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Juncker Plan: better access to finance for small businesses in the Baltic countries

The Investment Plan for Europe, or [Juncker Plan](#), is backing a €10 million guarantee agreement signed between the European Investment Bank and the financing company Capitalia, active in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. This guarantee agreement is supported by the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the heart of the Juncker Plan, and by the Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) programme. Thanks to this agreement, small businesses in need of resources in the Baltic countries will be able to receive financing of up to €25 000. Marianne **Thyssen**, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, said: *“Giving small entrepreneurs the means to put their talent to work with better access to finance is one of our key priorities. This is how we will build a fairer and a more inclusive European Union.”* A press release is available [here](#). As of February 2019, the Juncker Plan already mobilised €380 billion of additional investments, including €1.3 billion in Estonia, €966 million in Latvia and €1.6 billion in Lithuania. (For more information: Annika Breidthardt – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)

EU boosts cooperation with Pacific region on future EU-ACP partnership, climate actions and fighting gender-based violence

Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development Neven **Mimica** is on an official visit to the Pacific Islands and Australia. The aim of the visit is to reconfirm the EU’s commitment to the region and to strengthen dialogue, as well as to launch substantial development cooperation. He will meet with, amongst others, Fiji’s Minister for Industry, Trade and Tourism Ms. Premila Kumar, the Minister for Industry, Trade and Tourism Ms. Premila Kumar and the Prime Minister of Tuvalu, Hon. At this occasion, Commissioner **Mimica** stressed: *“The EU’s commitment to and partnership with the Pacific region is strong. We are natural partners in the tackling of global challenges such as climate change, and we continue to work together. This is not least underlined by the EU’s green investments in the Pacific region and across the globe”*. Commissioner **Mimica** is expected to sign a number of initiatives in the areas of water and sanitation, malnutrition, renewable energy, sustainable waste management, rural entrepreneurship and adaptation efforts to the effects of climate change. The Commissioner will furthermore visit EU funded projects, notably the Fuluasou Hyrdoelectric Plant, which aims to reduce carbon emissions. After this, Commissioner **Mimica** will continue his trip for an official visit to Australia. (For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz De Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Christina Wunder – Tel.: +32 229 92256)

EU monitoring mission evaluates progress on human rights and labour rights in Myanmar

A high-level mission of the European Commission and the European External

Action Service (EEAS) returned last week (18-22 February 2019) to Myanmar as part of a broader engagement under the EU's Everything But Arms (EBA) trade preferences scheme. Myanmar benefits significantly from its duty-free, quota-free access to the EU market under the EBA trade preferences scheme. To continue benefiting from the scheme Myanmar must uphold and respect the fundamental principles enshrined in the relevant 15 fundamental United Nations and International Labour Organisation conventions. A previous monitoring mission [visited Myanmar in October](#) 2018 following deeply worrying reports as regards human rights violations and concerns about labour rights. The EU mission focused on several issues such as accountability for crimes under international law; cooperation with United Nations special procedures and mandates; unrestricted humanitarian access to conflict-affected communities; situation of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and conditions for safe, voluntary, dignified and sustainable return of refugees; discrimination, hate speech, media freedom and labour rights. The EU delegation held constructive discussions with the government of Myanmar in Nay Pyi Taw, met with the Chief Minister and State Government of Rakhine, and the Speaker of the Rakhine State Assembly, visited a Rohingya IDP camp and met with local Rakhine and Hindu communities. The mission also provided an opportunity for discussions with representatives of United Nations agencies and humanitarian organisations present in Myanmar. The European Commission and the European External Action Service will now analyse the findings from the mission. The EU will continue to engage with Myanmar and looks forward to seeing sustained and concrete progress in all areas of concern in the near future. A full [press release](#) is available online. *(For more information: Daniel Rosario – Tel.: +32 229 56185; Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Kinga Malinowska – Tel.: +32 229 51383; Adam Kaznowski – Tel.: +32 229 89359)*

Consumer Policy: New Commission award for product safety leaders

The European Commission is launching today, a new Product Safety Award for businesses that are industry leaders in making sure their products and services are safer for consumers. Věra **Jourová**, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, said: *"We want to encourage more companies to make product safety a priority and to keep all consumers safe, especially our children. There are still too many dangerous products recalled or causing harm. The Product Safety Award is a chance for companies to be rewarded for going the extra mile to keep their customers safe."* This year, companies can apply under the categories of online sales and childcare products. The applications from companies based in one of the 31 European Economic Area countries (the 28 EU Member States plus Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein) can be made until 7 April 2019. Commissioner **Jourová** will hand in the awards to the winners at a ceremony in Brussels in September. More information can be found on the Product Safety Award [website](#). *(For more information: Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Mélanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659)*

