

[Daily News 14 / 07 / 2017](#)

Juncker Plan: EUR 300 million to retrofit homes in Germany

The [Juncker Plan](#) has backed a EUR 300 million European Investment Bank (EIB) loan agreement with Vonovia, a German real-estate management company. The loan will finance upgrades to the company's residential units to ensure they meet modern energy-efficiency standards. The agreement was made possible with the support of the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI). The EFSI is the central pillar of the European Commission's Investment Plan for Europe, the so-called "Juncker Plan". European Commission Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, added: *"Upgrading housing units to ensure that they meet the latest energy-efficiency standards is a process that demands investment. That is where the European Fund for Strategic Investments can play an important role. Today's agreement is another demonstration of the important role EU support plays in enabling investments that can help deliver on our broader objective of maximising energy efficiencies and, at the same time, improve the daily lives of thousands of families."* The Juncker Plan is now expected to trigger over €19 billion in investments in Germany and €209 billion across Europe. For the latest figures country-by-country, see [here](#). A full press release is available [here](#). (For more information: Vanessa Mock – Tel.: +32 229 56194; Enda McNamara – Tel.: +32 229 64976)

President Juncker in Thessaloniki, Greece: Awarded of Honorary Doctorate by the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and meets with Prime Minister Tsipras

Speaking to guests attending the ceremony on his award of Doctor Honoris Causa, by the Faculty of Law, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, President **Juncker** said we must never lose sight of what keeps us together and thus the values that we share. The same goes for the compassion and solidarity that we show each other. This is what the European Union is built on. He said *"this is what we must keep fighting for as Europe looks forward to its future."* Addressing Greece's economic development, President **Juncker** commended the country for having turned the page, adding that progress is down to the wide-ranging reforms the country has put into place over the last years. *"Now we are moving to the future. It is a brighter future than the one we could have imagined years ago; prosperity is returning"* he said. Meeting bilaterally with Prime Minister Tsipras, President **Juncker** underlined his support for the country, reiterating the importance of Greece sticking to the reforms that are beginning to bear fruit for the country. President **Juncker's** full speech is available online [here](#). (For more information: Margaritis Schinas – Tel.: +32 229 60524)

Procédure rapide de règlement des petits litiges disponible à partir d'aujourd'hui

Grâce à la procédure européenne de règlement des litiges, les consommateurs et entreprises, en particulier les petites et moyennes entreprises, pourront

régler les litiges transfrontaliers de façon rapide et peu onéreuse. Par exemple, si un consommateur achète une paire de ski en ligne d'un autre pays européen, qu'il ne les reçoit jamais et que le vendeur ne veut pas les lui rembourser, il pourra avoir recours à cette procédure. La Commissaire **Jourová** a dit: " *Grâce à une procédure simple et efficace de règlement des litiges, les consommateurs et les petites et moyennes entreprises pourront faire des achats dans d'autres pays européens en toute confiance. Ils pourront désormais obtenir rapidement le remboursement pour d'achats transfrontaliers allant jusqu'à 5000 euros, en cas de problème ou de non-livraison.*" La procédure européenne de règlement des petits litiges existe depuis 2007 et a fait ses preuves: elle a permis, pour les petits litiges transfrontières, une réduction de la durée des procédures contentieuses de 2 ,5 ans avant son introduction à en moyenne 5 mois. La nouvelle procédure, entrant en vigueur aujourd'hui, permettra d'augmenter le plafond à 5000 euros pour permettre à davantage de petites et moyennes entreprises d'en bénéficier. La procédure sera aussi plus simple grâce à l'usage de technologie et évitera au plaignant de se déplacer à la cour de justice. Enfin, les nouvelles règles garantiront que les frais de justice soient plafonnés et proportionnels, pour éviter qu'ils ne soient supérieures au montant de la demande. Plus d'informations sont disponibles [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Christian Wigand– Tel.: +32 229 62253; Mélanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659)

AGRIFISH Council: Commission consults Ministers on fishing opportunities for 2018

