordable delivery prices, more consumers will shop online across borders, more small companies will sell to other EU countries. It’s excellent news for e-commerce in the EU. I hope we can reach a final agreement on this proposal with the European Parliament under Estonia’s upcoming EU Presidency.”* Commissioner Elżbieta **Bieńkowska**, responsible for Internal Market and Industry, added: *“High tariffs for parcel delivery and inconvenient return options stop consumers from buying online from other Member States. Tackling these issues is vital in helping consumers and companies, especially SMEs, make the most of the EU Single Market.”* The Commission’s [proposal for a Regulation on cross-border parcel delivery services](#) complements initiatives to improve cross-border parcel delivery services taken by postal operators and by e-retail associations, as well as a proposal for new standards in the parcel sector that include quality of service measurements. During today’s meeting in Luxembourg, the Council of Ministers in charge of telecommunications also discussed the [proposal for a European Electronic Communications Code](#) as well as the review of the [e-privacy Directive](#). This afternoon, the Commission will give a state of play of the Digital Single Market strategy, cybersecurity initiatives and the Estonian delegation will present the digital priorities of the Estonian Presidency of the Council starting on 1 July. See also [this factsheet](#) and [MEMO/16/1896](#) on e-commerce. (For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel.: + 32 229 56182; Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: + 32 229 67083; Mirna Talko – Tel.: +32 229 8727; Inga Hoglund – Tel.: + 32 229 50698)

Commission launches a new online tool to exchange information on companies

The European Commission launched today a single platform to access company information in the EU. Linking national business registers will facilitate cross-border trade and increase confidence and transparency in the EU Single Market. With an increasing number of cross-border businesses using the opportunities offered by the single market, the demand for access to information on companies with businesses in different Member States has increased. Before the introduction of this new platform, information on companies had to be requested separately from the diverse national registers through often lengthy and costly procedures. Commissioner Věra **Jourová** explains: *“When working together with other companies, businesses, consumers, investors and authorities want to quickly check whether these companies really exist, whether they are trustworthy and who is legally representing*

the company. The interconnection of business registers will contribute to a more transparent and trustworthy environment for making business in the Single Market.” Thanks to this new system, citizens, businesses and national authorities will be able to search for information filed by companies in the national registers. In addition, the new system will improve the communication between registers by allowing them to exchange trustworthy information on companies between each other. The service has been set up in close cooperation between the Commission and the Member States under the [Directive on interconnection of EU business registers](#) (BRIS). The business register search is available [here](#). (For more info: Christian Wigand– Tel.: +32 229 62253; Mélanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659)

First Employment and Social Innovation agreement in Montenegro

The [European Investment Fund \(EIF\)](#) and [Crnogorska Komercijalna Banka AD \(CKB\)](#) have signed the first transaction in Montenegro under the [EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation](#) (EaSI). The EaSI guarantee agreement with CKB will allow up to 700 Montenegrin micro-borrowers to benefit from €5 million worth of financing over the next five years. Thanks to the joint backing of EIF and the European Commission, CKB will be able to reach out to micro-borrowers country-wide, including in rural and remote areas. Commenting on the transaction, Marianne **Thyssen**, EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, said: *“Thanks to our EaSI guarantee, CKB will be able to provide loans at reduced interest rates to 700 micro-entrepreneurs who are excluded from commercial bank funding. The European Commission is fully committed to promoting inclusive entrepreneurship in the fight against social and financial exclusion. I therefore warmly welcome today’s agreement with CKB, which marks the first of its kind in Montenegro under the EaSI programme.”* More information can be found [here](#). (For more information: Christian Wigand– Tel.: +32 229 62253; Sara Soumillion – Tel.: + 32 229 67094)

Better Regulation policy simplifies environmental reporting: more information for citizens, less administrative burden

Today the European Commission adopted an [Action Plan](#) to improve citizens’ access to high quality information on environmental issues whilst cutting administrative burdens for industry and public authorities in EU Member States. Europe’s citizens have the right to know how EU policies are improving air and water quality, waste management or nature protection. The Action Plan adopted today will ensure that high quality information is widely available and accessible at the local level. Businesses involved in reporting and regulatory monitoring will face simpler procedures and policy makers will have access to higher quality information to underpin decisions. First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans**, responsible for Better Regulation said, *“This action plan is about simplifying environmental reporting and informing citizens better. It’s a good example of how better regulation helps us uphold our high environmental standards and meet our evidence-based policy objectives.”* Karmenu **Vella**, Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, said: *“Two weeks ago we adopted the new [Bathing Water Report](#) which is of huge interest to anyone who uses Europe’s beaches; last year the information was accessed and searched directly more than a million times.*

This underlines the desire from citizens for useful information that can be processed, understood and shared quickly. Our ambition is to replicate this positive experience for all environmental reporting.” More details [here](#). (For more information: Christian Wigand– Tel.: +32 229 62253; Iris Petsa – Tel.: +32 229 93321)

La Belgique se joint à la coopération européenne sur le calcul à haute performance

