

Daily News 25 / 06 / 2019

COLLEGE MEETING: Commission report shows sound financial management of the EU budget and tangible results delivered for citizens

Making sure that every euro from the EU budget creates added value for EU citizens is a key priority for the European Commission. It is also an important objective of the [Commission proposal](#) for the EU's next long term budget for the period 2021–2027. The [2018 Annual Management and Performance Report](#) (AMPR) published today shows the concrete results already achieved by the EU budget in terms of creating jobs and growth and investing in Europe's youth. Together, the [State of the Union](#), the [General Report](#) and the Annual Management and Performance Report provide a comprehensive picture for citizens of the European Union's achievements and the role the EU budget plays in translating priorities into results. Through the report, which is also the starting point of the 2018 budgetary discharge procedure, the College of Commissioners takes political responsibility for the management of the EU budget. Today's report shows that in 2018 the EU budget once again contributed to delivering on the EU's political priorities. For example, by now it has helped mobilise a total of over €400 billion under the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) – the heart of the Juncker Plan. By 2020, these investments are expected to create over 1.4 million jobs in the EU. Cohesion policy funds have helped create a further 1.3 million jobs in the EU over the past 10 years and enabled a total of 8.9 million people to gain new qualifications. The EU budget has also addressed another important priority for Europeans – climate change. In 2018, spending for climate action was integrated across all EU programmes: in total 20.7% of the budget was spent on climate change-related action. In addition to singling out other achievements in areas like migration, the security union, cutting-edge research and the EU's external action, the report also confirms that the EU budget is well-managed. The Commission has an effective toolbox in place to make sure that the budget is protected and every euro is spent in the most effective way, to the benefit of the EU's 500 million citizens and many more people beyond the EU's borders. Also today, the European Commission has adopted the Annual Report on internal audits carried out in the Commission in 2018. The report provides an overview of the audits conducted across the Commission by the independent Internal Audit Service. It also specifies the recommendations given, all of which were accepted, and the action taken by Commission departments to address the identified risks. *(For more information: Mina Andreeva – Tel.: +32 229 91382; Andreana Stankova – Tel.: +32 2 295 78 57; Tim McPhie – Tel.: +32 229 58602)*

COLLEGE MEETING: European Commission appoints new Head of Representation in Croatia and an Adviser for the preparations of the country's Council Presidency

The European Commission has decided today to appoint Mr Ognian Zlatev as the new Head of the Commission's Representation in Zagreb, Croatia. Mr Ognian

Zlatev, Bulgarian national, will take up office on 1 July 2019. Currently he is Head of the European Commission's Representation in Sofia, Bulgaria, where he has been working since 2013. A highly experienced expert in communication, with nearly 30 years of professional experience, he successfully supported the Commission's work over the past 6 years at the Representation in Sofia and notably during the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2018. Mr Zlatev brings excellent knowledge of EU affairs, outstanding management skills and considerable expertise in media development, South-East Europe and the Western Balkans to his new post. The Commission also decided to appoint today Mr Branko Baričević as an Adviser to the President on matters relating to the preparation of the Croatian Presidency of the Council of the EU. Mr Baričević has been the Head of the European Commission Representation in the Republic of Croatia since 1 July 2013, when Croatia became the EU's 28th Member State. He joined the Commission from the Croatian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where he had served, between 2005 and 2012, as the Head of Mission of Croatia to the European Union in Brussels. A press release in [EN](#), [FR](#), [DE](#) and [HR](#) is available online. (For more information: Mina Andreeva – Tel.: +32 229 91382; Andreana Stankova – Tel.: +32 2 295 78 57)

COLLEGE MEETING: The European Fiscal Board publishes its yearly report on euro area fiscal policy direction

Today, the European Fiscal Board will publish its assessment of the euro area fiscal stance for 2020. The [European Fiscal Board](#) is an independent body mandated to advise the European Commission on the overall direction of fiscal policy of the euro area and to evaluate the implementation of the EU fiscal governance framework. It was formally established at the end of 2015 and began operating shortly after its members were appointed in October 2016. The chairman of the Board Niels Thygesen attended today's College meeting to present the report. The report and press release will be available [online](#) at 14.00. (For more information: Annika Breidthardt – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Annikky Lamp – Tel.: +32 229 56151)

COLLEGE MEETING: Updated Code of Conduct for Commissioners delivers greater transparency, Commission report shows

The Juncker Commission has been committed to enhancing transparency from day one. In this spirit – upon the proposal of President **Juncker** and after consultation of the European Parliament –, in [January 2018](#) the Commission adopted a [new Code of Conduct](#) for Commissioners, which sets stricter rules and even higher ethical standards and introduces greater transparency in a number of areas. The Commission has today published the first [annual report](#) on the application of this Code of Conduct. It confirms that following the adoption of the updated Code, the Commission has achieved an even greater level of transparency when it comes to the conduct of its Members. More concretely, since February 2018 and every two months, the Commission publishes information on the Commissioners' travel expenses. In February 2019, the European Commission published [practical arrangements](#) for

