

Daily News 11 / 04 / 2017

Bank On Nature: Commission and EIB sign first loan agreement backed by Natural Capital Financing Facility to support biodiversity

The European Commission and the European Investment Bank (EIB) are announcing today the first loan agreement backed by the Natural Capital Financing Facility (NCFF), a financing partnership between the Commission and the EIB supporting nature and climate adaptation projects through tailored loans and investments, backed by an EU guarantee. Today's agreement will see [Rewilding Europe Capital](#) receive a EUR 6 million loan to provide support for over 30 businesses across Europe, focused on restoring and protecting natural areas. This will support and is in line with the upcoming Action Plan of the Commission to improve the implementation of the [EU's Habitats and Birds Directives](#) and is expected to create hundreds of new jobs. Karmenu **Vella**, Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries said, *"Nature is essential for our lives, and our economy. The recent successful evaluation of the EU nature directives illustrated this. The Rewilding Europe project will be the first of many that the Bank on Nature initiative, building on the NCFF, will assist in our plans to create rural jobs and protect nature"*. The rewilding areas concerned are: Western Iberia (Portugal), Velebit Mountains (Croatia), Central Apennines (Italy), Southern Carpathians (Romania), Danube Delta (Romania), Rhodope Mountains (Bulgaria), Oder Delta (Germany/Poland) and Lapland (Sweden). A signing ceremony with Vice-President **Katainen**, Commissioner **Vella** and EIB Vice-President Taylor will take place today at 15.00 and can be followed live on [EbS+](#). A press release will be available at the time [here](#). (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Iris Petsa – Tel.: + 32 229 93321; Enda McNamara – Tel.: +32 229 64976)

EU's Official Development Assistance reaches highest level ever, with €75.5 billion in 2016

New figures confirm that the EU and its Member States have consolidated their place as the world's leading aid donor in 2016. With €75.5 billion in 2016, this constitutes an 11% increase compared to 2015 levels. The EU's assistance has increased for the fourth year in a row and reached its highest level to date. In 2016, EU collective ODA represented 0.51% of EU Gross National Income (GNI), having increased from 0.47% in 2015. Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven **Mimica**, said: *"I am proud that the EU remains the world's leading provider of Official Development Assistance – a clear proof of our commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. We call on all development actors to re-double their efforts to do likewise. And we do not stop there. Leveraging private sector investments, helping mobilise domestic resources and intensifying joint efforts with EU Member States, we seek to make the most of all financing sources for development."* Read the [press release](#) and the [fact sheet](#). (For more information: Carlos Martín Ruiz de Gordejuela – Tel.: + 32 229 65322; Christina Wunder – Tel.: + 32 229 92256)

First Vice-President Timmermans announces Commission plans to revise European Citizens' Initiative Regulation

In a speech this morning at the annual European Citizens' Initiative Day, First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** announced the Commission's plans to revise the European Citizens' Initiative Regulation and further improve the use of this important tool. The First Vice-President said, *"I want to make the ECI more accessible and citizen-friendly. I want the ECI to become a popular and living instrument, one that citizens are familiar with... There are obstacles to a more accessible and citizen-friendly ECI which have their origin in provisions of the ECI Regulation itself. We should take a careful look at those too... This process could culminate in a proposal to revise the ECI Regulation this year."* The Commission will make proposals later this year, based on lessons learned in the five years since the Regulation came into force, and drawing on a public consultation to be launched before the summer. European Citizens' Initiatives were introduced by the Lisbon Treaty as a democratic tool in the hands of citizens. If a registered Initiative receives the signatures of one million citizens from at least seven Member States, the Commission must decide whether or not it will take the requested legislative action, and explain the reasons for that choice. In the first five years, the Commission has registered over 40 Initiatives, which have collected over six million signatures. Three Initiatives have reached the College of Commissioners for discussion after passing the one million signature threshold and two of the three have seen concrete policy actions in response, including in the Commission's 2017 Work Programme. More information on European Citizens' Initiatives is available on the dedicated website [here](#). (For more information: Alexander Winterstein – Tel.: +32 229 93265; Tim McPhie – Tel.: +32 229 58602)

