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Juncker Plan backs EUR 150 million agreement to upgrade broadband networks in Greece

The [Investment Plan for Europe](#), the so-called “Juncker Plan”, has backed a EUR 150 million EIB loan agreement with Cosmote, a Greek telecommunications operator, to finance enhancements and expansions to its mobile broadband network, significantly increasing the network’s performance in terms of speed, capacity and coverage. This agreement was made possible by the support of the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI).

Pierre **Moscovici**, Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs, Taxation and Customs, said: *“This agreement demonstrates yet again the valuable role the Juncker Plan can play in mobilising investment to support and expand growth-enabling infrastructure in Greece. The agreement also serves as testament to the Commission’s broader strategic objective of seeking to fully exploit the opportunities offered by digital technologies to promote innovation, productivity and growth. The Commission remains committed to supporting investment that will act to secure Greece’s economic recovery.”*

The Juncker Plan is working to boost investment, support jobs and spur growth in Greece and across Europe. As of June 2017, [operations approved in Greece under the EFSI](#) represent a financing volume of over EUR 1.1 billion and are expected to mobilise over EUR 3.3 billion in investments. This project also contributes to meeting Europeans’ growing connectivity needs, promoting [access to high quality networks](#) and boosting Europe’s competitiveness, as foreseen in the [Digital Single Market strategy](#). A full press release is available [here](#). (For more information: Vanessa Mock – Tel.: +32 229 56194; Enda McNamara – Tel.: +32 229 64976)

Commission welcomes agreement by Parliament and Council to protect workers better against cancer-causing chemicals

Today the European Parliament and the Council reached an agreement on the [Commission’s proposal to set new or stricter exposure limits for several cancer-causing chemicals in the workplace](#). Commissioner Marianne **Thyssen**, in charge of Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, welcomed today’s agreement and said: *“Cancer kills more workers than any other work-related disease and causes many families enormous suffering. Today’s agreement therefore marks a milestone in the protection of workers’ health and safety, in particular against cancer at the workplace. Protecting workers’ health and safety in general, and the fight against work-related cancer in particular, are a top priority for this Commission.”* The revision process of the Carcinogens and Mutagens Directive started in 2008, and the Juncker Commission took concrete action to speed up progress in this area. Since May 2016, we have put forward two proposals to amend this Directive and reduce workers’ exposure to 20 cancer-causing chemicals. Both proposals would help save the lives of more than 100,000 workers over the next 50 years. More information can be found in this [statement online](#). (For more information:

Christian Wigand– Tel.: +32 229 62253; Sara Soumillion – Tel.: + 32 229 67094)

Avenir des finances de l'UE: les propositions du Groupe de haut niveau pour simplifier l'accès aux fonds européens

Aujourd'hui, le [Groupe de haut niveau sur la simplification](#) a présenté [son rapport final](#) sur des règles simplifiées pour les fonds européens dans la perspective du prochain cadre budgétaire, après 2020. Ce cadre simplifié bénéficierait autant aux autorités locales, qui gèrent les fonds au quotidien, qu'aux entreprises qui accèderaient plus facilement aux opportunités de financement de l'UE. Ce rapport alimentera directement la discussion sur l'avenir des finances de l'UE que la Commission a lancé le 28 juin avec [un document de réflexion](#) dédié à ce sujet. Par ailleurs, la Commission présente aujourd'hui [trois rapports](#) sur la mise en œuvre du budget de l'UE 2016, permettant de tirer des leçons pour l'avenir. Ces rapports soulignent notamment que des règles plus simples facilitent la vie des autorités locales, des entreprises et des agriculteurs, et leurs permettent d'utiliser au mieux les fonds européens; vous trouverez plus d'informations dans [ce communiqué de presse](#). Le Commissaire au Budget et aux Ressources humaines Günther H. **Oettinger**, la Commissaire à la Politique régionale Corina **Crețu** et Siim Kallas, ancien Vice-Président de la Commission européenne et Président du Groupe de haut niveau sur la simplification, présenteront les propositions du Groupe pour l'après 2020 aujourd'hui en salle de presse de la Commission, après la réunion de midi. Vous pourrez suivre la conférence de presse [en direct](#) et un communiqué de presse, ainsi que plus d'information sur les propositions-clés du groupe, sont disponibles [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d'information: Alexander Winterstein – Tel.: +32 229 93265; Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Andreana Stankova – Tel.: +32 229 57857; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)

