

Daily News 11 / 10 / 2018

Commission presents new bioeconomy strategy for a sustainable Europe

Today the Commission has put forward an action plan to develop a sustainable and circular bio-economy that serves Europe's society, environment and economy. As announced by President **Juncker** and First Vice-President **Timmermans** in their [letter of intent](#) accompanying President **Juncker's** 2018 [State of the Union Address](#), the new bio-economy strategy is part of the Commission's drive to boost jobs, growth and investment in the EU. Delivering on this objective requires a concerted effort by public authorities and industry. To drive this collective effort the Commission will launch 14 concrete measures in 2019 to scale up and strengthen bio-based sectors, rapidly deploy bioeconomies across Europe and protect the ecosystem. Vice-President for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness Jyrki **Katainen** said: *"It has become evident that we need to make a systemic change in the way we produce, consume and discard goods. By developing our bio-economy – the renewable segment of the circular economy – we can find new and innovative ways of providing food, products and energy, without exhausting our planet's limited biological resources. Moreover, rethinking our economy and modernising our production models is not just about our environment and climate. There is also great potential here for new green jobs, particularly in rural and coastal areas."* Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, Carlos **Moedas**, added: *"The EU aims to lead the way in turning waste, residue and discards into high value products, green chemicals, feed and textiles. Research and innovation plays a key role in accelerating the green transition of the European economy and in meeting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals."* The Commission is hosting a [conference](#) on 22 October in Brussels to discuss the action plan with stakeholders and highlight tangible bio-based products. More information is available in a [press release](#) in all languages and a [factsheet](#). (For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182; Victoria von Hammerstein – Tel.: +32 229 55040; Mirna Talko – Tel.: +32 229 87278)

Juncker Plan: 10,000 Polish small and medium businesses to receive better access to finance

The European Investment Fund (EIF) and Polish company PKO Leasing signed a new agreement for almost €350 million of financing for Polish small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). This agreement is backed by the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the heart of the Investment Plan for Europe – [the Juncker Plan](#)– and COSME, the EU programme for the competitiveness of SMEs. The agreement will benefit 10.000 Polish SMEs; this is the largest ever EIF direct guarantee transaction in Poland under an EU financing programme. Elżbieta **Bieńkowska**, Commissioner for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, said: *"I'm excited that thanks to this new agreement and European Investment Fund direct guarantees, we will be able to support over 10.000 Polish SMEs and provide them with financing worth 1.5*

billion PLN. Polish small and medium businesses are competitive and often what they need is just an additional boost to launch new products, expand beyond their local markets and develop their research and innovation capacity. This new EFSI-backed agreement will help them do just that. The Investment Plan for Europe is already expected to provide 43.000 Polish small businesses with better access to this European finance instrument and the new agreement will contribute further to this EU-Polish success story on the ground". The Juncker Plan is now set to generate over €344 billion in investment across Europe, including €15 billion in Poland, and to support 787,000 businesses. A full press release is available [here](#). (For more information: Christian Spahr – Tel .: +32 229 50055 Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel .: +32 229 56169)

Sparkasse Bank, the first bank in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to lend to start-up businesses under the EU's Employment and Social Innovation programme

Sparkasse Bank Makedonija and the [European Investment Fund](#) signed yesterday an agreement, under the [European Programme for Employment and Social Innovation \(EaSI\)](#), worth €1.5 million which will be made available to support start-up businesses. More specifically, under its brand new 'Step by Step'-programme, Sparkasse will make available financial guarantees to support the development of young and ambitious entrepreneurs who want to create their own business and are in need of financial resources to do so. Commenting on the transaction, Marianne **Thyssen**, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, said: *"Young entrepreneurs often face difficulties in accessing credit from traditional banking sources. With the help of financial guarantees from the EU's Employment and Social Innovation Programme, Sparkasse will offer start-up businesses loans at a reduced interest rate and less collateral requirements. This is a concrete example of how the European Commission boosts employment and social inclusion."* "Step by Step" is the first full accelerator programme of its kind, with a possibility of lending an amount of up to €25,000 and providing educational, financial and mentoring support. As for the European Commission's Programme for Employment and Social Innovation: this guarantee scheme was launched in June 2015 and aims at supporting the EU's objective of high level employment, adequate social protection, fighting against social exclusion and poverty and improving working conditions. It is funded by the European Commission and managed by the European Investment Fund. (For more information: Christian Wigand– Tel.: +32 229 62253; Sara Soumillion – Tel.: + 32 229 67094)

