

Daily News 16 / 05 / 2017

President Juncker consults the European Parliament on Mariya Gabriel as Commissioner for the Digital Economy and Society

President **Jean-Claude-Juncker** interviewed today Mariya Gabriel, the [candidate proposed](#) by the Bulgarian Government for Commissioner to replace former Member of the Commission Kristalina **Georgieva**. On this basis, President **Juncker** confirmed the competencies of Mariya Gabriel required under Article 17(3) of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) to become candidate for Commissioner and announced his intention to allocate the Digital Economy and Society portfolio to her. A [Mission Letter](#) sent today by President Juncker to Mariya Gabriel details her main tasks and responsibilities as Commissioner in charge of the Digital Economy and Society. Following today's interview of Mariya Gabriel and the announcement by President **Juncker** of the portfolio allocation, the process will now follow Article 246(2) TFEU and point 6 of the Framework Agreement between the European Parliament and the European Commission. An exchange of views between Mariya Gabriel and the relevant Committee of the European Parliament is expected to take place in the coming weeks. Read the full press release available in all EU languages [here](#). (*For more information: Mina Andreeva – Tel.: +32 229 91382*)

Commission calls on Member States to meet obligations under the EU's emergency relocation and resettlement schemes and sets out new approach on interoperability of information systems on borders and security

Meeting in Strasbourg, today the College of Commissioners will adopt two reports on the EU's emergency relocation and resettlement schemes and on progress made towards an effective and genuine Security Union. The first report will take stock of actions taken by Member States over the last month to fulfil their commitments under the relocation and resettlement schemes. On the European Agenda on Security, today's report will provide an update on the state-of-play with regards to the important work being carried out to improve security in the EU, and at its borders through better data management and the interoperability of information systems. Full press material will be available [online](#) at the start of the press conference in Strasbourg with Commissioners **Avramopoulos** and **King** which will be livestreamed [here](#). (*For more information: Tove Ernst – Tel.: +32 229 86764; Katarzyna Kolanko – Tel.: +32 299 63444*)

Commission registers European Citizens' Initiative on reducing the wage and economic differences

The European Commission has today decided to make a partial registration of a European Citizens' Initiative which invites the Commission to propose "*Legal acts that clearly demonstrate the EU's intention to eliminate wage inequalities between Member States and which – to achieve this objective – allow for a more efficient cohesion of these states*". The formal registration

of this Initiative on 22 May 2017 will start a one-year process of collection of signatures of support by its organisers. Should the Initiative receive one million statements of support within one year, from at least seven different Member States, the Commission will have to react within three months. The Commission's Decision makes clear for which kind of legal acts the signatures may and may not be collected in this case, dependent on the competences set out in the Treaties. More information is available in the press release available [here](#). (For more information: Mina Andreeva – Tel.: +32 229 91382; Tim McPhie – Tel.: +32 229 58602)

“Lower Saxony in Europe and Europe in Lower Saxony”: speech by President Juncker at the Lower Saxony Landtag

As part of his discussions with regional parliaments and local authorities, President **Juncker** was in Hannover, Germany yesterday to mark the 70th anniversary of the Parliament of Lower Saxony. Speaking about the importance of national and regional parliaments, President **Juncker** declared: *“Nations are not temporary inventions of history, their presence is permanent. And the same applies to regions. We can only construct Europe with and not against them”*. The President also stressed that *“it is important that the European Commission (...) remains in intensive dialogue with national and regional parliaments”* and invited the Lower Saxony Parliament to be involved in European politics even more and to participate in the debate about the future of Europe. In his speech, the President addressed a wide range of issues, from EU migration policy, to the Digital Single Market, Capital Markets Union, Energy Union, the Juncker Plan and our single currency, the euro. Speaking about the social dimension of Europe, he said: *“We have to pay more attention to the concerns of Europeans in social matters. (...) We must again turn back to those, for whom Europe was invented. Dreaming cannot be forbidden”*. Finally, President **Juncker** also spoke about the benefits Member States derive from the European Union, notably through the EU budget. *“In Europe there are no net payers and net recipients. In Europe, all Member States are net recipients because without Europe they would be net payers,”* he said. The full speech in German is available [here](#), and a recording can be found on the [EbS website](#). (For more information: Mina Andreeva – Tel.: +32 229 91382)

Commission welcomes European Parliament vote on extension and reinforcement of the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the heart of the Juncker Plan