HR/VP Mogherini, Commissioner Hahn and Commissioner Bulc at the 2017 Western Balkans Summit – stepping up regional cooperation to advance on the EU path

Federica **Mogherini**, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission, Johannes **Hahn** Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, and Violeta **Bulc**, Commissioner for Transport, will participate at the [2017 Western Balkans Summit](#) which will take place tomorrow 12 July in Trieste, Italy. The Summit will be an opportunity to discuss concrete avenues to strengthen regional cooperation on connectivity, regional economic integration, youth empowerment and people-to-people contacts to further advancing the European Union integration perspective of the region. The High Representative/Vice-President **Mogherini** will represent the EU at the meeting with the Heads of State or Government. Commissioner **Hahn** will attend various side events, including the meeting of Foreign Ministers as well as the [EU – Western Balkans Youth Forum](#), the [Business Forum](#) and the [Civil Society Forum](#), where he will deliver key-note speeches. Commissioner **Bulc** will participate at the meetings of Economic

Development as well as Transport Ministers and will, together with Mogherini and Hahn, also be at the signing ceremony of the Transport Community Treaty.

A full [press release](#) is available online, as is a factsheet "[EU engagement in the Western Balkans](#)". Photos and video of the mission will be on [EBS](#).

Ahead of the Summit, Commissioner **Bulc** will this evening take part in a [special multinational Citizens' Dialogue](#) in Gorizia, on the border between Italy and Slovenia. *(For more information: Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Alceo Smerilli – Tel.: +32 229 64887; Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Alexis Perier – Tel.: +32 229 6 91 43)*

La Commission lance l'Observatoire européen du marché du sucre

[L'observatoire européen du marché du sucre](#) entame dès aujourd'hui ses activités pour soutenir le secteur à mieux faire face à la volatilité des marchés grâce à des analyses et informations sur les tendances des marchés. Le Commissaire à l'agriculture et au développement rural, **Phil Hogan**, [avait annoncé](#) la création d'un tel Observatoire pour le secteur sucrier en début d'année au Salon de l'Agriculture à Paris, répondant ainsi aux demandes des parties prenantes pour des informations régulières et à jour sur les évolutions économiques. Au vu de la fin prochaine des quotas sucriers, l'activité quotidienne de cet Observatoire et ses réunions semestrielles seront particulièrement utiles. La réunion du comité économique de ce jour, présidée par la Commission, rassemblera les représentants de 14 organisations de la chaîne d'approvisionnement et de distribution du sucre: producteurs de betterave, producteurs de sucre, raffineurs, importateurs, acheteurs, négociant, producteurs d'éthanol et d'amidon. Etabli sur le même modèle des deux Observatoires déjà existants, [pour le lait et la viande](#), l'Observatoire du marché du sucre, vise à introduire plus de transparence dans le secteur en partageant des données économiques et des analyses à court-terme. L'agenda du jour portera sur les priorités et le fonctionnement de l'Observatoire et de son comité économique qui adoptera aujourd'hui les règles de procédure. Un Observatoire du marché des céréales sera aussi prochainement lancé. Plus d'informations sur le [lancement](#) de l'Observatoire du marché du sucre et [l'annonce de sa création](#) sont disponibles en ligne. *(Pour plus d'informations: Daniel Rosario – Tel.: +32 229 56185; Clémence Robin – Tel.: +32 229 52509)*

Consumption tax revenues on the rise in 2015, according to new Commission study on taxation trends

Revenues from consumption taxes including VAT and excise duties were up for the EU-28 **as a percentage of GDP in 2015**, a [study published today by the European Commission](#) has found. However, the share of consumption taxes of total revenue rose only slightly to 28.7% compared to 28.5% in 2014. The findings are in the 2017 edition of the Taxation Trends report which takes stock of tax systems in the EU, Iceland and Norway with extensive and comparable data on the different tax structures and rates of Member States. For instance, the report also shows that the average top level of corporate tax fell from 22.5% to 21.9% from 2016-2017. It also provides an analysis on the medium- to long-term evolution of these trends. Taxation is a top priority for the Juncker Commission and providing quality data is a must if we want to develop robust and effective tax policies for the future. This

report, published annually, offers a breakdown of comparative tax levels in the EU and of tax revenues raised from consumption, labour and capital. It also contains data on energy, environmental and property taxation and on the top rates for personal and corporate income taxes. Download the report [here](#). (For more information: Vanessa Mock – Tel.: +32 229 56194; Patrick McCullough – Tel.: +32 229 87183)

