

Daily News 11 / 06 / 2018

EU budget: Commission proposes €1.26 billion to reinforce the European Solidarity Corps

For the next long-term EU budget 2021-2027, the Commission is proposing a new programme for the European Solidarity Corps beyond 2020, with €1.26 billion to broaden the opportunities it offers. The new programme will allow at least 350,000 young Europeans to support communities in need between 2021 and 2027 through volunteering, traineeships and job placements. Commissioner for Budget and Human Resources, Günther H. **Oettinger**, said: *“Solidarity is one of the key values in the European Union, and the success of the European Solidarity Corps shows that there’s a high demand of young people to participate in solidarity activities. That’s why we have significantly increased the financial means for the European Solidarity Corps in the next EU budget.”* Tibor **Navracsics**, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, said: *“With this proposal, the European Commission has confirmed its commitment to strengthening solidarity and empowering young people. We are putting everything in place to enable the European Solidarity Corps to grow into a broad community of people and organisations ready to support those in need across our continent and beyond, helping to build resilient, cohesive societies. Young people, in turn, will gain skills, new friendships, and a strong sense of what it feels like to be European.”* Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne **Thyssen**, commented: *“Building on the experience gained so far, this proposal provides for a more inclusive and flexible approach and ultimately a greater freedom of choice for participants, whether they’d like to go on a voluntary or professional placement.”* The new programme will build on the achievements of the Corps in its first years of existence and creates one single entry point for young people ready to engage in solidarity, for instance by including volunteering activities in support of humanitarian aid operations in non-EU countries, previously operating under the [EU Aid Volunteers](#). Additional funding or dedicated activities of shorter duration or within one’s own country, for example, to make it easier for disadvantaged young people to take part in the European Solidarity Corps. More information is available in a [press release](#), [memo](#) and [infographics](#) online. (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Sara Soumillion – Tel.: + 32 229 67094)

Commission adopts proposals amending the association agreement with the Kingdom of Morocco to grant preferences to products from Western Sahara, in line with ECJ ruling

The Commission has today adopted two proposals for Council Decisions in relation to the signature and the conclusion of an agreement between the European Union and the Kingdom of Morocco on the amendment of the EU-Morocco Association Agreement (Protocols No 1 and No 4). The adoption of these proposals follows the December 2016 ruling of the Court of Justice of the

European Union, and aims to respect the Court's ruling and clarify the status of products from Western Sahara for preferential tariff treatment when imported into the EU. The draft Agreement proposes that "products originating from Western Sahara which are subject to the control of the Moroccan custom authorities benefit from the same commercial preferences granted by the EU to products covered by the association agreement". It also aims to contribute to the economic development of Western Sahara by ensuring that exports to the EU originating there will benefit from wide-ranging trade preferences. The proposals are available [here](#) and [here](#) and will now be sent to the Member States in the Council and to the European Parliament for the next steps in the legislative process. Inclusive consultations with a wide variety of Western Saharan local representatives, civil society and other organisations and bodies showed broad support for the socio-economic benefits that the proposed tariff preference would bring, and an accompanying [report](#) that highlights the benefits of the agreement for the local population and economy is available online. These proposals are also concluded without prejudice to the EU's position on Western Sahara, where the EU continues to support the efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General to achieve a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution. Morocco is a key partner in our southern neighbourhood with which the EU has developed a lasting and valuable partnership over many years and areas, and the EU remains committed to strengthening this partnership. (For more information: Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Vanessa Mock – Tel.: +32 229 56194; Lauranne Devillé – Tel.: +32 2 29 80833; Patrick McCullough – Tel.: +32 229 87183)