The Commission welcomes the vote by Members of the European Parliament's Budgets and Economic and Monetary Affairs committees to agree their position on extending, expanding and reinforcing the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the so-called “EFSI 2.0”. The proposal seeks to extend the EFSI's duration and enhance its financial capacity. The target of investment mobilised is to be increased from EUR 315 billion by 2018 to at least half a trillion euro by 2020. The proposal also places a greater emphasis on additionality and aims to further enhance the EFSI's transparency and geographic balance. European Commission Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**,

responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, said: *“The European Fund for Strategic Investments has already proven to be an important tool to boost investment, support jobs and spur growth across all 28 Member States. The extension of the EFSI represents an opportunity to build on that success. I look forward to continue working with Members of the European Parliament and Member States in the weeks to come to secure a final agreement.”* The Commission now calls on the Parliament and Member States to continue working towards the final adoption of the EFSI 2.0 proposal as quickly as possible to the benefit of public and private promoters driving investment projects in Europe. A full press release is available [here](#). (For more information: Annika Breidthardt – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Enda McNamara – Tel.: +32 229 64976)

Juncker Plan: EUR 80 million for Italian SMEs

The [Juncker Plan](#) has backed a European Investment Fund (EIF) agreement with Banca Popolare Pugliese, an Italian financial intermediary, to provide EUR 80 million in financing to innovative Italian small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and small mid-caps over the next two years. The European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the central pillar of the Juncker Plan, was a crucial factor in making this loan agreement possible. European Commission Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, said: *“The Investment Plan has already proven to be a success and Italy is amongst the Plan’s top beneficiaries. I am delighted that, with today’s agreement, even more Italian small and medium-sized businesses will gain access to the finance they need to innovate, grow, hire new employees and expand their activities.”* The Juncker Plan is now expected to trigger over EUR 31 billion in investments in Italy and EUR 183.5 billion across Europe. For the latest figures country-by-country, see [here](#). A full press release is available [here](#). (For more information: Annika Breidthardt – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Enda McNamara – Tel.: +32 229 64976)

Commission introduces new measures to fight poaching and end trade in raw ivory

The Commission is moving to end the export of old raw ivories as of 1 July, with the adoption of [new guidance on the EU rules governing ivory trade](#). Today’s decision, foreseen in the [EU Action Plan against wildlife trafficking](#), will help to prevent that legal ivory trade fuels international ivory trafficking, which has risen significantly over the last decade. The Commission will also grant new financial support of € 2.25 million to the Secretariat of the [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora](#) (CITES) to help with the implementation of the decisions on international wildlife trade agreed at the [CITES Conference of Parties](#) in October 2016. Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Karmenu **Vella** said: *“Fighting international ivory trafficking is a battle we can’t afford to lose. By ending the export of ivory tusks and other raw ivory we are living up to our responsibility. And we are delivering on the next*

commitment in our Action Plan against wildlife trafficking. Our financial support for developing countries will strengthen their capacity to implement the CITES Convention. This is essential to achieve progress in the fight against poaching and for sustainable wildlife trade.” A [press release](#) and [Q&A](#) on the new guidelines are available online.(For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Iris Petsa – Tel.: + 32 229 93321)

Aviation Safety: Commission clears all airlines from Benin and Mozambique from EU Air Safety List

The European Commission updated the [EU Air Safety List](#), the list of non-European airlines that do not meet international safety standards, and are therefore subject to an operating ban or operational restrictions within the European Union. The [EU Air Safety List](#) seeks to ensure the highest level of air safety for European citizens, which is a top priority of the [Aviation Strategy](#) adopted by the Commission in December 2015. Following today’s update, all airlines certified in Benin and Mozambique are cleared from the list, while four individual airlines are added (Med-View, Mustique Airways, Aviation Company Urga and Air Zimbabwe). Commissioner for Transport Violeta **Bulc** said: *“I am glad that we are able to take all carriers from Benin and Mozambique out of the air safety list. Their reforms have paid off. This is also a signal to the 16 countries that remain on the list. It shows that work and cooperation pays off. The Commission and the European Aviation Safety Agency are ready to assist them and raise the safety standards worldwide”.* More information is available in a press release in [EN](#), [FR](#) and [DE](#). (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Alexis Perier – Tel.: +32 229 [6 91 43](#))

European Commission marks the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia

Ahead of the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia on 17 May, First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** said: *“Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) people are our parents, our children, our siblings, our friends, our neighbours and our fellow Europeans. Let’s treat them as such. It’s time we put an end to the widespread discrimination against LGBTI people together.”* Commissioner Věra **Jourová** added: *“No matter who you love or who you are, everyone should enjoy the same rights and be protected from discrimination in the same way. We call on Member States to unblock discussions on the Equal Treatment Directive which would prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in education, social protection and access to goods and services.”* Last year, the Commission published a [list of actions](#) to advance LGBTI equality, which sets out the EU’s activities in this field for 2016-2019. Outside the EU, engaging in same-sex relationships is still considered a crime in more than 70 countries. You can find [online](#) a statement by High Representative/ Vice-President Federica **Mogherini**. For the first ever, the Commission will organise, under the responsibility of Commissioner Günther **Oettinger**, an event for European Commission staff on the occasion of IDAHOT tomorrow, on the theme of ‘Inclusion and Identity in the Workplace: an asset for all of us’. To show

the Commission's support for diversity and for LGBTI equality, the European Commission's Berlaymont headquarters and the headquarters of the European External Action Service will be lit up tonight in the colours of the rainbow flag. A [factsheet](#) on advancing LGBTI equality is available online, as well as the first testimony in the series of #EU4LGBTI stories – [Roberto & Andrea](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: + 32 229 67083; Mélanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659; Tim McPhie – Tel.: +32 229 58602)

