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Juncker Plan: €306 million for small and medium-sized businesses in Czechia

The European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the core element of the [Investment Plan for Europe](#), or Juncker Plan, is supporting an agreement between the European Investment Bank (EIB) and Česká spořitelna (ČS) to provide €306 million in financing for small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) in Czechia. The agreement will support about 250 companies and create nearly 43,000 jobs across the country. Věra **Jourová**, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality said: *“I very much welcome this agreement, which will create opportunities for Czech entrepreneurs and open up access to the finance they need to generate better-paying jobs and innovate. This is an example of Europe’s strong added-value – by pulling resources together it can offer practical benefits for citizens.”* A press release is available [here](#). As of June 2019, the Juncker Plan has mobilised nearly €410 billion of additional investment, including €4.6 billion in Czechia. The Plan is currently supporting 952,000 small and medium businesses across Europe. (For more information: Annika Breidhardt – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Enda McNamara – Tel.: +32 229 64976)

La Commission présente des initiatives pour renforcer l'état de droit, et passe à l'étape suivante dans une procédure d'infraction pour mettre les juges polonais à l'abri de tout contrôle politique

S'appuyant sur les enseignements tirés depuis 2014 et des consultations approfondies menées depuis le mois d'avril de cette année, la Commission européenne a [décidé hier](#) d'une série de mesures visant à renforcer encore l'état de droit en Europe. D'après un sondage Eurobaromètre publié hier, plus de 80 % des citoyens attachent une grande importance au respect de l'état de droit et estiment qu'il doit être amélioré. Frans **Timmermans**, Premier vice-président, s'est exprimé en ces termes: *« La Cour de justice de l'Union européenne a récemment réaffirmé que l'état de droit est essentiel au fonctionnement de l'UE. Son importance est également reconnue par une majorité écrasante de citoyens de l'Union. Ce principe a toutefois été attaqué de plusieurs manières au cours des cinq dernières années. La Commission européenne s'est battue avec acharnement pour résister à ces attaques avec les instruments à notre disposition, et elle continuera de le faire. Nous avons décidé de renforcer encore notre panoplie d'instruments afin de promouvoir, de protéger et de faire respecter l'état de droit. »* La Commission a présenté hier des initiatives concrètes regroupées autour de trois piliers: la promotion d'une culture de l'état de droit; la prévention des problèmes liés à l'état de droit; et une réponse efficace aux violations de l'état de droit. La Commission a également [décidé de passer à l'étape suivante](#) d'une procédure d'infraction en cours visant la Pologne, en adressant un avis motivé concernant le nouveau régime disciplinaire applicable aux juges polonais. Le [3 avril 2019](#), la Commission a lancé cette procédure d'infraction au motif que le nouveau régime disciplinaire porte

atteinte à l'indépendance judiciaire des juges polonais et n'apporte pas les garanties nécessaires pour mettre les juges à l'abri de tout contrôle politique, comme l'exige la Cour de justice de l'Union européenne. Les autorités polonaises disposent maintenant de deux mois pour prendre les mesures qui s'imposent pour se conformer à cet avis motivé. À défaut, la Commission pourrait décider de saisir la Cour de justice de l'Union européenne. (For more information: Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Tim McPhie – Tel.: +32 229 58602)

Antitrust: Commission fines US chipmaker Qualcomm €242 million for engaging in predatory pricing

