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European Commission welcomes first operational steps towards a European Defence Union

The Commission welcomes the plans presented by 25 EU Member States today to work together on a first set of 17 collaborative defence projects in the framework of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). President **Juncker** said: *"In June I said it was time to wake up the Sleeping Beauty of the Lisbon Treaty: permanent structured cooperation. Six months later, it is happening. I welcome the steps taken today by Member States to lay the foundations of a European Defence Union. Europe cannot and should not outsource our security and defence. The European Defence Fund that the European Commission proposed will complement these efforts and act as a further incentive for defence cooperation – including potential funding for some of the projects presented today."* PESCO is an instrument in the EU Treaty to enable willing Member States to pursue greater cooperation in defence and security. Since November, 25 Member States have notified their intention to launch Permanent Structured Cooperation on defence to High Representative Federica **Mogherini**. Today, these Member States signed a Declaration announcing the preparation of [first collaborative projects](#) in areas including the setting up of an EU medical headquarters, maritime surveillance, underwater drones and cyber-defence. While PESCO is purely intergovernmental, the [European Defence Fund proposed by the European Commission](#) in June will create incentives for Member States to cooperate on joint development and the acquisition of defence equipment and technology through co-financing from the EU budget and practical support from the Commission. This could include some of the projects presented by Member States today in the framework of PESCO. Additionally, the Fund fully finances grants for collaborative research projects, with first grant agreements expected to be signed before the end of 2017. Member States are expected to reach agreement on the European Defence Fund at a Council meeting tomorrow. A press release is [available online](#). (For more information: Margaritis Schinas – Tel.: +32 229 60524; Mina Andreeva – Tel.: +32 229 91382; Lucía Caudet – Tel.: +32 229 56182)

Capital Markets Union: Commission announces new tax guidelines to make life easier for cross-border investors

The Commission has today put forward new guidelines on withholding taxes to help Member States reduce costs and simplify procedures for cross-border investors in the EU. The new [Code of Conduct](#) offers solutions for investors who, as a result of how withholding taxes are applied, end up paying taxes twice on the income they receive from cross-border investments. A withholding tax is a tax withheld at source in the EU country where investment income such as dividends, interests, and royalties is generated. These levies provide a way for Member States to ensure that taxes are being applied appropriately on cross-border transactions. Since the income is often taxed

again in the Member State where the investor is resident, problems of double taxation can result. Investors do have the right to claim a refund when double taxation occurs but refund procedures are currently difficult, expensive and time-consuming. Today's recommendations, developed alongside national experts, form part of the [EU's Capital Markets Union Action Plan](#) and should improve the system for investors and Member States alike. In particular, the Code of Conduct aims to reduce the challenges faced by smaller investors when doing business cross-border. It should result in quick, simplified and standardised procedures for refunding withholding taxes where appropriate. You can find a full press release [online](#). The Code of Conduct will be presented to stakeholders at a public hearing organised by the European Commission on 30 January 2018. You can register [here](#). (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Patrick McCullough – Tel.: +32 229 87183; Letizia Lupini – Tel.: +32 229 51958)