DiscoverEU: 15,000 travel passes up for grabs to explore the EU this summer

As of tomorrow (12:00 CEST) until 26 June, (12:00 CEST) young people can [apply](#) for a ticket giving them the opportunity to discover their continent from July 2018 until the end of October 2018. [DiscoverEU](#) will enable them to better understand Europe's diversity, enjoy its cultural richness, make new friends and get a sense of their European identity. Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor **Navracsics**, said: "*DiscoverEU offers an excellent opportunity to young people to explore Europe through a personal journey in a way that no book or documentary can. I am confident that this experience will make a positive change – for the young people participating and for the communities they visit. What we are launching tomorrow is an opportunity for 15,000 unforgettable European stories, to be followed by many more later this year and beyond.*" Applicants must be 18 years old on 1 July 2018, EU citizens and prepared to travel this summer. With a budget of €12 million in 2018, DiscoverEU is expected to give at least 20,000 young people the opportunity to travel around Europe this year. Every EU Member State has been allocated a number of travel passes, based on the share of its country's population compared to the overall population of the European Union. The first application round, launched tomorrow, will allow at least 15,000 recipients to explore their continent. A second application round with at least 5,000 tickets will take place in autumn 2018. More information on the application criteria and process is available in a [press release](#) and [memo](#) online. (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: +32 229 56184)

Investment Plan supports renewable energy expansion in Austria

The European Investment Bank (EIB) is lending Energiepark Bruck/Leitha a total of €19.3 million to carry out two new wind farm projects with a joint capacity of 17 MW. Erste Bank is also participating in the €27.3 million financing plan. The EIB financing is guaranteed by the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the heart of the Investment Plan for Europe. Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, said: *“The EU is committed to supporting the clean energy transition in Europe. Financing for wind farms is a long term transaction and high risk by nature, which is where the European Fund for Strategic Investments is essential in providing the EU budget guarantee. It is very positive that the project is cofinanced by the private sector in the form of Erste Bank.”* (Full press release is found [here](#). For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Siobhán Millbright – Tel.: +32 229 57361)

EU steps up its support to fight Ebola in the Democratic Republic of Congo

The European Commission will provide €1.8 million in humanitarian aid to support the ongoing response to the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The funding brings the total EU response to Ebola so far in 2018 to € 3.43 million. *“Since the current Ebola outbreak was declared on 8 May 2018, the EU has immediately supported the efforts of the World Health Organisation and the national authorities to contain the spread of the disease. Previous outbreaks taught us a valuable lesson: we cannot be complacent with Ebola. We cannot let our guard down. This is why today I am strengthening our EU support. This funding will help our humanitarian partners and the authorities to fight and contain the further spread of Ebola,”* said Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management and EU Ebola Coordinator Christos **Stylianides**. The EU aid will support the coordination and logistical operations of the ongoing response, control and prevention of infections, surveillance of exit/entry points of Ebola-affected areas and safe burials. It will also provide general support to primary health centres in the affected areas. The funding is part of overall EU support for the outbreak, which includes the activation of [EU’s Civil Protection Mechanism](#), whereby an isolation system was deployed from Norway to transport quarantined patients in need of specialised treatment. The European Commission’s humanitarian air service [ECHO Flight](#) is also providing a shuttle service from Kinshasa to transport personnel and medical supplies to the affected areas. (For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz De Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)

Commission consults fishermen, industry and society for fishing opportunities in 2019

The Commission has adopted today a [Communication](#) which takes stock of the implementation of [EU’s Common Fisheries Policy](#) and launches the process of consultation on the fishing opportunities for 2019. Via a [public consultation](#), the Commission will consult Member States; Advisory Councils,

which include the fishing industry, non-governmental organisations, and interested citizens. Commissioner Karmenu **Vella**, responsible for the Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, said: *“Restoring the health of our seas and oceans is not a choice, it’s an imperative, and the EU must continue to lead by example. The laudable efforts of our fishermen over the last decade are starting to pay off: Many of our fish stocks, though far from all, are returning to sustainable levels. 2019 will be a crucial year for achieving our shared objectives. Working hand-in-hand – fishermen, industry, civil society and authorities – let us keep up the efforts and keep our ambitions high for our ocean. I look forward to working closely with all parties.”* Recent years have seen significant progress in the management of fisheries resources, notably in northern and western waters, where overfishing has decreased considerably, whilst biomass has increased and in 2016 on average was nearly 39% above 2003 levels. By contrast, moving towards sustainable exploitation in the Mediterranean and the Black Seas remains a challenge. Over recent years, EU fleet has also registered significant improvement in its overall economic performance, with record net profits of €1.3 billion in 2016. More details available [here](#). (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Iris Petsa – Tel.: +32 229 93321)

