

Energy Union: EU invests €22.1 million supporting synergies between transport and energy sectors

Today, EU Member States approved the Commission's proposal to invest €22.1 million in [seven actions](#) that will help develop sustainable and efficient transport and energy infrastructure. They will receive funding from the [Connecting Europe Facility](#) (CEF), one of the key funding instruments of the EU's [Energy Union](#) strategy to promote growth, jobs and competitiveness through targeted infrastructure investment at European level. Transport Commissioner Violeta **Bulc** said: *"European Transport still depends on oil for 94% of its energy needs. That is why the EU is investing in seven projects to speed up the deployment of alternative energy sources, with a special focus on electrification and multimodal transport."* Climate Action and Energy Commissioner Miguel **Arias Cañete** added: *"Enabling synergies between the transport and energy sectors will enhance the effectiveness of EU funding and will contribute to the further integration of the internal energy market. The successful conclusion of the first CEF synergy call is yet another milestone in the achievement of our long-term decarbonisation objectives"*. Four of the selected actions refer to the transport priorities "motorways of the sea", "maritime ports" and "multimodal transport modes" with emphasis on the gas sector (EU funding of €8.8 million), two are in the electricity sector addressing roads and multimodal transport modes (EU funding of €12.3 million) and one relates to smart grids, focusing on railway transport (EU funding of €1 million). More information is available [here](#) as well as the [list of selected actions](#). More information about Connecting Europe Facility via the [Innovation & Networks Executive Agency \(INEA\)](#) (For more information: Anna-Kaisa Itkonen – Tel.: +32 229 56186; Alexis Perier – Tel.: +32 229 69143; Nicole Bockstaller – Tel.: +32 229 52589)

Commission awards the Seal of Excellence to 2300 researchers

The Commission has today awarded, for the first time, Seal of Excellence certificates to more than 2300 researchers in recognition of their high-quality research proposals under the [Marie-Skłodowska-Curie Actions](#) (MSCA). These are being awarded to all researchers whose 2016 MSCA Individual Fellowship proposals reached a score of 85% or above but could not be funded due to the highly-competitive nature of the MSCA programme. This endorsement provides applicants with recognition for the quality of their work, which they can use to further develop their careers and to support their search for alternative funding at regional or national level. Cyprus and the Czech Republic have drawn on the [European Social Fund](#) to introduce funding schemes in support of recipients of the Seal. Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor **Navracsics**, said: *"I am delighted to award Seals of Excellence to more than 2300 leading researchers who just missed out on funding for the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Individual Fellowships in 2016. I very much welcome the initiatives of Cyprus and the Czech Republic to introduce new funding schemes for these excellent scientists and I would strongly encourage other countries to do the same."* Commissioner for Research, Science

and Innovation, Carlos **Moedas**, said: *“I am pleased to welcome MSCA applicants into the Seal of Excellence community. The Seal of Excellence is a simple concept with a big impact. This quality label can help individual researchers find funding for their project.”* National funding bodies in Croatia, Slovenia and Poland also have initiatives in the pipeline. Some other countries have opted not to introduce a specific funding scheme but are instead encouraging recipients of the Seal to apply to existing schemes. For further information, including national funding initiatives, please see [here](#). For information on MSCA see [factsheet](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 2 29 67083; Lucía Caudet – Tel.: +32 229 56182; Inga Höglund – Tel.: +32 229 50698; Maud Noyon – Tel.: +32 229 80379)

State aid: Commission clears support for renewable and cogeneration plants in Latvia

The European Commission has found support granted to renewable energy and cogeneration power plants built in Latvia between 2007 and 2012 to be in line with EU state aid rules. The Commission concluded that the measure helps Latvia to achieve its 2020 energy and climate objectives without unduly distorting competition. Latvia notified the existing support scheme to the Commission in 2015 for reasons of legal certainty. Latvia reviewed the support mechanism to ensure that beneficiaries are not overcompensated and aid is limited to the minimum necessary to achieve the schemes’ objectives. The Commission’s assessment showed that the support scheme promoted the deployment of renewable power generation and cogeneration without unduly distorting the market, in line with the relevant state aid Guidelines. The support scheme is financed by all final electricity users in Latvia with a levy on electricity consumption. In order to remedy any possible past discrimination against foreign green electricity stemming from the financing of the support scheme, Latvia has committed to invest in projects favouring integration with the European electricity market. The non-confidential version of the decision will be made available under the case number SA.43140 in the [State Aid Register](#) on the Commission’s [Competition website](#) once any confidentiality issues have been resolved. (For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Ficosa International by Panasonic

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of Ficosa International of Spain, by Panasonic of Japan. Ficosa International develops, manufactures and commercialises systems and components for different types of vehicles. Panasonic is active in the development and engineering of electronic technologies and solutions across various sectors. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would not raise competition concerns as Panasonic already has joint control over Ficosa International, which will change to sole control following the transaction. 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.8312](#). (For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Travelopia by KKR

