

Daily News 17 / 01 / 2018

New measures to boost key and digital competences, as well as the European dimension of education

Only two months after the [Gothenburg Summit on 17 November 2017](#), the European Commission has today adopted new initiatives to improve key and digital competences of European citizens and to promote common values and pupils' awareness of the functioning of the European Union. They are intended to reduce socio-economic inequalities, whilst sustaining competitiveness in order to build a more united, stronger and more democratic Europe. Jyrki **Katainen**, Vice-President of the Commission for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, said: *"Today's initiatives aim at empowering individuals so that they can make the most of their lives and so that we can build fair, resilient economies and societies. Tibor Navracsics, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, said: "Europe's education and training systems need to give people from all backgrounds the right competences to progress and prosper professionally, but also enable them to be engaged citizens. We need to harness the potential of education to foster social cohesion and a sense of belonging."* Mariya **Gabriel**, Commissioner for The Digital Economy and Society, added: *"The digital skills gap is real. While 90% of future jobs require some level of digital literacy, 44% of Europeans lack basic digital skills. The Digital Education Action Plan we propose today will help Europeans, educational institutions and education systems to better adapt to life and work in increasingly digital societies."* The new proposals will also feed into the first [European Education Summit](#) which Commissioner Navracsics will host in Brussels on 25 January. A full [press release](#), [memo](#) and [factsheets](#) are available online. (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: +32 229 56184)

From waste to energy: the Juncker Plan and Cohesion Policy fund innovative energy sources in Lithuania

The Commission adopted two funding decisions to support the construction of a combined heat and power plant in Vilnius designed to produce electricity and heat out of biomass and municipal waste. The plant will help diversify the Lithuanian capital's energy sources and support the transition towards a circular economy in the region. Over €139 million from the [Cohesion Fund](#) is now invested in the plant, in addition to a €190 million European Investment Bank (EIB) loan backed by the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the heart of the [Investment Plan for Europe](#), signed in December 2016. Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for jobs, growth, investment and competitiveness, said: *"In Lithuania, the EFSI and Cohesion Policy funds are joining forces to support the circular economy; an innovative financing solution for equally innovative projects, turning waste to energy."* Commissioner for Regional policy Corina **Crețu** added: *"This additional support from the EU won't simply give the inhabitants of Vilnius a cleaner, greener environment to live in; they will also inspire new business ideas as the*

circular economy sector is abundant with opportunities for growth and innovation.” The Cohesion Fund grants are split into €90.8 million to build the biomass unit and €48.5 million for the municipal waste-to-energy facility. These projects, which should be completed in the course of 2019, will contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions generated by the waste sector in the country by roughly 10% as well as waste landfilling in the region. In line with the EU waste hierarchy, when waste cannot be recycled, recovering the energy embedded in it and injecting it back in the economy is the next best environmental and economic option while avoiding landfilling. Investments in treatment facilities for residual waste should nevertheless be granted in limited and well justified cases, where there is no risk of overcapacity and the objectives of the waste hierarchy are fully respected. (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tél.: +32 229 58615, Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tél.: +32 229 56169)

Celebrating Europe’s up-and-coming artists with the European Border Breakers Awards

This evening, [ten emerging European artists](#) will receive a [European Border Breakers Award](#) (EBBA) during a ceremony at the Eurosonic Noorderslag festival in Groningen, The Netherlands. Every year since 2004, these awards for popular and contemporary music, co-funded by the [Creative Europe](#) programme, recognise Europe’s best up-and-coming artists who have been successful outside their own countries with their first international release. Tibor Navracsics, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, said: *“Music is more than an industry or a creative sector – it is a language which speaks to millions across borders, irrespective of nationality or background. Music can help to tear down barriers and build bridges. That is why we must make the voices of our artists heard in Europe. My warmest congratulations to all this year’s winners!”* This year’s winners represent a range of musical genres, from folk-influenced rock to electronic pop and dance music. Previous winners of the award include some of Europe’s best-known artists: Adele, Stromae and Dua Lipa to name just a few. The EBBA winners – announced in their respective home countries late last year – are selected on the basis of a combination of airplay, sales, live performances in Europe, and position in the European Border Breakers Charts. The Public Choice Award, to be presented tonight by a representative of the European Commission, also gave the public the chance to have its say via an online competition. Tonight’s ceremony will once again be hosted by TV personality and musician Jools Holland and will be broadcast via various TV and radio stations across Europe. (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: +32 229 56184)

La Commission approuve une nouvelle indication géographique protégée d’Espagne

La Commission européenne a approuvé la demande d’inscription de la [«Carne de Salamanca»](#) dans le registre des indications géographiques protégées (IGP).