EU releases humanitarian assistance to Africa as needs grow

With an aid of €47 million, the EU will help support the most vulnerable in the Great Lakes as well as in Southern Africa and Indian Ocean region, who continue to face the consequences of years of conflict and displacement, as well as widespread food insecurity and natural disasters. Of this support, €32 million will go to populations in the Great Lakes region – including the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda, Burundi, and Tanzania, while €15 million will go to the Southern Africa and Indian Ocean region, including Madagascar, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Swaziland, and Lesotho. *"We stand in full solidarity with the people of Africa. The assistance announced today will help the millions affected by forced displacement, food insecurity, and natural disasters in the Great Lakes region and in the Southern part of the continent. The EU remains committed to help people in need wherever they are and to leave no one behind,"* said Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides**. Humanitarian partners in Democratic Republic of Congo, where more than 2 million people remain displaced by internal conflict and where malnutrition is high, will receive the main bulk (€22.7 million) of the funding allocated for the Great Lakes region. The

regional impact of the Burundi crisis will also be covered. In Southern Africa and Indian Ocean, funds will go towards helping those affected by food insecurity caused by prolonged drought, as well as to strengthening capacities to manage recurrent disasters. The largest part (€6.2 million) of the package to this region will go to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable in Madagascar, which was hit by the tropical cyclone Enawo last month – one of the most powerful cyclones to have affected the country during the last ten years. *(For more information: Carlos Martín Ruiz de Gordejuela – Tel.: + 32 229 65322; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.:+32 229 69140)*

Capital Markets Union: Commission holds public hearing ahead of Mid-term Review

The Commission is today hosting a public hearing on the progress of the Capital Market Union (CMU) Action Plan and to gather views on the next steps for this flagship project. Vice-President Valdis **Dombrovskis**, responsible for Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union, opened the event in Brussels and Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen** will give a keynote speech. Panellists will include Members of the European Parliament, representatives from national governments, industry and supervisory authorities, as well as consumer and investor associations. Vice-President Valdis **Dombrovskis** said: *“The CMU involves a deep rebalancing of our financial system so we can offer more funding opportunities to our businesses and more investment choices for citizens. We have already delivered more than half of the first batch of 33 actions. We must now build on this solid start and tackle other barriers to cross-border investment. Today’s public hearing is a welcome chance to hear views on how best way to achieve our policy goals”*. Building on the recent public consultation, today’s hearing will inform the preparation of the CMU Mid-term Review, scheduled for June 2017. The programme of the conference is available [here](#). The event is web streamed [here](#). *(For more information: Annika Breidhardt – Tel: +32 229 56153; Letizia Lupini– Tel: +32 229 51958)*

Un rapport de la Commission montre comment la politique de Cohésion de l’UE peut aider les régions à faible revenu et à faible croissance

Dans ce [rapport](#) sur les régions de l’UE qui accusent un retard en matière de croissance ou de richesse, la Commission définit clairement les voies à suivre afin de soutenir des stratégies de croissance régionale avec l’aide des fonds européens. Le rapport évalue ce qui favorise ou entrave la compétitivité de ces régions et les raisons pour lesquelles elles n’ont pas encore atteint les niveaux de croissance et de revenus escomptés. Il identifie également leurs besoins en matière d’investissement – le capital humain, l’innovation, la qualité des institutions ou encore l’accessibilité – ainsi que les instruments de la politique de cohésion de l’UE susceptibles d’aider ces régions à construire leur avenir. La Commissaire européenne chargée de la politique régionale, Corina **Crețu**, a déclaré: *«Pour chaque obstacle au développement, la politique de cohésion propose une solution. Des*

stratégies de développement régional sur mesure peuvent rendre ces régions plus attrayantes pour les habitants, les travailleurs et les entreprises. Voilà ce que nous faisons: nous aidons les régions à cerner leurs besoins et leurs atouts concurrentiels et nous leur fournissons les outils qui leur permettront de mettre en place de meilleures politiques». Un [communiqué de presse](#) et [un mémo](#) sont disponibles en ligne. (Pour plus d'informations: Anna-Kaisa Itkonen – Tel.: +32 229 56186; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tél.: +32 229 56169)

