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rescEU: a new European system to tackle natural disasters

Today the European Commission has revealed ambitious new plans to strengthen Europe's ability to deal with natural disasters. The proposal is a central part of President **Juncker**'s agenda of a [Europe that protects](#). The initiative comes in light of more complex and frequent natural disasters that have seriously affected many European countries over recent years. A key part of the proposal is the creation of **rescEU**, a reserve at European level of civil protection capabilities such as aerial forest fighting planes, special water pumps, urban search and rescue and field hospitals and emergency medical teams. These will complement national assets and will be managed by the European Commission in order to support countries hit by disasters such as floods, forest fires, earthquakes and epidemics. Alone in 2017, over 200 people were killed by natural disasters in Europe and over one million hectares of forest have been destroyed. President Jean-Claude **Juncker** said: *"Europe can't be on the side-lines when our Member States suffer from natural disasters and need help. No country in Europe is immune to natural disasters which have sadly become the new normal. When a disaster strikes, I want the European Union to offer more than condolences. Europe is a continent of solidarity and we must be better prepared than before, and faster in helping our Member States on the frontline."* *"The tragedies of last summer and the past few years have shown that our current disaster response system has reached its limits in its existing voluntary format. The challenges we face have evolved, and so must we. It is a matter of solidarity and shared responsibility at all levels. This is what European citizens expect from us and I now look to European governments and the European Parliament to embrace this proposal,"* said **Christos Stylianides**, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management. The Commission proposal focuses on two complementary strands of action, targeting a stronger collective response at European level and improved prevention and preparedness capacities: 1) Strengthening European response capacities: rescEU and 2) Stepping up disaster prevention and preparedness. Finally, the proposal will streamline and simplify administrative procedures in order to reduce the time needed to deploy life-saving assistance. Find out more information in our full [press release](#), [Q&A MEMO](#) and [factsheet](#). The press conference of Commissioner Stylianides is available [here](#). Stock [photos](#) and [video](#) of the EU Emergency Response Centre and civil protection activities are also available. (for more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz De Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)

EU-Switzerland relations: President Juncker in Bern to continue good cooperation

Today President **Juncker** met Ms Doris Leuthard, President of the Swiss Confederation as well as Mr Alain Berset, Vice-President of the Swiss Confederation and Mr Ignazio Cassis, Federal Councillor in charge of Foreign

Affairs, in Bern, where discussions focussed on EU-Swiss cooperation in a number of areas as well as the importance of the institutional framework agreement for the future of EU-Swiss relations. *“J’aime bien les choses qui vont ensemble: l’Europe et la Suisse”* President **Juncker** said, *“la Suisse fait partie de l’histoire et de la culture européenne”*. With regards to the framework agreement, President **Juncker** added that *“Switzerland is an important partner for the EU. We are moving in the right direction. In Spring, we want to agree on this ‘Freundschaftsvertrag’ (‘Friendship Treaty’)”*, underlining that the agreement will be on the agenda when he meets with President Leuthard in April next year. The EU and Switzerland signed an agreement to link their emissions trading systems. The link will allow participants in the EU’s Emissions Trading System (EU ETS) to use allowances from the Swiss system for compliance, and vice versa. This is the first agreement of this kind for the EU and between two Parties to the Paris Agreement on climate change. The EU ETS is the largest cap-and-trade system in the world and the cornerstone of the EU climate policy. Linking compatible emissions trading systems with each other is a long-term goal for the EU, as it expands opportunities for cutting emissions and thereby reduces the cost of fighting climate change. Second, the Commission has proposed to the Council to update some provisions relating to the existing agreement with Switzerland on insurance. The aim is to bring the [1991 EU/Switzerland agreement on non-life insurance](#) into line with EU and Swiss rules that have since come into force. Non-life insurance products include car, travel or house insurance. The current agreement already allows EU insurers to apply EU solvency rules to their non-life-insurance branches in Switzerland. Reciprocally, Swiss insurers can currently apply Swiss solvency rules to their non-life branches in the EU. This update brings legal certainty to businesses and supervisors and ensures that both EU and Swiss insurers continue to benefit from the agreement, as it allows them to comply with only one set of rules. President **Juncker** and President Leuthard held a press conference at 11:30 CET, which can be followed on [EbS+](#). (For more information: Mina Andreeva – Tel.: +32 229 91382; Anna-Kaisa Itkonen – Tel.: +32 229 56186; Vanessa Mock – Tel.: +32 229 56194; Nicole Bockstaller – Tel.: +32 229 52589; Letizia Lupini – Tel.: +32 229 51958)