No region left behind: launch of the Platform for Coal Regions in Transition

On Monday 11 December Maroš Šefčovič, Vice-President of the European Commission in charge of the Energy Union, Miguel Arias Cañete, Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy and Corina Crețu, Commissioner for Regional Policy in Strasbourg, will launch a Platform for Coal Regions in Transition. This Platform is one of the elements of the Coal and Carbon-Intensive Regions in Transition Initiative, a key action from the Clean Energy for All Europeans Package ([IP/16/4009](#)). The aim of the Platform is to assist Member States and regions in their efforts to modernise their economies and prepare them to deal with the structural and technological transition in coal regions. The EU's commitment to a clean energy transition is irreversible and non-negotiable. In this shift to a modern and clean economy the goal of the Commission is to ensure that no regions are left behind when moving away from an economy driven by fossil fuels. The Platform will facilitate the development long-term strategies in coal and carbon intensive regions to boost the clean energy transition by bringing more focus on social fairness, new skills and financing for the real economy. To this end the Commission will bring together European Union officials, national, regional and local stakeholders involved in the transition to help them foster partnerships and learn from each other's experiences. The Platform's activities will initially focus on coal regions, with the aim to expand to carbon-intensive regions in the future. The launch takes place on the eve of the "[One Planet Summit](#)" convened by the French President Emmanuel Macron to mark the second anniversary of the Paris Agreement on climate. At the summit, the Commission will reconfirm its commitment for a forward-looking climate policy and show that the EU is leading the fight against climate change by example and through action. The Platform launch event on Monday is open to media and will take place at the Hemicycle of the Regional Council of the Grand Est Region in Strasbourg, see full [programme](#). A joint press conference is scheduled at 17:00 CET at Room Marcel Rudloff, [Europe by Satellite](#) will transmit. The full press release is available [online](#) in all EU languages. (For more information: Anna-Kaisa Itkonen – Tel.: +32 229 56186; Nicole Bockstaller – Tel.: +32 229 52589; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)

€700 million to support refugees in Turkey through flagship humanitarian aid

programmes

The Commission has announced today additional humanitarian aid for two major projects through the EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey that both work by providing monthly transfers on a special debit card. €650 million goes to the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) which is implemented by the World Food Programme. A further €50 million will boost the Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE) project implemented by UNICEF. *“The EU is an innovator in humanitarian aid and we are stepping up funding for programmes that are bringing real results to over one million people. With €1 billion in funding, the Emergency Social Safety Net is improving lives and helping refugees and their host communities in Turkey. This is complemented by a programme encouraging children to go to school, by providing additional money on the same card. Let me commend the generosity of the Turkish people in hosting so many refugees,”* said Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides**. The [ESSN programme](#) works by providing monthly transfers to the most vulnerable refugees via a special debit card, allowing them to purchase essential items. It already supports over 1.1 million refugees and will continue until the end of January 2019 with this additional funding. Today’s announcement brings total funding to the ESSN to €1 billion. The CCTE project, [announced earlier this year](#), supports refugee families who register their children for school and ensure that they attend regularly. The programme, delivered by UNICEF, helps cover the costs of education and supports families to send their children to school. The project has now reached the families of over 167,000 children, and aims to help 250,000 refugee children during its first year. Read the full press release [here](#). (For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz De Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 2 296 53 22; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 2 296 91 40)

L’UE clôture les négociations avec la Tunisie en vue d’un nouvel accord aérien

L’Union européenne a aujourd’hui clôturé les négociations et paraphé un ambitieux accord sur les services aériens avec la Tunisie. Celui-ci entraînera une amélioration de l’accès au marché pour les compagnies aériennes, offrira aux passagers une meilleure connectivité, un choix plus large et des tarifs moins élevés. Ce nouvel accord devrait se traduire par 800 000 passagers supplémentaires sur une période de cinq ans. L’augmentation du nombre de vols signifie également la création d’emplois et de richesses pour l’ensemble des partenaires. On estime que l’accord pourrait générer 2,7 % de croissance du PIB liée aux voyages et au tourisme. S’exprimant à Tunis, M^{me} Violeta **Bulc** a déclaré à ce propos: *«Nous progressons aujourd’hui dans la réalisation des objectifs de la stratégie de l’UE en matière d’aviation, mais nous amenons également nos relations avec la Tunisie vers de nouveaux sommets. Cet accord aérien ambitieux permettra d’améliorer l’accès au marché et contribuera à la mise en place des niveaux les plus élevés en matière de sécurité, de sûreté et de protection de l’environnement. C’est une excellente nouvelle pour le tourisme, pour les passagers et pour les entreprises!»* Cet accord a été négocié par la Commission européenne dans le cadre de sa [stratégie de l’aviation pour l’Europe](#), une initiative importante visant à donner un nouvel élan à l’aviation européenne et à offrir de

nouveaux débouchés. Plus de renseignements sont disponibles [ici](#). (Pour plus d'information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Alexis Perier – Tel.: +32 229 69143)

New scientific standards to help early diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease

Today, the European Commission releases [new scientific standards](#) to help early detection of Alzheimer's disease. These newly developed standards will serve to calibrate diagnostic tools for more accurate diagnosis and may facilitate the development of new drugs to fight the disease that, together with other forms of dementia, is estimated to cost EUR 167.5 billion per year in the EU. Welcoming the new standards, Vytenis **Andriukaitis**, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, said: *“Early diagnosis is of key importance for people with Alzheimer's, as early treatment can delay the development of the disease and help keep them autonomous for longer.”* Tibor **Navracsics**, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, responsible for the [Joint Research Centre which developed the certified reference material](#) in close collaboration with the International Federation of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine and with support of the Alzheimer's Association, said: *“By putting this new instrument at the disposal of researchers and industry, we are making an important step to contain Alzheimer's disease one day, which destroys irreversibly the memory of affected people, and greatly diminishes their quality of life.”* Dementia is affecting large numbers of people and is a major burden for society. Alzheimer's disease is the most common type of dementia affecting 50 – 70 % of all patients. The EU has been supporting brain research for many years through Framework Programmes for Research and Innovation, including the current one, [Horizon 2020](#), reaching some €500 million a year for basic as well as translational research. (For more information: Anca Paduraru, Tel.: [+32 2 299 12 69](#); Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: [+32 229 67083](#); Aikaterini Apostola, Tel.: [+32 2 298 76 24](#); Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: [+32 229 56184](#)).

Urban mobility: Toruń and Wrocław develop tram networks with EU funds

€81.5 million from the [Cohesion Fund](#) is invested in the tram fleet and network in the Polish cities of Toruń and Wrocław. Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina **Crețu** said: *“Getting around Toruń and Wrocław will be smoother thanks to these Cohesion policy investments. At the same time this is a new example of how EU funds help us reach our EU-wide objectives of clean mobility.”* In Toruń almost €45 million will help buy 5 trams, 20 hybrid and electric buses, renovate old tram tracks and build a new one connecting the city centre with the northern residential district of Jar. Works should be completed by 2021. The investment is part of the “BiT-City” project, Toruń's public transport strategy. In Wrocław, €36.5 million will help replace the old tram rolling fleet with 56 new, energy efficient trams. Not only will it improve air quality and mobility in the city, but it will also make the city's transport systems more accessible for persons with disabilities. (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel .: +32 229 58615, Sophie Dupin from Saint-Cyr – Tel .: +32 229 56169)

Solidarité avec l'Italie: des investissements européens dans la prévention du risque sismique dans la région du Latium

28 millions d'euros supplémentaires du Fonds européen de développement régional ([FEDER](#)) sont alloués à la région du Latium, touchée par les terribles tremblements de terre de 2016 et 2017 qui ont frappé le centre de l'Italie. A ces 28 millions d'euros de l'Union Européenne s'ajoute un montant similaire de cofinancement national pour le Latium. Cet argent servira à améliorer la résistance sismique des bâtiments publics dans la région. La Commissaire à la politique régionale Corina **Crețu** a déclaré: *“Les mois et les années passent, mais pour les Italiens qui ont tout perdu dans la catastrophe, les blessures restent vives. Ils n'ont pas oublié, et l'Europe ne les a pas oubliés. Nous continuons de soutenir l'Italie, à long terme, et avec ces investissements nous nous tournons vers l'avenir.”* L'argent provient de l'enveloppe supplémentaire d'1,6 milliards d'euros de fonds européens que l'Italie va recevoir suite à la réévaluation en 2016 de tous les budgets nationaux de la politique de Cohésion pour la période 2014-2020, afin de prendre en compte l'impact de la crise; [l'ajustement technique](#). Il y a deux semaines [la Commission a annoncé](#) que la région de l'Ombrie allait recevoir 28 millions d'euros de plus afin de soutenir la reprise économique et les efforts de reconstruction, notamment de la basilique San Benedetto à Norcia. Plus d'information sur le soutien de l'UE suites aux tremblements de terre en Italie est disponible [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)