On 17th July, Fisheries Ministers of the EU will discuss in Council the [Commission's Communication](#) setting out principles for healthy and profitable fishing quotas for 2018. For the first time, the consultative Communication looks at the progress made in the implementation of the reformed Common Fisheries Policy four years on. The Policy statement highlights noteworthy improvement in the overall economic performance of the EU Fleet, which registered record net profits of EUR 777 million in 2014, a 50% increase from 2013. The economic forecast for 2016 and 2017 remains upbeat. In terms of the state of fishing stocks, today in the Atlantic, North and Baltic Seas 61% of assessed stocks are exploited sustainably and fish stocks are being rebuilt. A notable example is the recovery of the Cod in the North Sea, which has almost tripled due to sustainable management between 2006 and 2016. By contrast, overfishing in the Mediterranean and the Black Seas remains an issue. As regards the obligation introduced with the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, to land all fish and move away from the wasteful practice of discards, all fisheries in the Baltic and Black Seas, as well as all fisheries for pelagic and other industrial species in all EU waters are now under the landing obligation. The Communication is open for [consultation](#) to stakeholders and citizens. A [press release](#) and [Q&A](#) are available online. (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Aikaterini Apostola– Tel.: +32 229 87624)

State aid: Commission confirms Irish air travel tax exemption for transit and transfer passengers did not constitute state aid

The European Commission has found that the exemption for transfer and transit passengers from the Irish air travel tax was in line with EU state aid rules.

The exemption did not selectively favour certain airlines and therefore involved no state aid within the meaning of EU rules. This concerns an excise duty, which was in place from March 2009 to April 2014, and applied to airlines operating in Ireland. The tax had to be paid for each passenger flying from an airport located in Ireland. However, departures of passengers in transfer or transit were exempted from the tax. On the basis of [its in-depth investigation](#), the Commission has now concluded that the exemption was in line with the underlying logic of the Irish air travel tax, which was to tax journeys by air originating from Ireland. If a passenger transfers or transits in Ireland they are on a single journey from their airport of origin to their airport of destination, and not on two separate journeys arriving in and originating from Ireland. The exemption also avoids that such a journey would be subject to taxation twice, both at the airport of origin and at the airport where the transfer or transit took place, which can lead to double taxation. Moreover, a tax system aimed at taxing journeys by air, instead of individual flights constituting such journeys, did not in itself induce undue discrimination among airlines. This decision follows a judgment by the General Court (case [T-512/11](#)) annulling the Commission's 2011 decision that the exemption did not result in state aid, on the basis that the Court considered that the Commission should have initiated the formal investigation procedure in order to gather relevant information. The non-confidential version of the decision will be made available under case number [SA.29064](#) in the [State Aid Register](#) on the [Commission's competition](#) website once any confidentiality issues have been resolved. (*For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889*)

State aid: Commission confirms no aid in Belgian public guarantee for nuclear risks

The European Commission has concluded that the Belgian state guarantee for nuclear operators that do not find sufficient civil liability coverage on private insurance markets does not involve state aid. It would improve compensation for potential victims without granting any advantage to operators. In March 2017, Belgium notified to the Commission for assessment under EU state aid rules a law to improve compensation for potential victims of a nuclear incident. Under this Belgian law, the liable nuclear operator would have to compensate victims up to €1.2 billion for up to 30 years after a nuclear incident occurred. Nuclear operators are obliged to financially secure their liability towards victims. The Commission found that, in the case of the Belgian measure, the premium to be paid by the nuclear operators to benefit from the state guarantee was set at such a level that it will not give them an economic advantage. The Commission also found that the premium is expensive enough to avoid crowding out the private insurance market – there are sufficient incentives for private players to develop competitive offers to replace the need for the State guarantee. The Commission established that the Belgian state guarantee aims to improve compensation of victims of a nuclear incident, without granting any economic advantage to nuclear operators and hence without any state aid within the meaning of EU rules. The full press release is available online in [EN](#), [FR](#), [DE](#) and [NL](#). (*For*

more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of joint control over Redexis Gas by USSL and Goldman Sachs