Commission diagnoses the state of health in the EU

“Spending only 3% of our health budgets on prevention, compared with 80% on the treatment of diseases, is simply not enough. We need better access to primary care so that the emergency room isn’t people’s first port of call. And we need to enshrine health promotion and disease prevention into all policy sectors to improve people’s health and reduce pressure on health systems. These are just a few of the diagnoses coming out from our 2017 State of Health in the EU report. By offering comprehensive data and insights, we aim to support national health authorities in tackling the challenges and in making the right policy and investment choices. I hope they will make good use of it”, said Vytenis **Andriukaitis**, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety. Only by rethinking our health systems can we ensure that they remain fit-for-purpose and provide patient-centred care. This is what the 28 Country

Health Profiles published today by the Commission, along with the Companion Report suggest. The country-specific reports provide an in-depth analysis of EU Member States' health systems. They look at the health of the population and important risk factors, as well as at the effectiveness, accessibility and resilience of health systems in each EU member state. A press release is available online in [all languages](#). Follow the press conference with Commissioner Andriukaitis live [here](#). The **28 Country Health Profiles**, the Companion Report and more background information can be found [here](#). (For more information: Anca Paduraru – Tel.: +32 229 91269; Aikaterini Apostola – Tel.: +32 229 87624)

5th Eastern Partnership Summit takes place in Brussels with a focus on delivering tangible results to citizens

On Friday 24 November, the [5th Eastern Partnership Summit](#) will take place in Brussels. The President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude **Juncker**, and the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, will represent the European Union alongside Heads of State or Government from the EU Member States and the six Eastern partner countries, namely [Armenia](#), [Azerbaijan](#), [Belarus](#), [Georgia](#), the [Republic of Moldova](#) and [Ukraine](#). High Representative/Vice-President Federica **Mogherini** and Commissioners Johannes **Hahn** and Cecilia **Malmström** will also participate. The Summit will be a key moment for the leaders to reflect on a number of significant achievements that have been accomplished since the last Eastern Partnership (EaP) Summit in Riga in May 2015: Association Agreements including Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas have entered into force with [Georgia](#), the [Republic of Moldova](#) and [Ukraine](#); citizens of Georgia, Moldova (since April 2014) and Ukraine can now travel without a visa to the Schengen area for short-stays; trade between the EU and the region has increased significantly; the EU has ramped up its support to [civil society](#) and engagement with [young people](#), has helped to improve the [business](#) and [media](#) environments in the region, has broadened the [digital landscape](#) in the partner countries, and has increased the number of opportunities for citizens of the European Union and of the region to travel, research or study abroad. At the Summit, leaders will endorse the [20 deliverables for 2020](#) (full document [here](#)), which constitutes a clear work plan for the future across the four priority areas: stronger economies; stronger governance; stronger connectivity; and stronger societies. The leaders will endorse a revised multilateral institutional set-up for the Eastern Partnership, providing for stronger political guidance and a more results-oriented approach to our cooperation. A number of bilateral agreements are also expected to be taken forward in the margins of the Summit. President **Juncker** will, together with President Tusk and the Prime Minister of Estonia, Jüri Ratas, hold a joint press conference at 15:30. Arrival doorsteps are scheduled from 8:15. Coverage of the Summit will be available on [EbS](#) (stockshot selection [here](#)). Factsheets on the [20 deliverables for 2020](#), on the EU's relations with each of the 6 partner countries ([Armenia](#), [Azerbaijan](#), [Belarus](#), [Georgia](#), [Moldova](#), [Ukraine](#)), [debunking common EaP myths](#), and on each of the Summit's side events are available on the [Summit website](#). (For more information: Margaritis Schinas –

