

# Daily News 18 / 07 / 2017

## **À l'ère de la mondialisation, la Commission agit pour aider les régions à bâtir des économies robustes**

Pour favoriser la croissance et l'innovation et aider les régions européennes à tirer leur épingle du jeu dans une économie mondialisée, la Commission présente aujourd'hui une série d'actions destinées à les aider encore davantage à investir dans les domaines où elles occupent une position concurrentielle (stratégies dite de «[spécialisation intelligente](#)»). Deux [projets pilotes](#) vont ainsi aider les régions à passer à la vitesse supérieure en matière d'innovation. Le premier est spécifique aux régions en transition industrielle qui, à leur demande, pourront bénéficier d'un soutien personnalisé par des experts de la Commission. Ces partenariats leur permettront de développer leur capacité d'innovation, les compétences de leurs citoyens et d'attirer davantage d'investissements. Le second projet concerne les régions souhaitant s'associer pour créer des projets à haute valeur ajoutée. Des experts de la Commission les aideront à développer des partenariats interrégionaux, sur le modèle de [l'Initiative Vanguard](#). Vous trouverez davantage d'information dans ce [communiqué de presse](#) et [ce mémo](#) et vous pouvez revoir la conférence de presse du Vice-Président de la Commission Jyrki **Katainen**, chargé de l'emploi, de la croissance, de l'investissement et de la compétitivité, et de la Commissaire à la politique régionale Corina **Crețu** sur [EBS](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Lucía Caudet – Tel.: + 32 229 56182; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)

## **Trade negotiations: Commission publishes reports following negotiating rounds with Mexico and Mercosur**

The Commission publishes today – as part of its commitment to a more transparent trade policy – reports summarising the progress made during the latest negotiating rounds for the [EU-Mexico](#) and [EU-Mercosur](#) trade agreements. The reports offer a summary of the progress made in all areas of the negotiations, namely: 1) Trade in goods (including Market Access, and General Rules); 2) Non-Tariff Measures; 3) Rules of Origin; 4) Trade in Services; 5) Procurement; 6) Intellectual Property (including Geographical Indications); 7) Sustainable Development, 8) Other issues (Institutions and Regulatory Cooperation). Both negotiations are progressing at a good pace with full engagement from both partners. The latest round of talks with Mexico took place from 26 and 30 June 2017 in Mexico City and the next one is planned in Brussels for 25 to 29 September, with intersessional meetings between 24 and 27 July. The latest round with Mercosur was held between 3 and 7 July 2017 in Brussels and the next one is planned in Brasilia for 2 to 6 October, with intersessional meetings between 4 and 8 September in Brussels. The recent Commission proposals made in the course of the negotiations can also be accessed through the dedicated [transparency page](#). More information on the [EU-Mexico](#) and [EU-Mercosur](#) talks is available on the website of DG Trade. (For more information: Daniel Rosario – Tel.: + 32 229 56185; Kinga Malinowska –

Tel.: +32 229 51383)

## **Sustainable Finance: Commission hosts major event to promote sustainable investment**

The Commission is today hosting a major event to explore how best to use finance to promote sustainable investments and facilitate the transition to a low-carbon economy within the context of the Capital Markets Union. This is part of the European Union's efforts to turn climate change, environmental and sustainable policy goals into tangible results. The EU is taking the lead in this area and needs to develop an overarching strategy to better align capital flows with a pathway to sustainable development and growth. That is why the European Commission established at the end of 2016 the High-Level Expert Group on Sustainable Finance as part of its commitment to the Paris Climate Agreement and its work on Capital Markets Union. After six months of intensive work, the Expert Group summarised its first results and policy options in an [interim report](#). Today's public hearing will give a wide range of participants the occasion to share their views on barriers to and possible solutions to ensure an increased uptake of sustainable finance. Vice-President Valdis **Dombrovskis**, responsible for Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union, opened the event in Brussels and Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, will give a keynote speech. The public hearing will be accompanied by the launch of a questionnaire by the High Level Expert Group. The programme of the conference is available [here](#). The event is web streamed [here](#), the questionnaire is available [here](#). (For more information: Vanessa Mock – Tel.: +32 2 295 61 94; Letizia Lupini – Tel.: +32 229 51958)

## **Mergers: Commission approves acquisition of Momondo by Priceline**

The European Commission approved unconditionally, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of Momondo Group by Priceline Group, both active in the online travel sector. Priceline operates online travel agents and travel comparison metasearch sites, under several brand names including booking.com, priceline.com, agoda.com, KAYAK, Rentalcars.com and Opentable. Momondo Group is primarily active in the operation of metasearch sites, under the brands Cheapflights and Momondo. The Commission assessed the impact of the proposed transaction on markets for the operation of metasearch sites in the European Economic Area (EEA) and examined a number of vertical relationships arising from the merging companies' activities. The Commission found that the companies' metasearch activities are largely geographically complementary in the EEA, while the merged entity will be competing with several other global metasearch operators. Therefore, the Commission concluded that the transaction would raise no competition concerns in the European Economic Area. A full press release is available online in [EN](#), [DE](#) and [FR](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

