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Customs Union: Fake and potentially dangerous goods worth nearly €740 million stopped at EU customs in 2018

New figures released by the European Commission today show that the number of interceptions of fake goods being imported into the EU increased in 2018 due to a large amount of small parcels in express and postal traffic. Detention figures for seized consignments jumped from 57,433 in 2017 to 69,354 in 2018, though the total amount of articles detained decreased compared to previous years. Almost 27 million articles that infringed on intellectual property rights (IPR) were detained in 2018 with a street value of nearly €740 million. Pierre **Moscovici**, Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs, Taxation and Customs said: *“Customs officers across the EU have seen success in tracking down and seizing counterfeit goods that are often dangerous for consumers. Their job is made even more difficult by the rise in small packages entering the EU through online sales. Protecting the integrity of our Single Market and Customs Union, and effective enforcement of intellectual property rights in the international supply chain are also priorities. We need to continue stepping up the efforts against counterfeiting and piracy.”* The top categories of detained articles were cigarettes, which accounted for 15% of the overall amount of detained articles. This was followed by toys (14%), packaging material (9%), labels, tags and stickers (9%) and clothing (8%). Products for daily personal use in the home such as body care articles, medicines, toys and electrical household goods accounted for nearly 37% of the total number of detained articles. A [press release](#) and a [factsheet](#) are available online. (For more information: Vanessa Mock – Tel.: +32 229 56194; Patrick McCullough – Tel.: +32 229 87183)

#EUBeachCleanUp: l’UE organise un nombre record d’actions de nettoyage à l’échelle mondiale

Sur les plages d’Europe et du reste du monde, le personnel de l’UE s’associe aux communautés locales pour éliminer les déchets marins dans le cadre de la campagne #EUBeachCleanUp. Lancée le 19 août, la campagne de cette année, qui se déroulera jusqu’à la fin du mois d’octobre, aura comme point culminant la journée internationale de nettoyage du littoral, organisée le samedi 21 septembre, lors de laquelle des actions seront menées dans plus de 80 pays, sur tous les continents habités. Cette année, grâce à des partenariats innovants avec les Nations unies et les Schtroumpfs, la campagne atteindra des milliers de citoyens de tous âges. Le succès de l’initiative #EUBeachCleanUp repose sur des actions de sensibilisation (avec une forte présence sur les médias sociaux) associées à un appel à l’action très concret: rejoignez-nous sur vos plages! Le commissaire chargé de l’environnement, des affaires maritimes et de la pêche, M. Karmenu **Vella**, se félicite de cette campagne et invite chacun d’entre nous à y participer: *« L’Union européenne mène certaines des politiques les plus ambitieuses pour lutter contre la pollution marine dans le monde. En collaboration avec les Nations unies, nous voulons nettoyer et assainir nos océans, conformément à l’objectif de développement durable 14 des Nations unies. Cette année, nous*

avons de nouveaux acteurs à nos côtés: les Schtroumpfs. Bleus, courageux et adorés des plus jeunes comme des plus âgés, ce sont les partenaires idéaux de notre campagne. Participez à nos actions et aidez-nous à créer, à l'échelle mondiale, une vague de mobilisation en faveur des océans! » L'UE a adopté une [stratégie européenne sur les matières plastiques dans une économie circulaire](#), parallèlement à des mesures législatives visant à réduire la production et la consommation des 10 articles en plastique à usage unique que l'on retrouve le plus souvent parmi les déchets marins. Un communiqué de presse est à votre disposition [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Enrico Brivio – Tél.: +32 229 56172, Ana Parrondo Crespo – Tél.: +32 229 81325)

Juncker Plan in Italy: European Investment Bank lends €250 million to Italian agency for research into clean fusion energy