La «Carne de Salamanca» est une viande bovine issue d'un cheptel de race *morucha* élevé dans la province de Salamanque en Espagne. L'élevage et la production du cheptel bovin apte à la production de «Carne de Salamanca» sont profondément liés à un milieu géographique spécifique, la *dehesa*, qui présente une grande valeur écologique et se caractérise par la présence de chênes verts qui constituent les ressources naturelles les plus importantes pour l'alimentation des vaches, veaux et taureaux. Les éleveurs perpétuent les pratiques traditionnelles d'élevage: le bétail ne rentre jamais à l'étable et passe sa vie à l'extérieur, dans les pâturages. L'élevage du cheptel bovin et la consommation de sa viande sont intimement liés à cette région où, au XVe siècle déjà, la «Carne de Salamanca» était utilisée comme moyen de paiement des rentes seigneuriales, en raison de sa notoriété et de sa renommée. Cette nouvelle appellation va rejoindre plus de 1420 produits déjà protégés dont la liste est disponible dans la base de données [DOOR](#). Pour plus d'informations, voir aussi les pages sur la [politique de qualité](#). (pour plus d'information: Daniel Rosario – Tel: +32 2 29 56185; Clémence Robin – Tel: +32 229 52 509)

Eurostat: La production dans le secteur de la construction en hausse de 0,5% dans la zone euro – En hausse de 0,6% dans l'UE28

En novembre 2017 par rapport à octobre 2017, la production dans le secteur de la construction, corrigée des variations saisonnières, a augmenté de 0,5% dans la zone euro (ZE19) et de 0,6% dans l'UE28, selon les premières estimations d'Eurostat, l'office statistique de l'Union européenne. En octobre 2017, la production dans le secteur de la construction avait reculé de 0,3% dans la zone euro et de 0,5% dans l'UE28. En novembre 2017 par rapport à novembre 2016, la production dans le secteur de la construction a augmenté de 2,7% dans les deux zones. Un communiqué de presse Eurostat est à votre disposition [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Lucía Caudet – Tel.: +32 229 56182; Maud Noyon – Tel.: +32 229 80379; Victoria von Hammerstein – Tel.: +32 229 55040)

Eurostat: Le taux d'inflation annuel en baisse à 1,4% dans la zone euro celui de l'UE en baisse à 1,7% en décembre 2017

Le taux d'inflation annuel de la zone euro s'est établi à 1,4% en décembre 2017, contre 1,5% en novembre. Un an auparavant, il était de 1,1%. Le taux d'inflation annuel de l'Union européenne s'est établi à 1,7% en décembre 2017, contre 1,8% en novembre. Un an auparavant, il était de 1,2%. Les taux annuels les plus faibles ont été observés à Chypre (-0,4%), en Irlande ainsi qu'en Finlande (0,5% chacun) et au Danemark (0,8%). Les taux annuels les plus élevés ont quant à eux été enregistrés en Lituanie et en Estonie (3,8% chacun) ainsi qu'au Royaume-Uni (3,0%). Par rapport à novembre 2017, l'inflation annuelle a baissé dans vingt-trois États membres, est restée stable dans quatre et a augmenté dans un autre. Un communiqué de presse Eurostat est à votre disposition [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Annika Breidhardt – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Juliana Dahl – Tel.: +32 229 59914)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of European Bridge Travel by CEFC and Rockaway Capital

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over European Bridge Travel a.s. by CEFC Group (Europe) Company a.s. ("CEFC Europe") and Rockaway Capital SE, all of the Czech Republic. European Bridge Travel is a holding company which provides tourism-related services via its subsidiaries, in particular the sale of package holidays operated by third parties, the on-line sale of air tickets and the brokerage of travel insurance. CEFC Europe belongs to CEFC China Energy Company Limited, a private company specialising in energy services and financial services. Within the EU, CEFC China Energy Company Limited is active on metals and engineering markets as well as in brewing, real estate rental and football club management, and is currently branching into financial and banking services. Rockaway Capital invests in existing companies and start-ups in the field of internet services, including e-commerce. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because of its very 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.8759](#). *(For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889)*

STATEMENTS

President Juncker attends European Parliament's Plenary Session in Strasbourg: Programme of activities of the Bulgarian Presidency to the European Parliament and Future of Europe