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the proposed acquisition of joint control over Redexis Gas S.A. and Redexis Gas Finance B.V. (Redexis Gas) of Spain by Universities Superannuation Scheme Limited (USSL) of the UK and GS Global Infrastructure Partners II, LP and GS International Infrastructure Partners II, LP (Goldman Sachs) of the US. Redexis Gas is a regulated natural gas company, active in LPG transmission and distribution in Spain. USSL is the corporate trustee responsible for managing a UK private sector pension scheme for academic and comparable staff in UK universities and other higher education and research institutions. Goldman Sachs is a global investment banking, securities and investment management firm that provides a range of financial services worldwide. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns as Goldman Sachs previously solely controlled Redexis Gas and USSL is not active in the same market as Redexis Gas. 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.8550](#). *(For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889)*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Vice-President Šefčovič in Portugal for second Energy Union Tour

From 17-18 July, Vice-President for Energy Union Maroš **Šefčovič** will be travelling to Lisbon and Porto for the second Energy Union Tour. Vice-President **Šefčovič** will meet Portuguese Prime Minister António Costa, Minister for the Environment João Pedro Matos Fernandes and Secretary of State for Energy Jorge Seguro Sanches. He will also meet with actors from the financial sector, consumer associations, entrepreneurs and start-up owners and will visit several clean energy innovative projects. The main focus of his discussions will be the Energy Union and the Commission's "[Clean Energy for All Europeans](#)" package, including Portugal's preparation of its National Energy and Climate Plan, as well as the Smart Finance For Smart Buildings Initiative and improving interconnections between the Iberian Peninsula and the rest of Europe. During his visit, Vice-President **Šefčovič** will attend an international conference on clean energy and energy interconnections and participate in an [EU Citizens' Dialogue](#) with the theme of the tangible impact of the Energy Union on European citizens. In Lisbon, the Vice-President will be accompanied by Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation Carlos **Moedas** and Professor Bertrand Piccard, explorer and chairman of the Solar Impulse Foundation. Ahead of the trip, Vice-President **Šefčovič** said: *"I congratulate Portugal for becoming one of the EU's frontrunners in its usage of renewable energy. This is also helping it to decrease its dependency on energy imports from abroad. Moreover, new interconnections between Portugal,*

Spain and France could even help Portugal to become an exporter of renewable electricity. I also look forward to discussing low emission mobility and innovation with my Portuguese colleagues". Upcoming dates and more information on the 2017 Energy Union tour are available [here](#). More information on the Energy Union is available [here](#). (For more information: Anca Paduraru – Tel.: +32 229 91269; Nicole Bockstaller – Tel.:+32 229 52589)

Future of EU finances – Commissioner Oettinger visits Luxembourg, Greece

Commissioner Gunther H. **Oettinger** in charge of Budget and Human Resources is visiting Luxembourg today and Greece on 17 July to discuss the [Reflection paper on the future of EU finances](#). In Luxembourg, the Commissioner will meet with Prime Minister Xavier Bettel and his deputy Étienne Schneider, with Jean Asselborn, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs and with Pierre Gramegna, Minister of Finance. He will also visit the Parliament of Luxembourg, where he will speak before the Committees of Foreign and European affairs, Defence, Cooperation and Immigration and of Budget and Finance. In Greece, Commissioner **Oettinger** will speak about the future of the EU budget with Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras and with Alternate Minister of Finance Giorgos Chouliarakis. The Commissioner will also meet Alternate European Affairs Minister George Katrougalos. He will visit the Hellenic Parliament and speak before the committees on European Affairs and on Budget. Commissioner **Oettinger** first [presented](#) the reflection paper on 28 June in Brussels. This is the final paper in the series of five reflection documents released following the publication on 1 March of the Commission's [White Paper on the Future of Europe](#). The Commissioner will now meet with different stakeholders in Brussels and in the European capitals to gather their feedback on the questions and options raised in the Reflection paper. This feedback will also feed into the Commission's proposal for the next Multiannual Financial Framework. Click here for the [German](#), [Greek](#) and [French](#) versions of the Reflection paper. (For more information: Alexander Winterstein – Tel.: +32 229 93265; Andreana Stankova – Tel.: +32 229 57857)

[Calendar](#)

The Commissioners' Weekly Activities

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