College Members meet Japan's Economy Minister Seko and participate in EU-Japan Business Roundtable

Vice-President Andrus **Ansip**, Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen** and Commissioner Cecilia **Malmström** spoke this morning at the [EU-Japan Business Roundtable](#) – a yearly gathering of businesses and policy makers, alternating between Japan and Brussels. The roundtable was the first opportunity to present to European and Japan business leaders last week's [Economic Partnership Agreement](#) reached with Japan. Vice-President for the Digital Single Market **Ansip** accentuated in his [speech](#) that the EU and Japan can bring their digital cooperation to the next level with free flow of personal data based on converging data protection laws, while Trade Commissioner **Malmström** noted in her [speech](#) the new opportunities the companies will be able to enjoy after the Economic Partnership Agreement removes 99 per cent of customs duties and reduces unnecessary red tape. This afternoon, Climate Action and Energy Commissioner Miguel **Arias Cañete** will meet Japan's Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Hiroshige Seko to sign a joint Memorandum of Cooperation on Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) and to exchange views on the state of the EU-Japan energy dialogue. Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen** will also meet Minister Seko to discuss international trade and investment issues. Later in the day, Minister Seko will additionally meet Vice-President **Ansip** and Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality Věra **Jourová** to discuss [data protection, adequacy decisions and data flows between Japan and the EU](#). The EU and Japan have been in a dialogue to promote high data protection standards since January 2017. Last week Commissioner **Jourová** [took stock of progress](#) in this dialogue with Japanese data protection Commissioner Haruhi Kumazawa. Additionally, President **Juncker** and Prime Minister Abe issued last Thursday a [joint declaration](#), reaffirming the importance of ensuring a high level of privacy and security of personal data as a fundamental right and as a central factor of consumer trust in the digital economy. The aim is to strengthen EU-Japan industrial and digital cooperation in various digital fields, including also topics such as the Internet of Things and eGovernment. (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Daniel Rosario – Tel.: +32 229 56185; Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Inga Höglund – Tel.: +32 229 50698)

State aid: Commission approves Danish scheme to promote rail transport interoperability

The European Commission has approved under EU state aid rules a Danish scheme to support rail freight operators' investment in new on-board traffic management equipment. The Danish State will gradually convert all regional and long-distance rail tracks to the [European Rail Traffic Management System](#) (ERTMS). ERTMS is a safety system that enforces a train's compliance with speed restrictions and signalling status. It will enable the creation of a

seamless European railway system, and increase the safety and competitiveness of the European rail sector. The Danish scheme is designed to support the cost for rail freight operators of investing in this new equipment. The state support takes the form of direct grants to be used for fitting the new equipment in eligible new locomotives, and for retro-fitting such equipment in eligible locomotives already in use. The Commission assessed the compatibility of the scheme under the [2008 Commission Guidelines on state aid for railway companies](#). It concluded that the aid granted is necessary to achieve the intended objective of promoting interoperability of railway systems in the EU, in line with the [Directive on rail interoperability](#), and that it is proportionate, in accordance with EU state aid rules. The full press release is available online in [EN](#), [FR](#), [DE](#) and [DA](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889)

State aid: Commission approves Hungarian support scheme for renewable electricity

The European Commission has found the new Hungarian support scheme for renewable electricity to be in line with EU state aid rules. The scheme will help Hungary to reduce CO2 emissions, in line with EU energy and climate goals, whilst preserving competition. Margrethe **Vestager**, Commissioner responsible for competition policy, commented: *“We want to make progress towards clean energy for the sake of our environment but also for European economic growth. The Hungarian support scheme will increase the share of green energy in Hungary’s energy mix, whilst preserving competition in the electricity market. We approved the scheme today.”* Hungary notified plans to support electricity from renewable energy sources in April 2017. The Commission found that the scheme will help Hungary increase the share of renewable energy sources in its energy mix. It promotes the integration of such electricity into the market, in line with the Commission’s [2014 Guidelines on State Aid for Environmental Protection and Energy](#), while limiting distortions of competition due to the state support. The full press release is available online in [EN](#), [FR](#), [DE](#) and [HU](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of DexKo by KPS

