

Daily News 25 / 04 / 2018

COLLEGE MEETING: Boosting innovation in the Digital Single Market: freeing up data to power artificial intelligence for Europe

Today the European Commission presents a series of new initiatives to complete the [Digital Single Market](#) and turn data from different countries, sectors and disciplines into a major source of innovation and growth. They include a European approach on artificial intelligence (AI) to put this technology at the service of European citizens and boost Europe's competitiveness, while guaranteeing highest European standards for personal data protection. The Commission proposes a three-pronged approach to increase public and private investments, prepare for socio-economic changes, and ensure an appropriate ethical and legal framework. More information on the Commission's approach on AI is available in the [press release](#), [Q&A](#) and [factsheet](#). At the same time, the Commission proposes to boost the data economy and encourage healthcare data sharing in Europe. The goal is to allow better use of public sector data, by making it more accessible for researchers and SMEs so that they can create new innovative services. With today's proposals, citizens will be able to access and manage their health data more easily. Further details are available in the [press release](#), in two memos on [data](#) and [eHealth](#) as well as in a [factsheet](#). You can follow the press conference of Vice-President Andrus **Ansip**, Commissioners Elżbieta **Bieńkowska**, Carlos **Moedas** and Mariya **Gabriel** live on [EBS](#). More information on the Digital Single Market is available [here](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Inga Höglund Tel.: +32 229 50698)

Company Law: Commission proposes new rules to help companies move across borders and find online solutions

Today, the European Commission is proposing new company law rules to make it easier for companies to merge, divide or move within the Single Market. The new rules will also ensure that employees' rights are well protected and tax abuse is prevented. The rules will stimulate the growth potential of European companies by digitalising the process of setting-up and running a business. First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** said: *"In our thriving EU Single Market, companies have the freedom to move and grow. But this needs to happen in a fair way. Today's proposal puts in place clear procedures for companies, with strong safeguards to protect employees' rights and, for the first time, to prevent artificial arrangements aiming at tax avoidance and other abuses".* Commissioner for Justice, Consumers & Gender Equality policy, Vera **Jourová** said: *"Too often, European companies are prevented from looking for business opportunities abroad. I want to change this and modernise the company law rules. First, I want more online solutions for European businesses so that they cut costs and save time. Second, I want to offer the honest entrepreneurs the choice of where to do business and how to grow or reorganise their businesses."* This Company Law proposal was first announced in the [Commission's 2017 Work Programme](#) and part of the Commission's [Digital](#)

[Single Market Strategy](#). More information can be found in this [press release](#) and [memo](#). First Vice-President Timmermans and Commissioner Jourová will give a press conference on Wednesday 25 April around 13:00, which can be followed [here](#). (For more information: Christian Wigand– Tel.: +32 229 62253; Mélanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659)

Second Brussels Conference “Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region” – Day 2

The Brussels II Conference “[Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region](#)” (#SyriaConf2018), co-chaired by the EU and the United Nations, continues today with ministerial plenary and parallel sessions, bringing together over 85 delegations, from the EU and the region, regional and international organisation, NGOs and civil society. “From the European Union alone, almost €11 billion have been mobilised in these years. Last year at the [First Brussels Conference](#) we committed to increasing our support for Syrians, inside and outside the country. And today I can announce that, not only collectively we have delivered on last year’s pledges but also that collectively, as international community, we have even exceeded last year’s commitment by 25%. [...] The EU will confirm for the next year the same contribution as last year and we aim at maintaining the same level of contribution until 2020 – that is €560 million for our support to Syrians in Jordan, Lebanon and inside Syria and for the host communities. And for Syrians in Turkey the EU and Member States will uphold their commitments and mobilise additional €3 billion in the coming two years” announced High Representative/Vice-President Federica **Mogherini** at the opening of the Conference and the political session ([arrival doorsteps, opening remarks](#), including **Mogherini**’s [arrival doorsteps](#) and [opening statement](#) are available online). A joint press conference by the co-chairs (EU-UN) will take place at around 12:45 CET, live on [EbS](#). The plenary sessions dedicated to the regional and humanitarian aspects of the Syrian conflict will be respectively co-chaired by Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes **Hahn** and Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides**, as will be parallel sessions dedicated to “Inclusive human capital development and economic recovery for the region” and “Humanitarian protection issues inside Syria”. The total pledge announcement will be made by Commissioner **Stylianides** to conclude the Conference at around [18:00 CET](#). The opening of the plenary sessions by the co-chairs, of the parallel sessions as well as the final pledge will be [live streamed](#). [Videos](#) and [photos](#) of the entire day will be available [here](#). Yesterday, [HRVP Mogherini and UN Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Misturamet](#) with Syrian civil society representatives and hold a [joint press point](#). **Mogherini**’s remarks are available [here](#). In parallel, Commissioners **Hahn** and **Stylianides** hosted a “Day of Dialogue” together with UN representatives, key donors and over 200 NGOs from Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Turkey. The opening remarks by Commissioners **Hahn** and **Stylianides** are available online. Find out more about the event [here](#) (focus on resilience and regional/development) and [here](#) (focus on humanitarian support). Opening remarks by Commissioner **Hahn** at yesterday’s parallel session on ‘Fostering inclusive