Tel.: +32 229 60524; Maja Kocijančič – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Adam Kaznowski – Tel.: +32 229 89359; Alceo Smerilli – Tel.: +32 229 64887)

The European Union's External Investment Plan: green light for the first five investment areas

The European Commission has defined concrete areas of investments for its External Investment Plan. The new plan will mobilise €44 billion of sustainable investment for Africa and the EU Neighbourhood countries. The European Commission singles out five areas of investment, so-called "investment windows", in which the first actions of the External Investment Plan (EIP) will be implemented. These investment areas are crucial for the sustainable development in countries in Africa and the EU Neighbourhood countries. The High Representative/ Vice-President Federica **Mogherini** said: *"The European External Investment Plan is the largest ever investment programme for Africa. Today, only four per cent of global foreign direct investment goes to Africa. With the European External Investment Plan, we can raise at least €44 billion in private investment by 2020, notably for the most fragile parts of the continent. I hope and I expect that others will join this effort. This is a strong signal of the strengthened partnership with Africa as we are heading towards the AU/EU Summit next week"*. Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development Neven **Mimica** added: *"With today's decision we are setting the agenda for sustainable investments. Unlocking the potential of sustainable energy, promoting digitalisation for development or supporting micro, small and medium sized enterprises will help us to create sustainable development and reduce poverty, for the benefit of all."* Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes **Hahn** commented: *"The investment windows represent real opportunity for many people and businesses in partner countries and in the European Union. Involving the private sector and securing the most conducive environment for it to flourish will contribute to sustainable growth, which is what we aim for. The External Investment Plan will bring tangible results for citizens across our Neighbourhood and beyond, contribute to job creation and greater competitiveness, stronger economy, governance, connectivity, and a stronger society."* The five investment windows include: "Sustainable Energy and Connectivity", "Micro, Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (MSMEs) Financing", "Sustainable Agriculture, Rural Entrepreneurs and Agribusiness", "Sustainable Cities" and "Digital for Development". Read the full press release [here](#). (For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz De Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Christina Wunder – Tel.: +32 229 92256)

Commission welcomes agreement with Parliament and Council on simplifying environmental reporting

Last night, the negotiators of the Commission, the European Parliament and the Council reached a provisional agreement to update the rules on environmental reporting, including on waste and climate change. The Commission is monitoring the implementation of EU legislation in the EU Member States to ensure that the laws achieve their intended objectives and that all countries of the EU respect the rules that have been agreed. The most common way of doing this is through reporting and monitoring. Yesterday's

agreement updates the rules on reporting under the [Standardised Reporting Directive](#) and ensures legal clarity. It is part of the Juncker Commission's Better Regulation policy, which aims to improve implementation of EU rules, simplify them and reduce burden for public administrations. Commissioner **Vella** said: *"Today's technologies give us many opportunities to make reporting requirements in environmental laws quicker, simpler and more effective. The rapid agreement on simplified environmental reporting testifies to the common commitment of the Commission, Parliament and Council to harnessing these opportunities for better regulation and increased transparency. This will benefit everybody involved or interested in the environment. It's a good example of how better regulation helps us uphold our high environmental standards and meet our evidence-based policy objectives, and informing citizens better."* The agreement also marks the first deliverable of the REFIT streamlining exercise on environmental obligations in the EU, as proposed in [the Action Plan to streamline environmental reporting](#) adopted earlier this year and will help reduce an administrative burden estimated at around €22 million annually. Following the provisional agreement reached the Commission looks forward to the formal adoption, which should take place at the same time as the Circular Economy waste package. (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: + 32 229 56172; Iris Petsa – Tel.: +32 229 93321)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Intertoys by Apollo Management

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of sole control over Intertoys Group of the Netherlands, by Apollo Management of the US. Intertoys Group is active in the retail sale of a broad range of toys via both stores and online websites in the Netherlands, Germany, Luxemburg and Belgium. Apollo Management is a private equity investment fund with a diverse portfolio, including the Walz Group, active in the sale of baby products. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because of the limited overlap between the companies' activities. The operation was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the [public case register](#) under the case number [M.8683](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