La Belgique est le huitième État membre de l’Union européenne à signer la déclaration européenne sur le [calcul à haute performance](#). La Belgique participera aux efforts conjoints pour construire la prochaine génération de superordinateurs en Europe. Le vice-président de la Commission européenne Andrus **Ansip** a déclaré : “Je suis ravi que la Belgique fasse désormais partie de ce projet ambitieux. Les superordinateurs conduisent à de nombreuses applications avec des bénéfices directs pour les citoyens. Mais les pays européens, seuls, ne sont pas capables de construire et d’entretenir une telle infrastructure. C’est pourquoi nous devons unir nos forces, et j’invite encore plus de pays à se joindre à cette initiative”. La [déclaration sur le calcul à haute performance](#) a été lancée et signée à Rome en mars 2017 par l’Allemagne, la France, l’Italie, le Luxembourg, les Pays-Bas, le Portugal et l’Espagne. Plus d’information [ici](#). (Pour plus d’informations : Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 2 296 70 83 ; Inga Höglund – Tel: +32 2 295 06 98)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of joint control of DWS by Goldman Sachs and Eurazeo

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of joint control of Dominion Web Solutions, LLC (‘DWS’) by Goldman Sachs, both of the US and Eurazeo, of France. DWS provides online marketplaces and related digital marketing solutions in the US for the sale of vehicles and equipment. Goldman Sachs is active in global investment banking, securities and investment management services, and Eurazeo is a financial investor. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would not raise competition concerns, because DWS has no, or negligible, actual or foreseen activities 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.8503](#). (For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Federica Mogherini at Kulturanata talks in Finland

On Sunday, High Representative/Vice-President Federica **Mogherini** will visit Finland to participate at Kulturanata talks under the auspices of Mr Sauli Niinistö, President of Finland. She will be attending a panel focussing on the European security issues and foreign policy challenges, together with Børge Brende, Foreign Minister of Norway and Rose Gottemoeller, Deputy Secretary General of NATO. HRVP **Mogherini** will also hold a bilateral meeting with President Niinistö. (For more information: Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32

229 86570; Esther Osorio – Tel.: +32 229 62076)

Vice-President Šefčovič in Astana for the opening of the EXPO 2017 “Future Energy”

On 10-12 June Vice-President for Energy Union Maroš Šefčovič will be travelling to Kazakhstan to visit the World Universal Exhibition EXPO 2017 “Future Energy” in Astana. 115 countries and 20 international organizations will participate in the EXPO 2017. In this context, Vice-President Šefčovič will give a keynote speech at the 8th International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development, held under the auspices of the EXPO. The Forum will focus on energy security, trade and infrastructure, the energy-climate and food nexus, and the development of renewable energy in a regional context. During his visit, he will hold bilateral meetings with Kazakh Prime Minister Sagintayev and Kazakh Energy Minister Bozumbayev and also a series of meetings with Energy Ministers of participating countries. Ahead of the visit, Vice-President Šefčovič said: *“I welcome the determination of Kazakh authorities in pursuing the clean energy transition. This commitment is manifested in the three months World Universal Exhibition which aims at promoting high-technologies for achieving a sustainable and low-carbon energy mix. Kazakhstan has embarked on an ambitious path towards achieving its energy transition. The country also continues to remain a major energy supplier and contributor towards diversification of energy sources for the EU markets. The external dimension of the [Energy Union](#) is key as we strive to work with our partners and neighbours to enhance security of supply, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and ensure affordable energy”*. See the full Energy Ministerial program in Astana [online](#). (For more information: Anca Paduraru – Tel.: +32 229 91269; Nicole Bockstaller – Tel.:+32 229 52589)

Commissioners Arias Cañete, Vella in Bologna for G7 Environment Ministers’ Meeting

On 11-12 June, Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy Miguel Arias Cañete and Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Karmenu Vella will be in Bologna to participate in a Group of 7 (G7) Environment Ministers’ Meeting, chaired by Italian Minister of Environment, Land and Sea Gian Luca Galletti. Taking place under the Italian presidency of the G7, the meeting will focus on implementation of the Paris Agreement on climate change, the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals, resource efficiency, marine litter as well as [financing sustainability](#) to trigger investments for the clean and modern economy supporting jobs and growth. Commissioner Arias Cañete will attend the sessions on 11 June and Commissioner Vella will attend the sessions and the closing press conference on 12 June. Both Commissioners will conduct bilateral discussions in the margins with the participants from other G7 countries. The G7 comprises Canada (with Minister of the Environment and Climate Change Catherine McKenna), France (with Minister of Ecological and Solidary Transition Nicolas Hulot), Germany (with Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety Barbara Hendricks), Italy (with Minister for the Environment Gianluca Galletti), Japan (with Minister of the Environment Koichi Yamamoto), the United Kingdom (with Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Andrea Leadsom) and the United States (with the United States Environmental

Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt). The EU is represented at this G7 meeting by the European Commission. Information on the G7 Environment Ministers' Meeting is available [here](#). (*For more information: Anna-Kaisa Itkonen – Tel.: +32 229 56186; Nicole Bockstaller – Tel.:+32 229 52589*)

[Calendar](#)

The Commissioners' weekly activities

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