The European Investment Bank is providing €250 million of financing under the Juncker Plan's European Fund for Strategic Investments towards the new scientific and technological hub of ENEA, Italy's National Agency for New Technologies, Energy and Sustainable Economic Development. This forms part of a total investment of €500 million for the facility which will be hosted in Frascati near Rome. The project will also receive funding from EUROfusion, the EU's programme to produce safe, clean nuclear energy. ENEA has created the facility to respond to some of the key scientific and technological issues surrounding nuclear fusion, in particular the question of how to control the large amount of heat generated. Some 1,500 scientists and technicians will be involved in the project. Commissioner Miguel **Arias Cañete**, responsible for Climate Action and Energy, said: "To achieve a climate neutral Europe by 2050, we need to keep investing in new technological solutions. Fusion is a potential source of safe, non-carbon emitting and virtually limitless energy. If we succeed in making a breakthrough in this technology it could significantly contribute to our efforts to make Europe the first climate neutral major economy. Today's investment decision is one step towards this objective." A press release is available [here](#). As of September 2019, the Juncker Plan has mobilised €433.2 billion of additional investment, including €67.4 billion in Italy. The Plan is currently supporting 972,000 small and medium-sized businesses across Europe. (For more information: Annika Breidthardt – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Siobhan Millbright – Tel.: +32 229 57361)

State aid: Commission approves Greek Primary Residence Protection Scheme to support households at risk of losing their home due to difficulties in mortgage repayments

The European Commission has approved under EU State aid rules the Greek Primary Residence Protection Scheme to support households that have encountered difficulties in repaying mortgage loans and risk losing their primary residence. The scheme, which has an annual budget of around € 132 million, sets strict eligibility criteria in terms of the value of the primary residence and income of the borrower to ensure it is targeted at those in need. Eligible borrowers will receive a grant corresponding to 20% to 50% of their monthly loan payment depending on their income, provided that: (i) their loans are secured against their primary residence; and (ii) they resume paying the residual part of their monthly payment. If the

borrower stops servicing its loan, it is foreseen that the bank can initiate the foreclosure of the property. All banks will have to restructure the loans of eligible borrowers along the same requirements defined by the State. The Commission concluded that, with respect to individuals, including those performing an economic activity, the measure does not involve any State aid. With respect to the banks that issued the loans, the Commission found that the scheme will provide an indirect advantage because it increases the amount of repayment the banks are likely to receive from the non-performing loans. At the same time, the Commission's assessment showed that this indirect aid would not create undue distortions of competition because the aid is limited to what is necessary to achieve its objective of ensuring that borrowers do not lose the house in which they live. Moreover, since all banks established in Greece will participate in the scheme, it is non-discriminatory among them. The Commission has therefore concluded that the scheme is well-targeted and limited in time and scope as required by EU rules. Finally, the scheme is expected to contribute to reduce the high burden of non-performing loans in the Greek banking sector. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number SA.53520.

State aid: Commission approves support scheme for energy-intensive companies in Slovakia

The European Commission has approved, under EU State aid rules, Slovak plans to partially compensate energy-intensive companies for the national levy to support renewable energy production. Slovak support for renewable energy is at present financed through contributions based on electricity consumption. The scheme, which will apply until 31 December 2029 and will have a provisional budget of €120 million for the years 2019 to 2021, will benefit companies active in Slovakia in sectors that are particularly energy-intensive (hence with higher electricity consumption) and more exposed to international trade. The beneficiaries will obtain compensation for up to a maximum of 85% of their contribution to the financing of support to renewable energy. The Commission assessed the measure under EU State aid rules, in particular, the [Guidelines on State Aid for environmental protection and energy](#) 2014-2020. The Guidelines authorise reductions – up to a certain level – in contributions levied on energy-intensive companies active in certain sectors and exposed to international trade, in order to ensure their global competitiveness. The Commission found that the compensation will only be granted to energy intensive companies exposed to international trade, in line with the requirements of the Guidelines. Furthermore, the measure will promote the EU energy and climate goals and ensure the global competitiveness of energy-intensive users and industries, without unduly distorting competition. On this basis, the Commission concluded that the measure is in line with EU State aid rules. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the [State Aid Register](#) under the case number SA. 53564. *(For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344)*