MEDIA programme: One Oscar and several Césars for EU supported films

During the 91st Academy Awards, also known as the Oscars, held on Sunday 24 February, EU funded films were once again nominated across various

categories, and in the end it was [British actress Olivia Colman who won the Oscar for the best actress in *The Favourite*](#). *The Favourite*, an Irish-UK-US coproduction by Yorgos Lanthimos, received € 50,000 of EU funding for its development, via the [Creative Europe MEDIA programme](#). Also during the weekend, some EU-supported films stood out during the 44th edition of the French César Awards, held on Friday 22 February. In particular, *Jusqu'à la garde* by Xavier Legrand was one of the big winners of the night receiving up to five awards, including the César for the best film. The other two EU-supported films awarded at the French ceremony were *Dilili in Paris* by Christophe Rossignon, which won best animated film, and *Sink or Swim* (Le Grand Bain) with Philippe Katerine as best supporting actor. The EU's MEDIA programme plays a crucial role in supporting Europe's audiovisual sector through the development, promotion and distribution of thousands of films as well as support to training programmes, film festivals, cinema networks and distribution platforms. To promote Europe's diversity of films, MEDIA has launched the [EU Film Contest](#), to reach the next generation of filmmakers and young people with an interest in films/TV. Participants can test until 19 March their European film knowledge for a chance to experience the behind the scenes of Cannes Film Festival and see European audiovisual industry at work. More information about how the EU supports cinema and the audiovisual sector is available in this [factsheet](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: +32 229 56184)

Aides d'État: la Commission autorise l'aide accordée à quatre fermes pilotes d'éoliennes flottantes en mer en France

La Commission a approuvé, en vertu des règles de l'UE relatives aux aides d'État, les projets d'aide en faveur de quatre fermes pilotes d'éoliennes flottantes pour la production d'électricité en France. Le projet « Groix Belle Île » sera situé dans l'océan Atlantique, tandis que les trois autres projets (« Golfe du Lion », « Eolmed » et « Provence Grand Large ») se situeront en Méditerranée. Chacune des quatre fermes pilotes d'éoliennes utilisera une combinaison particulière de turbine, de flotteur et de câbles. L'objectif de l'aide publique est de tester ces différentes solutions technologiques, l'objectif à long terme étant de tester cette technologie avant de la déployer à plus grande échelle. Les fermes pilotes d'éoliennes bénéficieront à la fois d'une aide à l'investissement et d'une aide au fonctionnement. L'aide à l'investissement sera partiellement versée sous la forme d'avances remboursables. La Commission a apprécié les mesures au regard des règles de l'UE en matière d'aides d'État, en particulier sur la base de ses [lignes directrices concernant les aides d'État à la protection de l'environnement et à l'énergie](#). La Commission a constaté que : (i) les projets français favoriseront le développement d'un nouveau type d'énergie éolienne en mer et la croissance potentielle d'une technologie innovante dans le domaine des énergies renouvelables et (ii) le niveau des aides accordées aux quatre projets est proportionné et permettra d'éviter une surcompensation pour les bénéficiaires de l'aide publique, conformément aux exigences des lignes directrices. Sur cette base, la Commission a conclu que les quatre projets encourageraient l'utilisation d'électricité produite à partir de sources d'énergie renouvelables et aideraient la France à atteindre ses objectifs climatiques, sans fausser indûment la concurrence. La communique de

presse est disponible en ligne en [FR](#), [EN](#), [DE](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Ricardo Cardoso – Tél.: +32 229 80100; Giulia Astuti – Tél.: +32 229 55344)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Arris by CommScope

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of ARRIS International plc (“ARRIS”) by CommScope Holding Company (“CommScope”), both of the US. ARRIS provides entertainment, communications, and networking technology products for service providers to deliver media, voice and IP data services to their subscribers. CommScope is a global provider of infrastructure solutions for the core, access and edge layers of communications networks. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns given the companies’ minimal combined market position resulting from the proposed 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.9226](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Concentrations: la Commission autorise l’acquisition de April par CVC

La Commission européenne a approuvé, en vertu du règlement européen sur les concentrations, l’acquisition de April S.A. («April»), basée en France, par CVC Capital Partners, SICAV – FIS S.A. («CVC»), basée au Luxembourg. April est un courtier en assurances et un assureur actif principalement en France. CVC fournit des conseils en investissement et gère des fonds d’investissement actifs dans différentes régions du monde. La Commission a conclu que l’opération envisagée ne soulèverait pas de problème de concurrence en raison de l’absence de chevauchement entre les activités des entreprises concernées. La transaction a été examinée dans le cadre de la procédure simplifiée de contrôle des concentrations. De plus amples informations sont disponibles sur le site internet [concurrence](#) de la Commission dans le [registre public](#) des affaires sous le numéro [M.9273](#). (Pour plus d’informations: Ricardo Cardoso – Tél.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tél.: +32 229 90526)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini to visit Lebanon