economic and social development in hosting countries' are available [online](#). Commissioner **Stylianides** also participated in a specific event dedicated to education. For more information on the Conference, visit the dedicated [website](#) – which contains the [programme](#), [list of participants](#) and [background information](#). For further insight into the EU response to the Syrian crisis, read our [factsheet](#). (For more information: Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Carlos Martin Ruiz de Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322 ; Lauranne Devillé – Tel.: +32 229-80833; Alceo Smerilli– Tel.: + 32 229 64887; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.:+32 229 69140)

State aid: Commission approves public service compensation to Sumburgh airport in the UK

The European Commission has found public service compensation granted to Highlands and Islands Airports Limited (HIAL) for the operation of Sumburgh airport to be in line with EU state aid rules. Sumburgh airport is located on the Shetland Islands and connects a sparsely populated region in Scotland with the UK mainland and the rest of the EU. The public funding will facilitate regional connectivity and contribute to the area's development without unduly distorting competition in the Single Market. The approved public compensation amounts to approximately GBP 6.7 million (€7.7 million) annually until 2022. The Commission assessed this measure under its [2014 Guidelines on State aid to airports and airlines](#) and [the Services of General Interest Framework](#), which allow Member States to grant aid in the form of compensation to airports that have an important role for regional connectivity. The Commission found that without the airport, the Shetland Islands would face significant disadvantages in terms of connectivity and economic development compared to other European regions, as the airport is the most important connection hub for its population. Without prejudice to any provisions of the Withdrawal Agreement, which is under negotiation, this Commission decision only applies until the UK ceases to be a Member State. The non-confidential version of the current decision will be published under the case number SA.49482 in the [State Aid Register](#) on the Commission's [competition website](#) once any confidentiality issues have been resolved. (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Saxo Bank by Geely

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of sole control over Saxo Bank A/S by Geely Financials Denmark A/S, both of Denmark. Saxo Bank is an online investment bank offering online trading and investment services worldwide and banking services in Denmark. Geely Financials Denmark is part of Zhejiang Geely Holding Group, a Chinese multinational company active in the automotive manufacturing industry. It sells passenger cars under the Geely and Volvo brands and taxis under the London Taxi brand. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because the companies' combined market shares remain very limited on the markets concerned. 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.8735](#). (For more information: Ricardo

Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of GST Autoleather by Black Diamond Capital Management

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of GST Autoleather by Black Diamond Capital Management, both of the US. GST Autoleather is a global supplier of automotive interior leather. Black Diamond Capital Management is an investment advisory firm specialised in asset management. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because the companies are active on different product markets and have minor vertical relationships. 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.8846](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

Commission announces winners of the 2017 “Altiero Spinelli Prize for Outreach”