Commission brings together consumer alternative dispute resolution bodies from across the EU

Today, the Commission kicks off a two-day event in Brussels bringing together more than 350 consumer Alternative Dispute Resolution bodies, businesses, consumer representatives, and Member States authorities from across the EU. Věra **Jourová**, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality said: *“Alternative dispute resolution is an important tool for consumers to enforce their rights, in particular when the value of the dispute is low. I want more businesses to use it; it’s in their interest as it brings consumer trust and helps them avoid costly court procedures.”* Under this framework, consumers can have their disputes with traders resolved quickly, fairly and easily with the help of high-quality [alternative dispute resolution](#) bodies. When the purchase is made online, consumers can also use the European [online dispute resolution](#) (ODR) platform to ask an alternative dispute resolution body for help. Effective alternative and online resolution of consumer disputes is a key pillar under the [New Deal for Consumers](#) proposed by the Commission in April. The Commission is currently conducting a communication campaign to increase business engagement in Alternative Dispute Resolution procedures and on the Online Dispute Resolution platform. (For more information: Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Mélanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659)

Mergers: Commission clears the acquisition of joint control over London Luton Airport by AMP Capital and Aena Internacional

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over London Luton Airport Operations Limited (“LLAO”) of the UK by AMP Capital Investors (UK) Limited (“AMP Capital”) of the UK and Aena Desarrollo Internacional, S.M.E., S.A. (“Aena Internacional”) of Spain. LLAO manages and operates the London Luton Airport. AMP Capital, belonging to the corporate group of AMP Limited of Australia, is active in infrastructure investment and management services, and controls Newcastle

International Airport as well as Leeds Bradford Airport in the UK. Aena Internacional is majority-owned by the Spanish statutory corporation ENAIRE and is active in the management of airport infrastructure. 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.8923](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of a newly created joint venture by Banco de Sabadell and Oaktree Capital Group

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over a newly created joint venture by Bitarte S.A., belonging to the group Banco de Sabadell, both of Spain, and Oaktree Capital Group Holdings GP LLC of the US. The joint-venture will identify, acquire, develop, and commercialise residential plots of land in Spain. Banco de Sabadell is the fourth largest banking group in Spain. Bitarte owns real estate assets under development or awaiting development. Oaktree Capital Group is a global alternative and non-traditional management company with a particular expertise in credit strategies. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns given its limited impact on the market structure. 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.8875](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

STATEMENTS

Speech by Transport Commissioner Violeta Bulc on military mobility at the North Atlantic Council

Commissioner for Transport Violeta **Bulc** today presented the [EU Action Plan on Military mobility](#) to the North Atlantic Council, the principal political decision-making body within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). She said, *“The Action Plan on Military Mobility was developed in the context of our President’s commitment during his State of the Union speech in September 2017, to have a full-fledged Defence Union in place by 2025 (...). It is all about a higher level of security for the EU citizens. And, since many EU countries are members of NATO, it is also about a higher level of security and effectiveness of the military personnel of all NATO allies. That is what we want to concretely achieve, by leveraging EU policies which we already address for civilians. It is a matter of importance to me that when we invest billions of Euros of public money – that we do so in full knowledge of the military requirements and do so jointly, whenever we define these dual use – military and civilian – cases.”* Her full speech is available [here](#). (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Alexis Perier – Tel.: +32 229 69143)

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