Commissioner Bieńkowska at SME Assembly 2017 in Tallinn as SME recovery gathers speed

Commissioner Elżbieta **Bieńkowska**, responsible for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, delivered a keynote speech this morning at the [SME Assembly](#) in Tallinn, along with Urve Palo, Estonian Minister of Entrepreneurship and Information Technology. The Commissioner shared with the audience the Commission's initiatives to address the needs of innovative start-ups, support young entrepreneurs, and make access to finance more efficient for companies to scale up. The SME Assembly is part of the [European SME Week](#), a pan-European campaign with events and awards, such as the European Enterprise Promotion Awards, aiming to promote entrepreneurship in Europe. 2017's edition was emboldened by the encouraging results published in the [Annual report on EU SMEs](#) today. The report clearly shows the European

SMEs are recovering from the crisis, which benefits the whole EU economy. In fact, 2016 was the third consecutive year where there was a steady increase in EU SME employment and value added. Most importantly, in 2016, EU SME employment exceeded the 2008 level for the first time since the 2008/2009 economic and financial crisis. More information [here](#). (For more information: Lucia Caudet – Tel.: + 32 229 56182; Maud Noyon – Tel.: +32 229 80379; Victoria von Hammerstein – Tel.: +32 229 55040)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

European innovation in focus: Vice-President Ansip visits world-leading research hub in Leuven

Today European Commission Vice-President **Ansip**, in charge of the Digital Single Market, and Belgian Deputy Prime Minister De Croo, responsible for the Digital Agenda, will visit [imec](#) – a world-leading research and innovation hub in nanoelectronics and digital technologies based in Leuven, Belgium. On this occasion, results of EU investments in research and innovation will be presented, such as microchips used for better diagnosis and health monitoring. Imec has been participating in EU projects since its creation in 1984. Imec is involved in [ECSEL](#), a European initiative representing EUR 1.2 billion of EU investment for the period 2014-2020, to be leveraged by an equal amount from participating states and twice as much from industry (a total of EUR 4.8 billion). EU's research and innovation projects and [electronics strategy](#) have contributed to imec's success, based on cross-border cooperation, scientific excellence and collaboration with the industry and SMEs. A wide range of applications has benefitted from imec's solutions, including in computing, health, energy, security, communications, and transport. Vice-President **Ansip** said: "I would like to see more centres like imec across Europe. Imec not only provides innovative solutions to improve people's lives, it also creates jobs. For that to happen, we need to continue investing in research and innovation, and invest even more. We also need to make progress towards a Digital Single Market – and I am pleased to have Belgium's strong support." Follow Vice-President **Ansip**'s visit via [@Ansip_EU](#). Further information and full programme are available [here](#). Photo and video footage will be available on [EBS](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Inga Höglund – Tel.: +32 229 50698)

Vice-President Katainen in Finland

European Commission Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, will visit Finland on Thursday 23 and Friday 24 November. On Thursday, Vice-President **Katainen** will participate in a discussion on the Future of Europe in Helsinki with Members of the Finnish Parliament. He will also attend a [Citizens' Dialogue](#) on the goals and achievements of the Investment Plan for Europe and the Future of Europe at the Aalto University, together with Mr. Jussi Nykänen, founding partner of Social Impact Fund [EPIQUS](#), representatives of the Student Union and professors of the University. The event will be streamed live on [YouTube](#) with English interpretation from 13.30 – 15.00 CET. Twitter hashtags of the

dialogue are [#EUdialogues](#) [#FutureofEurope](#) [#investEU](#). On Friday 24 November, the Vice-President will give the opening speech at the [Finland100 leadership seminar](#) in Kuopio, organised by the Savo Vocational College. He will also meet with the Mayor of Kuopio, Mr. Jarmo Pirhonen. At the Kuopio Lyceum, he will participate in a second [Citizens' Dialogue](#) on the Future of Europe, together with Mr. Pietu Heiskanen, President of the Union of Upper Secondary School Students. You can watch the event live on [YouTube](#) in Finnish from 11.00 to 12.00 CET. *(For more information contact Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Siobhán Millbright – Tel.: +32 229 57361)*

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