The European Fiscal Board 2018 Annual Report

The European Fiscal Board has published its [second annual report](#) that reviews the way the EU fiscal framework was implemented in 2017. The report provides a comprehensive and independent assessment of the implementation of the Stability and Growth Pact in 2017 and will feed into the discussions in the context of the European Semester and the deepening of the Economic and Monetary Union. [The European Fiscal Board](#) is an independent body mandated to advise the European Commission on the overall direction of fiscal policy of the euro area and to evaluate how the EU fiscal governance framework is implemented. It was formally established end 2015 and began operating shortly

after its members were appointed in October 2016. (For more information: Christian Spahr – Tel.: +32 229 50055; Annikky Lamp– Tel.: +32 229 5615)

Commission decides to harmonise radio spectrum for Internet of Things

Today, the European Commission adopted an Implementing Decision to harmonise the radio spectrum for use by short-range devices in 874-876 and 915-921 MHz bands. This decision will facilitate a variety of applications in support of the [Internet of Things](#) like smart cities, smart homes, smart farming and smart transport systems. For businesses, for instance, it will support advanced radio-frequency identification technology helping factories in their inventory management of raw materials to save time. Today's decision to harmonise radio spectrum provides a long-term strategy to counterbalance fragmentation in these bands across Europe. Until now, Member States used these bands for different purposes such as short-range devices or railway communications. Radio spectrum waves are the basis for Wi-Fi, mobile phones and other wireless communication devices. Today's decision follows a positive opinion by the Member States in the [Radio Spectrum Committee](#), which is chaired by the Commission. In the future, once [the new EU Communications Code](#) will enter into force, radio spectrum will be assigned and coordinated even better at EU level than at the moment so that Europe can become a leader in the roll-out of 5G networks. This Decision complements other spectrum initiatives related to 5G, which are ongoing in other frequency bands (namely 700 MHz, 3.6 GHz and 26 GHz) and foresee further availability of spectrum by 2020. More information on [today's decision](#), the [EU spectrum policy framework](#) and an [overview of Spectrum in the EU](#) is available online. A factsheet on spectrum is available [here](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: [+32 229 67083](#); Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: [+32 229 56184](#))

International Day of the Girl Child 2018: Commission promotes girls' participation in digital economy

Today, on the occasion of this year's International Girl Child's Day, having the theme 'With Her: A Skilled GirlForce', Mariya **Gabriel**, Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society stresses the need to continue her work to increase the participation of women in the digital sector. While support for young women is decisive, actions to promote role models and encourage girls early on to learn digital skills and take up STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering Arts and Math) subjects are crucial to achieve a sustainable increase in the long run. This was also reflected in the recent Commission study [Women in the digital age](#) showing that only 24 out of every 1000 female graduates having an ICT related subject – of which only six go on to work in the digital sector. Mariya **Gabriel**, Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society: "Women are under-represented at all levels in the digital sector in Europe. Although the digital sector is rapidly growing, creating many new jobs every year, the share of women in this sector keeps decreasing. We need to focus on girls now, if we want to change this trend in the future. If we manage to support girls now, more women will enter the digital jobs market later, and will boost the European GDP with €16 billion every year." [On 6 March](#), the International Women's Day, Commissioner Gabriel outlined her [Women](#)

[in Digital Strategy](#), including a number of actions to facilitate an increase in the participation of women in the digital sector. Soon, the European Commission will release this year's edition of the 'Women in Digital Scoreboard', giving an overview of indicators measuring the participation of women in the digital economy. An [infographic on the Women in Digital Strategy and EU actions](#) in the field as well as [inspirational talks](#) from successful women in the digital sector are available online. (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: +32 229 56184)

Commission welcomes the political agreement reached by Ministers on new European rules on business restructuring and second chance for entrepreneurs