EU develops practical instrument to combat rare diseases

The European Commission has defined a [uniform standard](#) for the collection of data on rare diseases in Europe, which will allow to improve the treatment for patients. This is a first step towards ensuring that the data collected by European registries is comparable and the data registries are interoperable. Vytenis **Andriukaitis**, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, said: *“The real challenges of researching, diagnosing and treating rare diseases are linked to scarce and scattered knowledge, fragmented research efforts and expensive treatments. Therefore, cooperation at EU level can make a real difference to patients with rare diseases. By pooling together knowledge and expertise, we can reach results that no single country could reach in isolation.”* Tibor **Navracsics**, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, responsible for the Joint Research Centre, said: *“Rare disease patient registries and databases are key instruments for developing clinical research and improving patient care. They enable to pool data in order to obtain sufficient sample sizes for research, but they cannot work in isolation. The standard that has been developed for the registration of the data will enable all these registries to be on the same page, which on the longer term will facilitate and speed up research in this area.”* In the EU there are more than 6000 distinct rare diseases, affecting around 30 million people. The “Set of Common Data Elements for Rare Diseases Registration” defines the minimum data elements to be registered by all rare diseases registries across Europe, and provides instructions on how and in which format each data element should be registered. (For more information: Anca Paduraru, Tel.: [+32 2 299 12 69](#); Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: [+32 229 67083](#); Aikaterini Apostola, Tel.: [+32 2 298 76 24](#); Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: [+32 229](#)

[56184](#))

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Thames Water by OMERS

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the proposed acquisition of Thames Water of the UK by Omers Administration Corporation (“OMERS”) of Canada. Thames Water is a private utility company that is primarily active in the regulated provision of integrated water and sewerage services to household customers in the Thames Valley region. OMERS is the administrator of the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System Primary Pension Plan in Canada. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns as the two companies are not active 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.8722](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

Aides d’État: la Commission autorise une mesure visant à développer 105 mégawatts d’énergie hydraulique en France

La Commission européenne a autorisé une mesure de financement public français visant à augmenter la production hydroélectrique. Deux appels d’offres seront organisés pour la construction et l’exploitation de centrales hydroélectriques en France, pour une capacité totale de 105 mégawatts. Cette mesure permettra à la France d’augmenter la part d’électricité produite à partir de sources d’énergie renouvelables et de réduire ses émissions de CO₂, conformément aux [objectifs environnementaux de l’UE](#). Les bénéficiaires recevront les aides publiques sous la forme d’une prime s’ajoutant au prix de l’électricité sur le marché. Ils seront donc tenus de réagir aux signaux du marché, ce qui minimisera les distorsions de la concurrence engendrées par le soutien de l’État. Sur cette base, la Commission a conclu que la mesure était conforme aux règles de l’UE en matière d’aides d’État, et en particulier aux [lignes directrices de 2014 concernant les aides d’État à la protection de l’environnement et à l’énergie](#). Plus d’informations seront disponibles dans le [registre des aides d’État](#) sur le [site internet de la DG Concurrence](#) sous le numéro SA.49181. (Pour plus d’informations: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

Commission welcomes Italy’s efforts to notify eID led by private sector

Italy took the first step to start the notification process for their [electronic identification](#) (eID) scheme under the [eIDAS Regulation](#). It is the first Member State with an eID system led by the private sector to start this process. The notification of this eID scheme will enable Italian citizens and businesses to use their electronic identities to access online public services and private services across Europe. All Member States have committed to speed up the EU-wide usage of eIDs in the [Tallinn Declaration on eGovernment](#). Italy’s pre-notification together with [Germany’s notification](#) earlier this year are leading the way in the uptake. Italy’s pre-notification additionally emphasises the key roles of both the private and the public sector in building a trustworthy EU-wide eID ecosystem. The Commission

encourage similar uptake in the whole EU as part of its [2014 Regulation on electronic identification and trust services for electronic transactions in the internal market](#) (eIDAS Regulation). Further details are available [here](#) as well as in Vice-President Ansip's [blog post](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel. +32 229 67083; Inga Höglund – Tel.: +32 229 50698)