State aid: Commission approves modification of financing mechanism for Klaipėda LNG terminal in Lithuania

The European Commission has approved, under EU State aid rules, Lithuanian plans to modify the financing mechanism to cover the leasing costs of a liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal in Klaipėda, Lithuania. In [November 2013](#), the Commission approved aid to support the construction and operation of the LNG terminal under EU State aid rules. In particular, the Commission found that the measure was necessary to ensure security of gas supply in Lithuania. Under the 2013 decision, the leasing costs of the LNG terminal were exclusively financed through a fee levied on Lithuanian gas consumers, the so-called “LNG Supplement”. In order to reduce the financial burden on consumers, Lithuania now intends to replace part of the LNG Supplement with a loan guaranteed by the Lithuanian State. The State guarantee is necessary to obtain a loan of €135.5 million from a private financial institution. The loan will cover part of the leasing costs of the terminal for the period 2019-2024. The LNG Supplement will be reduced of a correspondent amount. The Commission found that the measure, as amended, remains compatible with the Internal Market and, therefore, approved the modification of the financing mechanism, under EU State aid rules. More information will be available on the Commission’s [competition](#) website, in the [State Aid Register](#) under the case number SA.53074. *(For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344)*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Competition: EU and Japan reinforce cooperation on competition policy at first EU-Japan Competition Week in Tokyo

Officials and experts from the EU and Japan will meet in Tokyo on 19 and 20 September to discuss and exchange good practices in competition policy and enforcement during the first EU-Japan Competition Week. The Competition Week will open on 19 September with a conference on competition law enforcement in the digital economy. Representatives from academia, the business sector, the Japan Fair Trade Commission (JFTC) and the European Commission will gather to discuss the challenges of digitalisation and how to ensure the digital economy benefits consumers and the broader economy. During a session on 20 September, officials from the European Commission, the Austrian Federal Competition Authority and the JFTC will discuss mergers in innovation markets, investigative procedures and engagement with parties during antitrust proceedings. The annual EU-Japan Competition Week is part of the [Competition Cooperation project](#), a 5-year EU-funded programme offering technical cooperation to competition authorities in Asia. The objective is to exchange experiences and strengthen convergence in competition policy, to the benefit of citizens and businesses in both the EU and Asia. More information about the European Commission’s bilateral dialogue with Japan in the field of competition policy is available on the Commission’s [website](#). *(For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)*

Le deuxième Sommet européen de l'éducation se tiendra à Bruxelles la semaine prochaine

Le jeudi 26 septembre, Tibor **Navracsics**, le commissaire chargé de l'éducation, de la culture, de la jeunesse et des sports, accueillera le deuxième Sommet européen de l'éducation à Bruxelles. Celui-ci réunira 19 ministres de l'éducation de l'UE ainsi que plus de 750 professionnels de l'éducation et des représentants de toute l'Europe, dont 150 enseignants. Sous le thème « Les enseignants d'abord : excellence et prestige pour l'Espace européen de l'éducation », les discussions porteront sur les défis auxquels les enseignants sont confrontés, liés à des facteurs tels que le prestige et la reconnaissance professionnels, la formation, l'autonomie et les ressources dont ils disposent. Les sessions exploreront des solutions à des problèmes spécifiques tels que l'utilisation des nouvelles technologies en classe, l'enseignement dans les zones rurales et la promotion de valeurs communes en matière d'éducation. Les discussions au sommet contribueront à faire avancer les travaux de la Commission sur un [Espace européen de l'éducation](#). Pendant le sommet, le commissaire **Navracsics** présentera également le Moniteur de l'éducation et de la formation de 2019, publication annuelle phare de la Commission sur l'éducation et la formation, qui se concentrera cette année sur la profession d'enseignant. Le sommet sera diffusé [en ligne](#) et le matériel vidéo sera disponible sur [EbS](#) dans l'après-midi. *(Pour plus d'informations: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tél.: +32 229 67083; Joseph Waldstein – Tél.: +32 229 56184)*

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