The European Commission has fined Qualcomm €242 million for abusing its market dominance in 3G baseband chipsets. Qualcomm sold below cost, with the aim of forcing its competitor Icera out of the market. This is illegal under EU antitrust rules. Baseband chipsets enable smartphones and tablets to connect to cellular networks and are used both for voice and data transmission. This case concerns chipsets complying with the Universal Mobile Telecommunications System ("UMTS"), the third generation ("3G") standard. Our investigation found that Qualcomm abused this dominance between mid-2009 and mid-2011 by engaging in "predatory pricing". Qualcomm sold certain quantities of three of its UMTS chipsets below cost to Huawei and ZTE, two strategically important customers, with the intention of eliminating Icera, its main rival at the time in the market segment offering advanced data rate performance. This behaviour took place when Icera was becoming a viable supplier of UMTS chipsets providing high data rate performance, thus posing a growing threat to Qualcomm's chipset business. The Commission's conclusion that Qualcomm engaged in predatory pricing during the period investigated is based on: (a) a price-cost test for the three Qualcomm chipsets concerned; (b) a broad range of qualitative evidence demonstrating the anti-competitive rationale behind Qualcomm's conduct, intended to prevent Icera from expanding and building market presence. The targeted nature of the price concessions made by Qualcomm allowed it to maximise the negative impact on Icera's business, while minimising the effect on Qualcomm's own overall revenues from the sale of UMTS chipsets. There was also no evidence that Qualcomm's conduct created any efficiencies that would justify its practice. On this basis, the Commission concluded that Qualcomm's conduct prevented Icera from competing in the market, stifled innovation and ultimately reduced choice for consumers. Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *"Baseband chipsets are key components so mobile devices can connect to the Internet. Qualcomm sold these products at a price below cost to key customers with the intention of eliminating a competitor. Qualcomm's strategic behaviour prevented competition and innovation in this market, and limited the choice available to consumers in a sector with a huge demand and potential for innovative technologies. Since this is illegal under EU antitrust rules, we have today fined Qualcomm €242 million."* The full press release is available online in [EN](#), [FR](#), [DE](#). (For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission clears Vodafone's acquisition of Liberty Global's cable business in Czechia, Germany, Hungary and Romania, subject to conditions

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the proposed acquisition by Vodafone of Liberty Global's cable business in Czechia, Germany, Hungary and Romania. Today's decision follows an [in-depth investigation](#) of the proposed transaction. Following its investigation, the Commission had concerns that, in Germany, the transaction: (i) Would eliminate the important competitive constraint exerted by the merging companies on each other in the market for the retail supply of fixed broadband services, in particular in the areas currently served by Liberty Global's subsidiary (Unitymedia). (ii) Would increase the market power of the merged entity in the market for the wholesale supply of signal for the transmission of TV channels. This could hinder the broadcasters' position, leading to quality degradation of the TV offer to final viewers in Germany. To address the Commission's competition concerns, Vodafone offered the following commitments: (a) To provide a remedy taker – already identified by Vodafone as Telefónica – with access to the merged entity's cable network in Germany. (b) To refrain from contractually restricting, directly or indirectly, the possibility for broadcasters that are carried on the merged entity's TV platform to also distribute their content via an OTT service. (c) Not to increase the feed-in fees paid by Free-to-Air broadcasters for the transmission of their linear TV channels via Vodafone's cable network in Germany by extending the existing agreements. (d) To continue to carry the HbbTV signal of Free-to-Air broadcasters, which allows TV customers to be directly connected to the broadcasters' interactive services. The Commission concluded that the transaction, as modified by the commitments, would no longer raise competition concerns. This decision is conditional upon the full compliance with the commitments. Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *"In our modern society access to affordable and good quality broadband and TV services is almost as asked for as running water. We have today approved Vodafone's purchase of Liberty Global's business in Czechia, Germany, Hungary and Romania subject to remedies designed to ensure that customers will continue enjoying fair prices, high-quality services and innovative products."* The full press release is available online in [EN](#), [FR](#), [DE](#). (For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

The European Union steps up support to security in Jordan and economic activities and trade in the region

The European Union has launched a new €6 million programme to improve border management capacities of security and law-enforcement in [Jordan](#) and to support economic activities and trade in the region. The programme will assist Jordanian authorities operating at the border with Iraq (Mafrag governorate) to rapidly react to any future humanitarian emergency as well as to security threat. This will also complement an ongoing support to the rehabilitation of a trade route at the Karameh-Treibil border crossing point that will contribute to facilitating bilateral trade and safe movement of people and goods between Jordan and Iraq. The programme constitutes an

important step in supporting Jordan's resilience and ability to address threats, in accordance with the EU-Jordan Partnership Priorities. In the context of continuous EU support to border management and trade facilitation between Jordan and Iraq, notably through the upgrading of the Karameh-Treibil border point, the programme is contributing to restoring confidence within a region affected by multiple crises, including the conflict in neighbouring Syria and the threat of Da'esh. More information is available [here](#). (For more information: Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Matteo Arisci – Tel.: +32 229 80833; Alceo Smerilli – Tel.: +32 229 64887)