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of Travelopia Holdings Limited and Travelopia USA Inc. (together "Travelopia"), both of the United Kingdom, by KKR & Co. L.P., of the US. Travelopia is a specialist travel operator active primarily in the USA, the United Kingdom and Australia. KKR is a global investment firm active in a variety of sectors. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because of its limited impact in the market. 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.8417](#). *(For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)*

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Capsugel by Lonza

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of Capsugel (Luxembourg) by Lonza (Switzerland). Lonza is active worldwide in the supply of services to the pharmaceutical, healthcare and life science industries, including contract development and manufacturing organisation services for biologics, fine chemicals, advanced intermediates and active pharmaceutical ingredients and manufacturing, development and commercialisation of active ingredients for use in consumer care, agriculture, water treatment, and coatings and composites. Capsugel is active globally in the design, development and manufacture of a range of dosage forms for the biopharmaceutical and health and nutrition industries, including solid oral dosage delivery products such as hard gelatine, soft gelatine, liquid-filled and alternative polymer capsules. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would not raise competition concerns given that the activities of the two companies are not overlapping, and that the merged entity will continue facing competition from other market players. The transaction was examined under the normal merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.8362](#). *(For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)*

Eurostat: Déficit public de la zone euro et de l'UE28 respectivement de 1,5% et 1,7% du PIB

Le déficit ainsi que la dette publique se sont réduits en termes relatifs en 2016 par rapport à 2015, tant dans la zone euro (ZE19) que dans l'UE28. Le ratio du déficit public par rapport au PIB a baissé dans la zone euro, passant de 2,1% en 2015 à 1,5% en 2016, ainsi que dans l'UE28, de 2,4% à 1,7%. Le ratio de la dette publique par rapport au PIB a reculé dans la zone euro, passant de 90,3% à la fin de l'année 2015 à 89,2% à la fin de l'année 2016, ainsi que dans l'UE28, de 84,9% à 83,5%. Un communiqué de presse est disponible [ici](#). *(Pour plus d'informations: Vanessa Mock – Tél.: +32 229 64976; Juliana Dahl – Tél: +32 229 59914)*

STATEMENTS

European Immunisation Week: Statement by Commissioner for Health and Food Safety Vytenis Andriukaitis and the WHO Regional Director for Europe Zsuzsanna Jakab

Today, the European Commission and the World Health Organisation (WHO) have issued a joint statement on the crucial importance of vaccination for immunisation and disease prevention in the European Union and the wider WHO European Region. The statement highlights the strong contribution of vaccines to public health: *"Vaccines have contributed to the health and wellbeing of everyone alive today in the European Union and the wider WHO European Region. In the last 60 years, immunisation has saved more children's lives than any other medical intervention. The impact of this revolution in disease prevention over just a few decades is enormous. Measles caused an estimated 2.6 million deaths each year, before widespread vaccination was put in place in 1980. Thanks to Maurice Hilleman's measles vaccine this highly contagious disease is now preventable. It is a blessing and an achievement that these diseases are largely behind us."* Each year, the European Immunisation Week celebrates the tremendous progress made thanks to vaccines. Furthermore, it provides an occasion to take stock of the tasks still lying ahead to secure public health such as reducing health system barriers and ensure public trust in immunisation. Member States have shown a strong commitment to this issue by endorsing the [European Vaccine Action Plan](#), the [European Health 2020 policy framework](#) and the [Sustainable Development Goals](#). Read the full statement [here](#) and spread the word that #VaccinesWork for us all. (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Aikaterini Apostola – Tel.: +32 229 87624)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Prolonged exposure to excessive noise from construction and transport can affect the health of more than 100 million Europeans. This was the main theme of [a high-level conference](#) organised by the Commission, and supported by the World Health Organisation (WHO), today in Brussels. Karmenu Vella, Commissioner for the Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, said: *"Environmental noise is a very real problem for millions of citizens. We have rules to protect them from excessive noise from construction and transport, but Member States need to intensify their efforts to implement them to bring noise levels down towards recommended levels. We will help facilitate this through the new [Environmental Implementation Review](#). Today's conference is the starting point for a broader dialogue with all stakeholders to ensure we strike the right balance between the transport and construction we all depend on, and the healthy lives we want"*. Based on the latest data of the European Environmental Agency (EEA), including a new [Commission report](#), conference participants will look at the root causes of noise and its effects. Together with Member States and stakeholders, the Commission will examine how to help improve the implementation of the [Environmental Noise Directive](#) and other instruments to tackle noise pollution. Speech and more information available [here](#). (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Iris Petsa – Tel.: + 32 229 93321)

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