President **Juncker** attended today's plenary session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg. On the agenda was first the presentation of the [programme of activities of the Bulgarian Presidency](#), and President **Juncker** congratulated the Bulgarian side for a particularly well-prepared Presidency, calling the six months ahead crucial for the European Union and its future. He also welcomed that Prime Minister Borissov had made the building of consensus one of his priorities, a "wise choice", the President said, and more important today than ever. President **Juncker** said: *"[...]the truth is that Bulgaria had to come a long way to join our Union. It had to make changes in a handful of years that other countries made in decades. It had to be patient, it had to be determined, it had to be courageous – and it was. Today it is with great pride but also with great expectation that I look forward to the next six Bulgarian month."* President Juncker also reminded his audience that he would travel to the Balkans end of February and early March this year. The full speech is [available online](#). In a second session of the EP's plenary today, President **Juncker** participated in a discussion on the Future of Europe with the Prime Minister of Ireland, Leo Varadkar. President **Juncker** said to be delighted about the Leaders' Agenda and said: *"17 Summits in the next 18*

months on the road to Sibiu – Hermannstadt – to chart our common future. This is even more than we had at the height of the Eurozone crisis. But with one important difference: This time we are not repairing the burning plane while flying, as we had to do it during the crisis. Instead, we are now fixing the roof of our European house while the sun is shining. We now know what we need to do together: completing our Economic and Monetary Union, securing our borders, delivering on our social agenda, making our tax system fairer, reforming our asylum system, getting back to Schengen and completing the Digital Market and Energy Union.” Please find the full speech [online](#). (For more information: Margaritis Schinas – Tel.: +32 229 60524; Mina Andreeva – Tel.: +32 229 91382)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos Stylianides visits Austria and Germany to present rescEU, the EU’s plan to strengthen its emergency response

Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides** is travelling to Vienna today to meet with Ms Karoline Edtstadler, State Secretary and Mr Peter Goldgruber, Secretary General of the Austrian Ministry of the Interior, and representatives of the Austrian National and Federal Council. He will then travel to Berlin to discuss with German Minister of the Interior, Mr Thomas de Maizière. During his visit, the Commissioner will also meet with State Ministers of the Interior of the German Länder Hessen and Brandenburg, Mr Peter Beuth and Mr Karl-Heinz Schröter, respectively. The meetings are part of a series of discussions with Member States on the Commission’s new plans to strengthen the EU disaster management through [rescEU](#). The proposal creates a reserve at EU level to be used when national capacities are overwhelmed, without replacing Member State capacities. (For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz de Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)

Commissioner Crețu to discuss future of EU finances in Slovakia

Tomorrow, Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina **Crețu** will meet the Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico and Deputy Prime Minister Peter Pellegrini, in Bratislava. The discussions will focus on the next EU financial period and the future Cohesion Policy after 2020. Commissioner **Crețu** said ahead of her visit: “In Slovakia, EU funds account for over half of all public investments, therefore the added value of Cohesion Policy is well known. We are now entering a crucial phase in our discussion on the future of EU finances. As I often say, it’s not only about what budget we want; it’s especially about what Europe we want.” More information on EU funds in Slovakia is available on the [Open Data Platform](#). (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)

Commissioner Crețu visits Serbia

Tomorrow evening and Friday, Commissioner for Regional policy Corina **Crețu** will be in Belgrade, Serbia. She will meet with Mr Aleksandar Vučić, the President of Serbia, Ms Ana Brnabić, Prime Minister of Serbia and Ms Jadranka Joksimović, Minister of European Integration. *“Serbia is already a very valuable and active partner in cooperation, especially in the context of the Danube and the Adriatic and Ionian macro-regional strategies,”* said Commissioner **Crețu** ahead of her visit, *“We support the European Union path Serbia has chosen.”* (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)

Commissioner Andriukaitis presents the European Reference Networks in Berlin

Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Vytenis **Andriukaitis**, is on official visit to Berlin on 18-20 January. On Wednesday he will visit Charité Hospital where he will meet Mr Lutz Stroppe, State Secretary in the Federal Ministry of Health, and will hold a Question and Answers session on [European Reference Networks](#) (ERNs) which are virtual networks involving healthcare providers across Europe. *“I will be delighted to visit Charité Hospital in Berlin and to learn more about the activities and progress in Germany in the work of the European Reference Networks. This has been an important initiative I launched in March 2017 and I am very attentive to the course it takes. The European Reference Networks are an innovative example of structured and voluntary collaboration in the field of healthcare among all EU Member States and Norway, bringing a real added value to the patients across the EU”* said Commissioner **Andriukaitis** before the visit. (For more information: Anca Paduraru – Tel.: +32 229 91269; Aikaterini Apostola – Tel.: +32 229 87624)

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