Concentrations: la Commission européenne autorise l'acquisition du Groupe Prosol par Ardian

La Commission européenne a approuvé, en vertu du règlement européen sur les concentrations, l'acquisition de Groupe Prosol par Ardian, les deux basées en France. Le Groupe Prosol est un distributeur au détail en France de fruits et légumes frais, de produits de la mer et de produits laitiers. Ardian est une société de capital-investissement. La Commission a conclu que l'opération envisagée ne soulèverait pas de problème de concurrence dans la mesure où les deux entreprises ne sont pas actives sur le même marché ou sur des marchés liés ou complémentaires. La transaction a été examinée dans le cadre de la procédure simplifiée du contrôle des concentrations. De plus amples informations sont disponibles sur le [site internet](#) concurrence de la Commission, dans le [registre public](#) des affaires sous le numéro d'affaire [M.8442](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission approves acquisition of Hamburg Süd by Maersk Line, subject to conditions

The European Commission has cleared under the EU Merger Regulation the proposed acquisition of container liner shipping company Hamburg Südamerikanische Dampfschiffahrts-Gesellschaft KG (HSDG) of Germany by Maersk Line A/S of Denmark, subject to conditions. Both Maersk Line and HSDG are active worldwide in container liner shipping. The proposed transaction would lead to the combination of two leading container liner shipping companies. Maersk Line is the largest container shipping company, while HSDG is number nine worldwide. The clearance is conditional upon the withdrawal of HSDG from five consortia (Eurosal 1/SAWC, Eurosal 2/SAWC, EPIC 2, CCWM/MEDANDES and MESA) on trade routes connecting (i) Northern Europe and Central America/Caribbean, (ii) Northern Europe and West Coast South America, (iii) Northern Europe and Middle East, (iv) the Mediterranean and West Coast South America and (v) the Mediterranean and East Coast South America. On these routes, the merged entity would have faced insufficient competition after the transaction. Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *“Competitive shipping services are essential for European companies and for the EU's economy as a whole. The commitments offered by Maersk Line and HSDG will maintain a healthy level of competition to the benefit of the very many EU companies that depend on these container*

shipping services.” A full press release is available online in [EN](#), [FR](#), [DE](#) and [DA](#) (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Concentrations: La Commission autorise l’acquisition du contrôle conjoint de trois parcs photovoltaïques par Engie, Omnes Capital et Prédica

La Commission européenne a approuvé, en vertu du règlement européen sur les concentrations, l’acquisition des sociétés françaises PV Besse et PV Sanguinet par la société française Futures Energies Investissements Holdings contrôlée conjointement par les sociétés françaises Engie, Omnes Capital et Prédica Prévoyance Dialogue du Crédit Agricole (“Prédica”). PV Besse exploite un parc photovoltaïque à Besse-sur-Isole dans la région du Var et PV Sanguinet possède deux parcs photovoltaïques à Sanguinet dans la région des Landes. PV Besse et PV Sanguinet sont actuellement contrôlées par Engie. Engie est active dans les secteurs du gaz, de l’électricité et des services énergétiques. Omnes Capital est une société de gestion d’actifs indépendante. Prédica est active dans le secteur de l’assurance et fait partie du Groupe Crédit Agricole. La Commission a conclu que l’acquisition envisagée ne soulèverait pas de problèmes de concurrence en raison des chevauchements limités entre les activités des entreprises concernées au niveau de la production, de la vente en gros et de la fourniture d’électricité, ainsi que du développement de parcs photovoltaïques. La transaction a été examinée en vertu de la procédure simplifiée du contrôle des concentrations. De plus amples informations sont disponibles sur le site internet [concurrence](#) de la Commission, dans le [registre public](#) des affaires sous le numéro d’affaire [M.8413](#). (Pour plus d’informations: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission approves energy consulting joint venture between Siemens and Allgäuer Überlandwerk