The Justice Ministers reached today a general approach on the [Directive](#) on insolvency, restructuring and second chance, proposed by the Commission in November 2016. This initiative will increase the opportunities for companies in financial difficulties to restructure early on so as to prevent bankruptcy and avoid laying off staff. It will ensure that honest entrepreneurs get a second chance at doing business after a bankruptcy. It will also lead to more effective and efficient insolvency procedures throughout the EU. Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, Věra **Jourová** said: *"This proposal will make a big difference for our businesses, for their investors, employees and the society as a whole. Honest entrepreneurs should be able to have a second chance, instead of being penalised for failing in their first business attempt. This is what our proposal is about: changing the European entrepreneurship culture to contribute to economic growth."* The Commission's proposal focuses on three key elements: common principles on preventive restructuring frameworks, rules to allow entrepreneurs to benefit from a second chance, and targeted measures for Member States to increase the efficiency of insolvency, restructuring and discharge procedures. The European Parliament has confirmed its mandate in September. The first 'trilogue' meeting between negotiators of the European Parliament, Council and Commission will start soon. More information on the proposal is available in the [press release](#), [Q&A](#) and [factsheet](#) published at the time of the proposal. (For more information: Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Melanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229-58659)

Partenariat UE-Afrique sur l'agriculture: 4^{ème} réunion de la Taskforce sur l'Afrique rurale à Bruxelles

La Taskforce sur l'Afrique rurale tient aujourd'hui et demain, 11 et 12 octobre, sa [4^{ème} réunion](#) à Bruxelles. Le commerce, les chaînes de valeur, l'intégration des marchés régionaux et les normes sanitaires et phytosanitaires seront au cœur des discussions de cette rencontre. Par ailleurs, des représentants africains et européens d'ONG, d'organisations agricoles régionales, et d'autres groupes institutionnels et privés viendront débattre avec les membres de la Taskforce cet après-midi. Le Commissaire à l'agriculture, Phil **Hogan** a dit: *"L'approche d'un partenariat économique entre partenaires égaux est déjà à l'œuvre dans les discussions EU-Afrique sur l'agriculture et le développement rural. La Taskforce, et ses 11 membres*

africains et européens travaillant ensemble pour produire des recommandations et des idées neuves dans les domaines de l'agriculture, l'agro-alimentaire, la finance la recherche et la production durable, en est un parfait exemple." Créée à l'initiative de la Commission européenne au mois de mai dernier, le groupe a pour vocation de livrer des recommandations sur le rôle du secteur agro-alimentaire et agro-industriel européen dans le développement économique durable de l'Afrique. Le rapport final, attendu en janvier 2019, sera axé entre autres sur la création d'emplois et le soutien aux jeunes actifs dans le secteur agro-alimentaire en Afrique. Les relations EU-Afrique sont une des priorités de la Commission européenne, qui a récemment lancé une [nouvelle alliance Afrique-Europe](#) pour stimuler les investissements et créer des emplois. Plus d'informations sur la Taskforce sur l'Afrique rurale, ses objectifs et sa composition sont [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Daniel Rosario – Tel.: + 32 229 56182; Clémence Robin – Tel.: +32 229 52509)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of assets belonging to CaixaBank by Lone Star

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of sole control over a portfolio of real estate owned assets (the "Pacific Portfolio") of BuildingCenter of Spain, and of ServiHabitat Servicios Inmobiliarios of Spain, both belonging to CaixaBank (together, the "CaixaBank Assets"), by Lone Star (through a subsidiary in Luxembourg). The CaixaBank Assets provide real estate management services for the Pacific Portfolio as well as other real estate properties, owned by CaixaBank or other companies. Lone Star is a private equity firm that invests globally in real estate, equity, credit, and other financial assets. 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.9055](#). (For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

EU fuel labelling: clearer information for consumers and operators

Tomorrow, a new harmonised set of fuel labels will appear across Europe. They will give drivers better information on the suitability of fuels for their vehicles wherever they travel in the EU, helping them avoid misfuelling and informing on the environmental impact of their choice. This initiative is taken on the basis of Article 7 of the Alternative fuels infrastructure Directive of October 2014 and in line with the Commission's [Action Plan on Alternative Fuels Infrastructure](#), adopted in November 2017, which sets out a number of support actions to accelerate the roll out of infrastructure, increase investments and improve consumer acceptance. It also complements the Juncker Commission's proposals "[Europe on the Move](#)" for a clean, safe and connected mobility. A full press release and memo explaining the new labels will be available tomorrow. (For more information: Anna-Kaisa Itkonen – Tel.: +32 229 56186; Lynn Rietdorf – Tel.: +32 229 74959)