The European Commission has announced the names of the 22 winners of the 2017 “Altiero Spinelli Prize for Outreach: Spreading knowledge about Europe”. Six first prizes of €50,000; six second prizes of €30,000 and ten third prizes of €17,000 are awarded to works that help communicate “Europe” to its citizens. Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor **Navracsics**, said: “We need to reconnect Europe’s citizens to our cultural richness, our history, founding values, institutions, benefits and achievements. Flagship EU programmes like Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps are essential in enabling people to experience what it feels like to be European. The Altiero Spinelli Prize for Outreach complements these initiatives, and I congratulate all the winners for their valuable contribution.” A team of 36 independent evaluators set up by the Commission selected the 22 winners from a total of 279 applications. The award ceremony will take place in Brussels on 20 June 2018. The prize is being awarded for the first time in 2017; the second edition will follow in 2018. It is an initiative implemented by the Commission at the request of the European Parliament, which funds the prize as a preparatory action/pilot project. Details of all the prize winners are available [here](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Inga Höglund Tel.: +32 229 50698)

STATEMENTS

Security Union: Commission welcomes political agreement on the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS)

Following the compromise agreement in December, the European Parliament (LIBE Committee) and the Council (COREPER) today reached a final political agreement on the Commission’s proposal from [November 2016](#) to establish a European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS). Welcoming the agreement, First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans**, Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris **Avramopoulos** and Commissioner for the Security Union Julian **King** said: “Today’s agreement on the European Travel

Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) is an important step towards building a safer and more secure Europe for our citizens. The Commission welcomes the efforts of the European Parliament and the Council to finalise this priority file, as agreed in the [Joint Declaration](#) of Legislative Priorities for 2018-2019. Importantly, it symbolises the closure of another security information gap at EU level. We now call on both the European Parliament and the Council to formally adopt this agreement.” The [full statement](#) and the [factsheet](#) are available online. (For more information: Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456; Tove Ernst – Tel.: +32 229 80423; Katarzyna Kolanko – Tel.: 32 229 63444)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Tunisie : L'UE se félicite de la Feuille de route des réformes prioritaires

Lors de sa première visite à Bruxelles, hier, le chef du Gouvernement tunisien Youssef Chahed a présenté à la Commission européenne la “[Feuille de route des réformes prioritaires](#)”. Pour la Commission, l’accent mis par la Feuille de route, notamment, sur les réformes structurelles – en particulier socio-économiques – et la lutte contre la corruption est un pas positif dont bénéficieront les citoyens tunisiens et qui renforcera les relations bilatérales entre [l’UE et la Tunisie](#). Lors de la conférence de presse suivant sa rencontre avec le Chef du Gouvernement tunisien, le président de la Commission européenne Jean-Claude **Juncker** a déclaré : «Je salue la Feuille de route qui traduit l’engagement à poursuivre les réformes socio-économiques indispensables. Je ne peux qu’applaudir le succès tunisien de ces dernières années. Voir ce pays, cette grande nation, sur quelques années, faire des progrès qui furent ceux de la Tunisie m’impressionne au plus haut degré. La Tunisie pour l’Union européenne, pour la Commission, est un partenaire privilégié. Et nous allons continuer à faire preuve de solidarité avec la Tunisie, son peuple courageux, un peuple entrepreneur, qui fait bien les choses.» Le président **Juncker**, la haute représentante/vice-présidente **Mogherini** et le commissaire **Hahn** ont chacun rencontré hier le chef du Gouvernement tunisien Youssef Chahed. Plus d’informations sont disponibles dans ce [communiqué de presse](#). La conférence de presse faisant suite à la rencontre du président **Juncker** avec le Chef du Gouvernement tunisien est disponible sur [EbS](#). (Pour plus d’informations: Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456; Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Alceo Smerilli +32 229 64887)

Vice-President Šefčovič in Slovenia for second Energy Union Tour

As part of his second [Energy Union Tour](#), Commission Vice-President for Energy Union Maroš **Šefčovič** will travel to Slovenia on 25-26 April. He will meet the Minister of Infrastructure Peter Gašperšič, with their talks focused on the Clean Energy Package, preparations of 2030 national energy and climate plans and clean mobility. Together, they will participate in a conference on the energy transition co-organised by the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, followed by a joint media statement at 10:30 on Thursday 25 April. Vice-President will also visit the European

Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators (ACER), and meet members of the parliamentary Committees on EU Affairs and on Infrastructure as well as representatives of civil society. Together with Commissioner for Transport Violeta Bulc, Vice-President Šefčovič will take part in the [TEN-T Days Conference](#) to discuss ways to contribute to innovative, clean and safe mobility and to forge additional synergies between transport, energy and digital connectivity, also in the context of the upcoming proposal on the EU budget for 2021-2027. Ahead of his visit, Vice-President Šefčovič said: *“I welcome Slovenia’s work on its national energy concept, which could serve as a basis for the 2030 national energy and climate plan – an important tool to attract investments and maximise benefits of the ongoing energy transition. The country’s innovative and clean tech spirit can create many business opportunities as well as mitigate high dependency on fossil fuel imports. The starting point is rather good, as Slovenia has already reached its 2020 targets on greenhouse gas emissions and is well on track to meet its 25 percent renewables target. But there still is tremendous potential that can be untapped for instance, in renewables or energy efficiency. I can see Slovenia as a regional catalyst in this field.”* (For more information: Anca Paduraru – Tel.: +32 229 91269; Nicole Bockstaller – Tel.: +32 229 52589)

Future of EU finances – Commissioner Oettinger visits Finland and Slovenia

Commissioner Günther H. Oettinger, in charge of Budget and Human Resources, is visiting Finland and Slovenia on 26 and 27 April respectively as part of his tour across EU Member States (#MFFtour27) aimed at gathering views on the future of EU finances and the EU’s multiannual budget post-2020 (#EUBudget). In Finland, the Commissioner will meet with Minister of European Affairs, Mr Sampo Terho, Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, Mr Jari Leppä, Minister for Economic Affairs, Mr Mika Lintilä and several Members of the Parliament. In Slovenia, the Commissioner will meet Minister of Finance, Ms Mateja Vraničar Erman and the State Secretary for EU affairs, Mr Igor Mally. He will also give a keynote speech at the TEN-T Days conference. The Commission kicked off the debate on the future of EU finances on 28 June 2017 with the publication of its [Reflection paper on the future of EU finances](#), available in all EU languages (also in [Finnish](#) and [Slovenian](#)). Then, on 14 February 2018, the Commission presented the Communication [“A new, modern Multiannual Financial Framework for a EU that delivers efficiently on its priorities post-2020”](#). Stakeholders’ views will be taken into account when preparing the next Multiannual Financial Framework, to be presented on [2 May 2018](#). See a speech [“A Budget Matching our Ambitions”](#) given by Commissioner Günther H. Oettinger at the conference [“Shaping our Future”](#) on 8 January 2018. (For more information: Alexander Winterstein – Tel.: +32 229 93265; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526).

TEN-T Days 2018: Connecting Europe with investment in innovative mobility solutions

Commissioner for Transport Violeta Bulc will be joined by Vice-President for Energy Union Maroš Šefčovič, Commissioner for Budget and Human Resources Günther H. Oettinger and Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina Crețu at the high-level transport conference [“TEN-T Days”](#) held until Friday in Ljubljana, Slovenia. This event organised by the European Commission will

bring together 26 European ministers, as well as Members of the European Parliament and more than 2,000 transport stakeholders to discuss the future of transport. In that regard, it will build on the positive agenda for a clean, connected and competitive mobility set out by the Commission in its “Europe on the move” packages. This year’s edition will put a strong emphasis on transport investments, which are an enabler of job creations and economic prosperity. According to the Commission’s estimates, completing the core [Trans-European Transport Network](#) (TEN-T) would generate 1.8% additional GDP in 2030 and 13 million job-years. More information on the event is available [here](#). *(For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Alexis Perier – Tel.: +32 229 6 91 43)*

Commissioner Jourová attends meeting with national electoral commissions

Chairs of national electoral commissions are in Brussels for a two-day meeting to discuss democratic participation and electoral matters. On Wednesday afternoon, Commissioner Jourová will discuss with the participants the emerging challenges related to the role of social media in the electoral process. Member States will share how they respond the risks posed to elections in the context of the Facebook / Cambridge Analytica revelations. Other sessions include discussions on best practices to promote electoral participation, including of underrepresented groups, and how to protect elections from cyber-attacks. *(For more information: Christian Wigand– Tel.: +32 229 62253; Mélanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659)*

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