La Commission européenne investit quatre millions d'euros pour soutenir la liberté de la presse et le journalisme d'investigation

La Commission européenne a lancé aujourd'hui un appel à propositions d'un montant de 4,2 millions d'euros pour soutenir la liberté des médias et le journalisme d'investigation en Europe. Ce financement fait partie de l'engagement de l'UE visant à promouvoir et à encourager [la liberté et le pluralisme des médias](#). Le soutien financier sera fourni pour trois actions. La première initiative mettra en place un mécanisme de réaction à l'échelle européenne pour atténuer les violations et la détérioration de la liberté de la presse et des médias dans les États membres (1,4 million d'euros). La deuxième initiative créera un fonds destiné à soutenir le journalisme d'investigation transfrontalier dans l'UE (1,5 million d'euros). La troisième partie de l'appel permet aux parties intéressées (par exemple, journalistes, ONG) de proposer des projets qui soutiennent le journalisme indépendant et la coopération journalistique dans les États membres, ou sensibilisent et soulignent l'importance de la liberté des médias, de la qualité et du journalisme éthique dans l'UE (1,3 million d'euros). L'appel à propositions est ouvert jusqu'au 27 septembre 2019. Plus de détails sur les critères d'éligibilité pour chaque volet de l'appel sont disponibles [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations : Nathalie Vandystadt – Tél. : +32 229 67083 ; Inga Höglund – Tél.: +32 229 50 698)

New Joint Research Centre report on factors driving political decision-making

Today the European Commission's [Joint Research Centre](#) has published a [new report](#) based on insight from the behavioural sciences, social sciences and the humanities, which looks at pressing political issues, such as the persistence of disinformation, and how emotions, values, identity and reason affect political decision-making. The aim of the report is to better understand the underlying behavioural and social processes behind policy-making, with the aim of using the findings to improve political decision-making by policymakers – civil servants and politicians – as well as citizens. Tibor **Navracsics**, Commissioner for Education, Youth, Culture and Sport, responsible for the Joint Research Centre, said: "Simply making more information available to citizens or decision makers is not enough to guarantee more informed or better decision-making. If we want political decision-making to bring about positive social change, we need to better understand how emotions, values, identity and reason affect how we think,

talk and take decisions on political issues.” The report is being presented during a [launch event](#) in Brussels today. More information is available [online](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: +32 229 56184)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Vice-President Katainen attends annual public debate forum SuomiAreena in Pori, Finland

Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, will visit Pori, Finland, on 18 and 19 July to attend SuomiAreena, an annual public debate forum for citizens. On Thursday 18 July, Vice-President **Katainen** participates in a panel discussion on EU matters, organized by the European Commission Representation in Finland. He will have a live on stage interview with Finnish news media MTV to talk about the future of Europe and defence. He will also attend a working dinner with Minister of Economy Mika Lintilä, Members of Parliament and other participants of the forum. On Friday 19 July, the Vice-President will deliver a keynote speech on the economic situation and sustainable finance in an event of Nordea Bank. He will also attend a working lunch with Members of the Finnish Parliament belonging to the Grand Committee (EU affairs committee) and other participants of the forum. (For more information: Annika Breidhardt – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Enda McNamara – Tel.: +32 229 64976)

Commissioner Stylianides visits Athens: Sustainable Africa speech and rescEU

Tomorrow, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides** visits Athens to speak on “Sustainable Africa: A strategic challenge for the European Union” at an event organised by the Delphi Economic Forum. In his speech, the Commissioner will stress the importance of a mutually beneficial partnership with Africa in the framework of a strong [Africa-Europe Alliance](#), promoting stability and prosperity on the African continent. During his visit to Greece, Commissioner **Stylianides** will discuss rescEU – the strengthened [European civil protection](#) system – with the Greek authorities, which aims at better protect European citizens from natural disasters, such as forest fires. He will also hold bilateral meetings with Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, Deputy Prime Minister Panagiotis Pikramenos and Minister of Citizen Protection Michalis Chrysohoidis. (For more information : Carlos Martin Ruiz De Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)

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