STATEMENTS

Protecting workers against cancer-causing chemicals: Statement by Commissioner Thyssen following the agreement between the EU institutions

Today, the European Parliament and the Council came to an agreement on the [Commission's second proposal to broaden the list of recognised cancer-causing chemicals in the workplace](#). With this agreement, 8 additional cancer-causing chemicals will be covered by the [Carcinogens and Mutagens Directive](#), including diesel exhaust. Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne **Thyssen**, welcomed the agreement with the following statement: *"Today we took another important step in protecting European workers from work-related cancer. The European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council, reached an agreement on legislation covering a further eight cancer-causing chemicals, including diesel exhaust. This will ensure better protection for more than 20 million workers in Europe. Workers in the chemical, metal and car industry, professional drivers, construction workers and workers in the dock and warehouse sector, in particular, will benefit. At the same time, it will make our internal market simpler and fairer, with particular attention to help small and micro-enterprises comply with health and safety rules. I extend my thanks to all parties who made this result possible, and would like to acknowledge in particular the efforts made by the Austrian Presidency and its predecessors on behalf of the Council, as well as rapporteur Claude Rolin and the shadow rapporteurs on behalf of the European Parliament. I hope this agreement will be confirmed quickly, so we can make a real difference on the ground and prevent more than 100,000 cancer deaths over the next 50 years."* The full statement can be found [here](#). (For more information: Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Sara Soumillion – Tel.: + 32 229 67094)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Oettinger hosts a conference on the EU budget for the future

On 12 October, Mr Günther H. **Oettinger**, European Commissioner in charge of Budget and Human Resources, will host the conference *"EU budget for the future – The road ahead"*, the fourth edition of the European Commission's annual conference on the EU budget. The event is taking place following the publication of the Commission's proposal for [the EU's long-term budget post-2020](#). Its goal is to gather further feedback and continue the debate on the strategic choices and policy decisions that shape a modern, fair and balanced EU budget for the future. Keynote speakers include Ms Helle Thorning-Schmidt, CEO of Save the Children, and European Commission Vice-President Mr Jyrki **Katainen**. Members of the European Parliament, senior government officials, representatives of academia and the civil society will also take part. More information about the participants and the latest [programme](#) are available [online](#). The conference will be broadcast live in all EU languages [here](#). The parallel sessions can be followed [here](#) and [here](#). Photo and video material will be available on [EbS](#). For media accreditations, contact the Spokesperson's Service. (For more information: Alexander

Winterstein – Tel.: +32 229 93265; Andreana Stankova – Tel.: +32 229 57857)

Le commissaire Navracsics participe à la cérémonie d'ouverture de la conférence sur le patrimoine religieux à Paris

Tibor **Navracsics**, commissaire chargé de l'éducation, de la culture, de la jeunesse et des sports, a ouvert aujourd'hui à Paris la conférence semestrielle intitulée "[Patrimoine religieux – Un patrimoine européen pour l'avenir](#)", organisée par le réseau "L'avenir du patrimoine religieux". *"Je suis impatient de débattre du rôle du patrimoine religieux dans l'Europe d'aujourd'hui, y compris des moyens de restaurer ce patrimoine hérité d'institutions religieuses et des possibilités de le réutiliser pour d'autres usages culturels"*, a déclaré le commissaire Navracsics avant la conférence. Le Commissaire clôturera également l'initiative de la [Torche du Patrimoine et de la Culture](#), inspirée du flambeau olympique d'Athènes, visant à sensibiliser et à préserver l'importance du patrimoine religieux européen en recueillant les témoignages de personnalités venant de toute l'Europe. Le réseau "L'avenir du patrimoine religieux" est une organisation non religieuse et à but non lucratif, cofinancée par le programme [Europe Créative](#) de l'Union européenne, qui mène à bien une série d'activités dans le cadre de [l'Année européenne du patrimoine culturel](#). (*Pour plus d'informations: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tél.: +32 229 67083, Joseph Waldstein Tél.: +32 2 29 56184*)

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