MEDIA-supported films sweep the main prizes at the 30th European Film Awards

This Saturday, the European Film Awards celebrated the best of European cinema in Berlin. [Seven films](#), supported by the EU Creative Europe [MEDIA programme](#) received awards. Ruben Östlund's *The Square* (Sweden, Germany, France, Denmark) got the Best European Film, Comedy, Actor (Claes Bang) Scriptwriter and Director Awards. [Loving Vincent](#) (Poland, UK), the world first fully painted animated feature got awarded the European Animated Featured Film Prize. Other prize winners are indicated [here](#). Overall, the EU has invested €6.5 million through the Creative Europe MEDIA programme to support the development and distribution of the [16 films nominated at EFA](#). Find out more about the winners on [EFA's website](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel. +32 229 67083; Inga Höglund – Tel.: +32 229 50698)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

One Planet Summit: la Commission européenne célèbre les 2 ans de l'accord de Paris

La Commission européenne sera largement représentée au «[One Planet Summit](#)», organisé par le Président de la République française Emmanuel Macron à Paris le 12 décembre 2017. Ce sommet a été initié par le Président français à l'occasion du deuxième anniversaire de [l'accord de Paris](#) sur le climat. Pour réaffirmer l'engagement de la Commission en faveur d'une politique climatique tournée vers l'avenir, la délégation de la Commission est conduite par le Vice-président chargé de l'Union de l'énergie, Maroš Šefčovič, qui sera accompagné par le Vice-président pour l'euro et le dialogue social, également chargé de la stabilité financière, des services financiers et de l'union des marchés des capitaux, Valdis Dombrovskis et le Commissaire chargé à l'action pour le climat et de l'énergie, Miguel Arias Cañete ([Programme du Sommet](#)). Reconnaissant que l'accord de Paris est un élément clé pour la modernisation de l'industrie et de l'économie européenne, la Commission utilisera le «One Planet Summit» pour présenter dix initiatives en faveur d'une économie moderne et propre. La Commission se servira de l'événement pour rappeler qu'avec une enveloppe de 20,2 milliards d'euros en 2016, l'UE et ses États membres sont les principaux contributeurs au financement climatique pour les pays en développement à l'échelle mondiale. Le Président Juncker a déclaré dans son [discours sur l'état de l'Union](#) au Parlement européen cette année: «Je voudrais que l'Europe soit à l'avant-garde de la lutte contre le changement climatique. L'année dernière, nous avons fixé des normes climatiques globales avec la ratification de l'accord de Paris ici même, dans cette assemblée. Face à l'affaiblissement des ambitions dont font preuve les États-Unis, l'Europe doit faire en sorte de rendre grande la planète, qui est la patrie indivisible de l'humanité toute entière.» Une [nouvelle page web de](#)

[la Commission](#) sur le One Planet Summit fournit plus d'informations. Suivez sur Twitter: #OnePlanet et #investEU. (Pour plus d'informations: Anna-Kaisa Itkonen – Tél.: +32 229 56186, Nicole Bockstaller – Tél.: +32 229 52589)

Commissioner Jourová to launch global alliance with high-level policy makers to fight violence against women

Today, the 2018 G7 Presidency, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Council of Europe, the European Commission, and UN Women are meeting this afternoon via teleconference to launch an alliance to tackle violence against women and girls at global level. Ahead of the event, Věra **Jourová**, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality said: *"In the EU, we dedicated 2017 to tackle violence against women and girls however as we have seen recently through the echoes of sexual harassment accusations around the world, this human rights violation is a global issue. Momentum is rising to make change. I am bringing together global key players committed to see change and bring concrete actions to put an end to violence against women."* The organisations will discuss the way forward on this issue. They will also discuss how their actions can better complement each other and be intensified to drive a renewed momentum on tackling violence against women and girls. The teleconference will take place today from 14:00 – 15:30 CET and will be [webstreamed live](#) and is open to journalists upon registration. A joint declaration will be published [online](#) after the meeting. For more information on the European Commission's efforts to tackle violence against women, see the [factsheet on a Year of Focused Action to end violence against women](#) and the [Q&A on what the EU does to tackle this violence](#). (For more information: Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Mélanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659)

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