High Representative/Vice-President Federica **Mogherini** travels to Lebanon today and tomorrow. It will be the first visit of the High Representative/Vice-President since a new Government was formed on 31 January 2019 and her fourth visit during her mandate. She will meet with President of the Republic Michel Aoun, Prime Minister Saad Hariri, Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri, and Minister of Foreign Affairs Gebran Bassil. She will also officially open the new premises of the EU Delegation to Lebanon in the presence of Prime Minister Hariri. The visit underlines the EU’s strong commitment to Lebanon’s stability and a partnership based on common values

and shared interests. Following the first [EU-LAS Summit in Egypt](#) and two weeks ahead of the [Brussels III Conference on “Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region”](#) in March, the visit comes at a crucial time. The High Representative/Vice-President will express the EU’s willingness to accompany Lebanon in implementing the reform agenda presented at the CEDRE Conference in Paris. Photos and videos of the visit will be available on [EbS](#). *(For more information: Maja Kocijančič – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Matteo Arisci – Tel: +32 229 80833)*

Commissioner Stylianides in Vienna, Austria

Today, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides** is in Vienna to meet the Austrian Interior Minister, Herbert Kickl. The meeting is an opportunity to discuss rescEU and the strengthened [EU Civil Protection Mechanism](#) to better respond to natural disasters like forest fires, floods, earthquakes and other crises by creating additional reserve of response capacities. The Austrian Presidency last semester ensured the proposal advanced during negotiations with the Parliament and EU Member States, and rescEU is expected to enter into force end of March. After the meeting, the Commissioner will visit the [“EU SAVES LIVES”](#) virtual reality exhibition that is currently in Vienna and open to visitors until 2 March. Visitors can learn how the EU helps to coordinate emergency response to natural disasters and other crises in Europe and worldwide. *(For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz de Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)*

Commissioner Crețu on official visit to Romania

Today, Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina **Crețu** is in Făgăraș, Romania. This morning she met the Presidents of the County Councils of Brașov and Sibiu, at the Făgăraș Fortress. The Commissioner also met with the mayors of the county of Făgăraș. The visit of Commissioner **Crețu** focuses on the state of play of EU-funded projects in the counties of Brașov and Sibiu as well as on the future of the Cohesion policy. Commissioner **Crețu** said: *“Regional and urban policy addresses the needs of all citizens and aims to foster a balanced territorial development. Sibiu and Brasov counties have received over €800 million of EU funds – including in the city of Făgăraș – which have contributed to improve the quality of the Romanian citizens’ lives. The EU has supported investments for modernising urban transport, developing health infrastructure, energy efficiency, supporting the business environment and, last but not least, improving water and sanitation infrastructure. EU funds will continue to support the development of this region.”* *(For more information: Christian Spahr – Tel.: +32 2 295 00 55; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)*

Security Union: Commissioners Avramopoulos and King to attend conference on cities’ cooperation against radicalisation

Tomorrow, Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris **Avramopoulos** and Commissioner for the Security Union Julian **King** will open a

conference in Brussels on “[EU Cities against Radicalisation](#)”, organised jointly by the European Commission and the European Committee of the Regions. The conference will bring together mayors, European and national policymakers, cities’ networks and organisations involved in countering and preventing radicalisation. The participants will discuss the challenge of violent radicalisation leading to extremism at the local level, with a focus on sharing innovative and effective responses to radicalisation and on exploring how cities can cooperate with each other in this area. The conference will also showcase the support that is available from national governments and the EU to empower cities to develop initiatives against radicalisation. The Commissioners’ opening remarks will be livestreamed on [EbS](#). (For more information: *Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456; Kasia Kolanko – Tel.: +32 229 63444*)

Le commissaire Moscovici en visite à Luxembourg ce mardi

Pierre **Moscovici**, commissaire en charge des affaires économiques et financières, de la fiscalité et des douanes, sera à Luxembourg le mardi 26 février. Il commencera par une visite au Parlement luxembourgeois, où il participera à un échange de vues avec les membres de la Commission des Finances et du Budget. En fin de matinée, il se rendra à l’Abbaye de Neumünster où il rencontrera Nicolas Schmit, ancien ministre du Travail, de l’Emploi et de l’Économie sociale et solidaire. Puis, le Commissaire interviendra lors de la conférence faisant suite au rapport « [Sustainable equality](#) ». Il participera ensuite à un déjeuner de travail avec Pierre Gramegna, ministre des Finances de Luxembourg. (Pour plus d’informations: *Annika Breidhardt – Tél.: +32 229 58615; Patrick McCullough – Tél.: +32 229 87183; Enda McNamara – Tél.: +32 229 64976*)

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