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the proposed acquisition of DexKo Global, Inc. by KPS Capital Partners, L.P., both of the US. DexKo is a designer and manufacturer of trailer axles and running gear components. It offers trailer axles and brakes, hubs and drums, chassis, suspension components, and other running gear components. KPS is an investment management fund with investments in a diverse array of industries, including basic materials, branded consumer, healthcare and luxury products, automotive parts, capital equipment and general manufacturing. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns as the two companies do not compete 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 number [M.8539](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Sponda by Blackstone

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of sole control over Sponda Plc (Sponda) of Finland by Blackstone Group L.P. (Blackstone) of the US, via a public tender. Sponda is a public real estate investment company that specialises in leasing business premises and developing and owning properties. Blackstone is a global asset manager with offices in Europe and Asia. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because of 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.8532](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Thyssen co-chairs third Pact for Youth Leaders' meeting

Tomorrow, 12 July, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne **Thyssen**, will co-chair the third [Pact for Youth Leaders' meeting](#) in Brussels, together with Viscount Etienne Davignon and in presence of Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sports, Tibor **Navracsics**. The meeting will gather business leaders and policy makers, who will discuss the progress of the Pact for Youth. Initiated by [CSR Europe](#) together with the European Commission in 2015, Pact for Youth brings together representatives for business, education and youth, as well as the European institutions, with the aim to provide at least 10,000 quality business-education partnerships and 100,000 new good quality traineeships, apprenticeships and entry-level jobs in support of youth employability. The meeting will also focus on ways to mainstream entrepreneurial and soft skills in curricula, in line with the Commission's [New Skills Agenda for Europe](#) as well as its ['Investing in Youth' initiative](#) that both propose to further support entrepreneurial skills. The outcome of the discussions will feed into the Pact for Youth Summit, taking place on 23 November 2017. In the margins of the meeting, Commissioners **Thyssen** and **Navracsics**, in presence of His Majesty the King of Belgium, will meet with young people in their country teams at the Youth Entrepreneurship Exhibition, organised by [JA Europe](#), provider of education programmes for entrepreneurship. The exhibition celebrates the best 200 young entrepreneurs across 36 countries in Europe following a competition in which 300,000 students took part. (For more information: Christian Wigand– Tel.: +32 229 62253; Sara Soumillion – Tel.: + 32 229 67094)

Commissioner Hogan in Turkey: trade and new Turkish geographical indication on the agenda

Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Phil **Hogan**, is today visiting Ankara in Turkey where he will meet his counterpart, the Turkish Minister of Food, Agriculture and Livestock, Faruk Çelik. They will discuss a number of issues related to trade in agri-food products and mark the inclusion of a new Turkish product in the EU's list of geographical

indications. This trip is part of the ongoing Commission's efforts to find new markets and opportunities for European farmers and food producers. *"The significance of this visit and today's meeting is underlined by the fact that Turkey is the European Union's sixth largest supplier of agricultural imports and the 10th largest destination of our exports."* said Commissioner Phil **Hogan** on his visit. *"Given the strong trading relationship in agri-food products, I hope that we can have a constructive engagement in relation to a range of issues of mutual interest and that we can strengthen our relationship to our mutual benefit."* The European Commission just added a Turkish product, ["Malatya Kayısısı"](#) (a dried apricot) to the EU's register of Protected Designations of Origin (PDO). While in Ankara, the Commissioner participated in a ceremony where he handed out to his Turkish counterpart the PDO certificate of the third Turkish product to become a geographical indication. The cooperation with Turkey in the field of agriculture mainly goes through [IPARD](#), the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance in Rural Development. The objective of this instrument is both to provide assistance for the implementation of the acquis concerning the CAP but also to contribute to the sustainable adaptation of the agricultural sector and rural areas in the candidate country. *(For more information: Daniel Rosario – Tel.: +32 229 56185; Clémence Robin – Tel: +32 229 52509)*

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