EUROSTAT: Le PIB en hausse de 0,5% tant dans la zone euro que dans l'UE28

Au cours du premier trimestre 2017, le PIB corrigé des variations saisonnières a augmenté de 0,5% dans la zone euro (ZE19) ainsi que dans l'UE28 par rapport au trimestre précédent, selon l'estimation rapide publiée par Eurostat, l'office statistique de l'Union européenne. Au cours du quatrième trimestre 2016, le PIB avait crû respectivement de 0,5% et 0,6%. Un communiqué de presse est disponible [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Annika Breidhardt – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Juliana Dahl – Tel.: +32 229 59914)

EUROSTAT: Excédent de 30,9 milliards d'euros du commerce international de biens de la zone euro

D'après les premières estimations pour le mois de mars 2017, les exportations de biens de la zone euro (ZE19) vers le reste du monde se sont établies à 202,3 milliards d'euros, en hausse de 13% par rapport à mars 2016 (178,9 mrd). Les importations depuis le reste du monde ont quant à elles été de 171,4 mrd d'euros, en hausse de 14% par rapport à mars 2016 (150,7 mrd). En conséquence, la zone euro a enregistré en mars 2017 un excédent de 30,9 mrd d'euros de son commerce international de biens avec le reste du monde, contre +28,2 mrd en mars 2016. Le commerce intra-zone euro a progressé à 168,1 mrd d'euros en mars 2017, soit +12% par rapport à mars 2016. Un communiqué de presse est disponible [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Daniel Rosario – Tel.: + 32 229 56185; Kinga Malinowska- Tel.: +32 229 Kinga 51383)

STATEMENTS

Statement by Commissioner Stylianides on the Ebola outbreak in the Northeast of the Democratic Republic of Congo

Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management and EU Ebola Coordinator Christos **Stylianides** has issued a statement following the declaration of an Ebola outbreak in the Northeast of the Democratic Republic of Congo: "The EU is fully committed to provide all support necessary. The national authorities, with the support of the World Health Organisation (WHO), and the European Commission's experts in the country as well as international medical NGOs, have set in motion initial measures to respond to the situation. The European Commission's Emergency response Coordination Centre (ERCC) is taking necessary preparedness measures for a potential EU intervention in case the European Medical Corps and logistical capacities would be needed. In these early days of the outbreak our priority must be to maintain close and efficient coordination with the national authorities, the

WHO, EU Member States, international partners and NGOs on the ground. (...) In this regard we are in close contact with our Member States. This new outbreak is a stark reminder that we can never let our guard down. (...)” The full statement is online [here](#). (For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz de Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322, Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Le Commissaire Moedas à l’inauguration de SESAME, “un projet phare de la diplomatie scientifique”

Le commissaire en charge de la recherche, de la science et de l’innovation Carlos **Moedas** a participé aujourd’hui à la cérémonie d’inauguration de l’accélérateur de particules SESAME (“Synchrotron Light for Experimental Science and Applications in the Middle East”), à Allan, en Jordanie, en présence de sa Majesté le Roi de Jordanie et des représentants de 17 pays partenaires, ainsi que de l’UNESCO, de l’AIEA et du CERN. Le Commissaire a souligné le fort engagement de l’Union européenne dans ce projet, centre de recherche le plus avancé du Proche-Orient et symbole de la collaboration pacifique entre les pays de la région. “*SESAME est la preuve la plus incontestable que la diplomatie scientifique est synonyme d’excellence et représente un outil incomparable pour améliorer les relations entre les pays, les régions et les cultures en promouvant la paix et la stabilité dans la région. La science est un langage universel qui permet d’ouvrir des canaux de communication et de construire des relations de confiance. Je suis fier que l’Union européenne apporte son soutien à ce projet phare de la diplomatie scientifique*”, a déclaré le Commissaire. Demain, mercredi, le commissaire **Moedas** continuera sa visite au Proche-Orient et rencontrera à Jérusalem le Premier ministre israélien Benjamin Netanyahu et le ministre de l’Economie Eli Cohen. Après une rencontre avec des étudiants à l’université Ben Gourion de Beer-Sheva, il visitera le Cyber Teck Park de la ville. Il participera le soir à une réception en l’honneur des 10 ans du Conseil européen de la recherche (ERC). Plus d’informations sur SESAME et l’engagement de l’UE [ici](#). (Pour plus d’informations: Lucia Caudet – Tel.: + 32 229 56182; Mirna Talko – Tel.: +32 229 87278; Maud Noyon – Tel.: +32 229 80379)

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