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the creation of a joint venture between Siemens AG and Allgäuer Überlandwerk GmbH (AÜW), both of Germany. The joint venture is based in Kempten, Germany and operates under the name of egrid applications & consulting GmbH (egrid). egrid is currently solely controlled by AÜW. It will provide energy consulting services on decentralised electricity networks, primarily in Germany. Siemens has worldwide activities in several areas, in particular digitalisation, automatisisation and electrification. AÜW is a local energy supplier and operator of a distribution network in Allgäu. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns due to the limited activities of the joint venture. 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.8430. (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Eurostat: La production industrielle en baisse de 0,3% dans la zone euro – En baisse de 0,2% dans l'UE28

En février 2017 par rapport à janvier 2017, la production industrielle corrigée des variations saisonnières a diminué de 0,3% dans la zone euro (ZE19) et de 0,2% dans l'UE28, selon les estimations d'Eurostat, l'office statistique de l'Union européenne. En janvier 2016, la production industrielle avait augmenté de 0,3% dans les deux zones. En février 2017 par rapport à février 2016, la production industrielle a progressé de 1,2% dans la zone euro et de 2,1% dans l'UE28. Un communiqué de presse est disponible [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Mirna Talko – Tel.: +32 229 87278; Maud Noyon – Tel.: +32 229 80379)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Stakeholder Forum concludes the Commission's consultation on the future shape of the European Solidarity Corps

Tomorrow in Brussels, a major [Stakeholder Forum](#) will bring together around 500 representatives of volunteering and youth organisations, other civil society actors, public employment services, national authorities and young people, to discuss how to further shape and consolidate the [European Solidarity Corps](#). European Commission President **Juncker** said: "Every gesture of solidarity makes a positive difference to someone. Yet, if we bring individual acts together in a common European effort, a whole society benefits. This is what the European Solidarity Corps is all about. We have to cater for the different needs of our young people, organisations and communities across Europe. We have to ensure that everyone who wants to can take part. And we have to respect and make the most of the diverse cultures and traditions that make our Union what it is." The Stakeholder Forum will focus on how to make attractive offers to both young people and organisations, how to ensure the Solidarity Corps functions effectively, supports participants' transition into the labour market and participation in society, and is open to young people with fewer opportunities. The Stakeholder Forum wraps up a broad consultation process involving a [public consultation](#) and a series of meetings with key interested parties. The input received will feed into the Commission's legislative proposal on the future of the initiative, to be presented in late spring. Already now the European Solidarity Corps offers volunteering opportunities, traineeships and job placements in solidarity projects across Europe. Since the launch in December more than 27,000 young people have registered. The database opened to [organisations](#) in March and the first participants already started their placements. The closing session of the Stakeholder Forum with President **Juncker** and the President of the European Parliament, Antonio Tajani, as well as the opening session with Commissioners **Oettinger** and **Navracsics** and the President of the Committee of the Regions, Markkula, can be followed live via [web-streaming](#). (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: +32 229 56184)

Johannes Hahn in Warsaw tomorrow for the Visegrad group Ministerial meeting on Eastern Partnership

Johannes **Hahn**, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, will be in Warsaw, Poland, tomorrow 12 April to participate at the Ministerial Meeting on Eastern Partnership organised by the [Visegrad Group \(V4\)](#). The meeting will bring together Commissioner **Hahn**, Ministers of Foreign Affairs from EU and from [Eastern Partnership](#) countries ([Armenia](#), [Azerbaijan](#), [Belarus](#), [Georgia](#), [Moldova](#) and [Ukraine](#)). The participants will take stock of the progress on deliverables and will focus their discussions on priority projects, such as connectivity and economic developments. Ahead of the mission, Commissioner **Hahn** said: *“The success of the Eastern Partnership is based on our shared values. Our partnership aims to deliver tangible and visible results for our citizens; results that contribute to greater stability and resilience of the region. I am looking forward to participate at the Visegrad group Ministerial. In the last year, we have been advancing in priority areas – economic development, strengthening institutions and good governance, mobility and people-to-people contacts, and notably connectivity, but still more needs to be done. In Warsaw, I will stress that Eastern Partnership is and will remain our priority for the future.”* Videos and photos of the visit will be available on [EbS](#). (For more information: Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Alceo Smerilli – Tel.: +32 229 64887)

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