## **State aid: Commission finds Belgian support to three airlines incompatible with EU rules; aid already recovered**

The European Commission has concluded that public support granted by Belgium to three airlines flying from Brussels Airport (Zaventem) gave them an unfair advantage over other airlines, in breach of EU state aid rules. These airlines are Brussels Airlines, TUI Airlines Belgium and Thomas Cook Airlines Belgium, which received €16.8 million, €2.1 million and €77 000, respectively. The distortion of competition has already been removed because Belgium in March 2017 recovered the aid from each airline (with interest), before the Commission concluded its in-depth investigation. The scheme in question was introduced by Belgium in January 2014 and foresaw around €19 million of public funding per year to the operator of Brussels Airport, which was then required to fully pass it on to certain airlines. In particular, it was used to reduce one of the airport charges (the so-called security charge) paid by airlines that had carried more than 400 000 passengers from Brussels Airport in 2012. Only Brussels Airlines, TUI Airlines Belgium and Thomas Cook Airlines Belgium met that condition. An initial payment was made to the three airlines in September 2014 but payments were suspended after the Commission opened its investigation [in October 2014](#). This investigation confirmed that the scheme amounted to a selective advantage to the three airlines over their competitors. Belgian authorities have actively cooperated with the Commission in this case and in March 2017 abolished the scheme and the three airlines have already reimbursed the money received with interest. More information on today's decision will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the [public case register](#) under the case number [SA.38105](#) once confidentiality issues have been resolved. The [State Aid Weekly e-News](#) lists new publications of state aid decisions on the internet and in the EU Official Journal. *(For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889)*

## **State aid: Commission approves public service compensation to Inverness airport in the UK**

The European Commission has found public service compensation granted to Highlands and Islands Airports Limited (HIAL) for the operation of Inverness airport to be in line with EU state aid rules. The public funding will contribute to the area's economic and social development, without unduly distorting competition in the Single Market. In particular, the Commission has concluded that the compensation allows for the provision of a genuine service of general economic interest, as the airport not only provides air access to the Highlands of Scotland, but is also an access point for some of Scotland's most remote islands, in particular the Shetland Islands, the Orkney Islands and the Western Isles. The compensation is granted for five years to HIAL, a company wholly owned by the Scottish Government. This Commission decision will apply until the UK ceases to be a member of the EU. The non-confidential version of the current decision will be published under the case number SA.45692 in the [State Aid Register](#) on the Commission's

[competition website](#) once any confidentiality issues have been resolved. The [State Aid Weekly e-News](#) lists new publications of state aid decisions on the internet and in the EU Official Journal. (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889)

### **Eurostat: Plus de 8 millions de spécialistes des TIC employés dans l'UE en 2016 – Un personnel largement masculin et hautement qualifié**

En 2016, 8,2 millions de personnes étaient employées dans l'Union européenne (UE) comme spécialistes des technologies de l'information et de la communication (TIC), ce qui représente 3,7% de l'emploi total. Au cours des dernières années, tant le nombre de spécialistes des TIC que leur part dans l'emploi total n'ont cessé d'augmenter afin de répondre aux besoins d'un monde de plus en plus numérique. Cette profession est largement composée d'hommes et de personnes ayant un niveau d'éducation élevé. En effet, sur 10 spécialistes des TIC employés dans l'UE, plus de 8 sont des hommes (83,3%) et plus de 6 sont diplômés de l'enseignement supérieur ou plus (61,8%). Un communiqué de presse est disponible [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Sara Soumillion – Tel.: + 32 229 67094; Inga Höglund – Tel.: +32 229 50698)

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **Commissioner Moscovici in Lisbon for meetings with Portuguese authorities**

Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs, Taxation and Customs Pierre **Moscovici** is in Lisbon today for meetings with the Portuguese authorities on the economic and budgetary situation and policy priorities. The visit is also an occasion to discuss the follow-up to the Commission's [Reflection Paper on the Deepening of the Economic and Monetary Union](#). The Commissioner is meeting with the Prime Minister, Antonio Costa and the Governor of the Bank of Portugal, Carlos Costa. Elisa Ferreira, member of the Board of Directors, will also take part in the meeting at the Bank of Portugal. (For more information: Vanessa Mock – Tel.: +32 229 56194; Patrick McCullough – Tel.: +32 229 87183)

### **La Commissaire Thyssen participe à la réunion informelle des Ministres d'Emploi et des Affaires Sociales sur l'équilibre vie privée – vie professionnelle**

Demain et jeudi, les 19 et 20 juillet, la Commissaire en charge de l'emploi, des affaires sociales, des compétences et de la mobilité des travailleurs, Marianne **Thyssen**, participera à la réunion informelle des Ministres d'Emploi, des Affaires sociales, des Familles et de l'Égalité des genres, ayant lieu à Tallinn, Estonie. Durant cette première réunion informelle du Conseil sous la Présidence estonienne, les Ministres se concentreront sur différents aspects liés à l'équilibre vie privée – vie professionnelle, y inclus le besoin d'un

meilleur équilibre entre la vie privée et la vie professionnelle sur le marché d'emploi et l'état des lieux des mesures existantes au niveau national. La réunion sera également une opportunité pour la Commissaire de présenter la [proposition de la Commission pour améliorer l'équilibre vie privée – vie professionnelle pour les travailleurs et soignants](#), déposée le 26 avril dernier dans le cadre du [Socle européen des droits sociaux](#). Demain à 17h30, une conférence de presse est prévue avec la Commissaire **Thyssen**, la Ministre estonienne de la Protection sociale, Kaia Iva, ainsi que le Ministre estonien de l'Emploi et de la Santé, Jevgeni Ossinovski. Vous pouvez suivre la conférence de presse en direct sur [EbS](#). (*Pour plus d'informations: Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Sara Soumillion – Tel.: + 32 229 67094*)

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