Commissioners participating in the European Parliament elections. These came after the new Code of Conduct enabled Commissioners— all of them experienced and high-calibre politicians – to participate in the European elections campaigns without having to take a leave of absence as in the past. Finally, the Commission’s website related to ethics and integrity of the Members of the Commission was updated to provide better, clearer and more comprehensive information for interested stakeholders. Under the new Code of Conduct, a new reinforced Independent Ethical Committee was set up to give advice on all ethical issues and make recommendations related to the Code. Today’s report provides details about their work. Also today, the Commission decided to extend the mandates of the three members of the Independent Ethical Committee – Ms Dagmar Roth-Behrendt, Mr Christiaan Timmermans and Mr Heinz Zourek – as of [13 July 2019](#). The annual report on the application of the Code of Conduct, the declarations of interest and the CVs of the Members of the Independent Ethical Committee are available online [here](#). (For more information: Mina Andreeva – Tel.: [+32 229 91382](#); Andreana Stankova – Tel.: [+32 2 295 78 57](#))

EU set to sign trade and investment agreements with Vietnam

The Council of Ministers today approved the EU-Vietnam trade and investment agreements, paving the way for their signature on Sunday 30 June in Hanoi. President of the European Commission Jean-Claude **Juncker** said: “I welcome the decision taken today by EU Member States. After Singapore, the agreements with Vietnam are the second to have been concluded between the EU and a Southeast Asian country, and represent stepping stones to a greater engagement between Europe and the region. It is also a political statement by two partners and friends standing together for open, fair and rules-based trade.” Commissioner for Trade Cecilia **Malmström** said: “I am very pleased to see that Member States have given a green light to our trade and investment agreements with Vietnam. Vietnam is a vibrant and promising market of more than 95 million consumers and both sides have much to gain from stronger trade relations. Beyond the clear economic benefits, this deal also aims to strengthen respect for human rights as well as protecting the environment and workers’ rights. I welcome Vietnam’s engagement in the process so far – their recent ratification of the International Labour Organisation Convention on collective bargaining is an excellent example of how trade agreements can encourage higher standards.” The agreements are set to bring unprecedented benefits for European and Vietnamese companies, consumers and workers, while promoting respect for labour rights and the fight against climate change under the Paris Agreement. For more information, see the [press release](#) available online, as well as documents on the [dedicated webpages](#). (For more information: Daniel Rosario – Tel.: +32 229 56185; Kinga Malinowska – Tel: +32 229 51383)

Faster rail travel in northern Slovakia thanks to Cohesion Policy

The [Cohesion Fund](#) invests almost €285.5 million for faster travel in northern Slovakia, on the railway line between the cities of Žilina and Púchov, near

the border with Czechia on the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T). The EU-funded project will upgrade the section of the line between Púchov and Považská Teplá so that trains can travel up to 160 km/h. The EU will also fund the construction of two tunnels, three large bridges and the refurbishment of two railway stations at Považská Teplá and Považská Bystrica. Commissioner for Regional policy Corina **Crețu** said: *“The EU is funding a better rail network in the region of Trenčín. Thanks to this investment, passengers will enjoy increased safety and comfort on the line and faster connections to other Slovak regions and to Czechia. Because this project promotes clean mobility in the region, inhabitants will also ultimately benefit from better air quality.”* The project should be completed at the end of 2021. The EU is investing almost €3.5 billion in transport and energy networks in Slovakia under the 2014-2020 Cohesion Policy. (For more information: Christian Spahr – Tel.: +32 2 295 00 55; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)

Juncker Plan supports Almirall’s research into new skin disease treatments with €120 million European Investment Bank loan

The European Investment Bank is providing €120 million in financing under the Juncker Plan to Spanish pharmaceutical company Almirall to develop new medication for dermatological problems currently lacking effective treatment. The financing will target research and development of therapies for patients with inflammatory dermatological diseases, selected cutaneous cancers and rare congenital disorders. Vytienis **Andriukaitis**, European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, said: *“The EU’s dedication to improving availability and access to specialised care has been shown today. There can be no innovative solutions without investment, and so it is vital we continue to guarantee funding at EU-level to ensure companies can develop new medications for diseases which currently have no treatment or cure. Patients must be at the core of every R&D strategy, and so I very much welcome EIB’s support in this field.”* A press release is available [here](#). As of June 2019, the Juncker Plan has already mobilised €408.4 billion of additional investment, including €43.5 billion in Spain. The Plan is currently supporting 952,000 small and medium businesses across Europe. (For more information: Annika Breidthardt – Tel.: [+32 229 56153](tel:+3222956153); Siobhán Millbright – Tel.: [+32 229 57361](tel:+3222957361))

Adoption of new rules to better protect children caught in cross-border parental disputes

The Council adopted today new rules which improve and clarify EU judicial cooperation in cross-border matrimonial matters, such as divorce, child custody and access rights, or child abduction. First Vice-President **Timmermans** said: *“I am very glad that following our proposal the Council adopted new rules to ensure that any disputes between parents who disagree after separation can be quickly solved. This is about putting children first.”* The Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, Věra **Jourová** said: *“When parents decide to separate, children can be caught in the middle, and it gets even more complicated when the parents come from different EU countries. In these difficult situations everybody should focus*

on what is best for the child. With the new rules, judicial cooperation will be faster and more efficient to make sure the children's well-being comes first." There are about 140,000 international divorces per year, and about 1,800 cases of parental child abduction in the EU. With the update of the Brussels IIa Regulation, a child who was abducted by one parent will be returned much faster to the country where he or she is used to living in. Children, old enough to form their own views, will have the opportunity to express them in all proceedings affecting them. By abolishing the exequatur for all court decisions, which is an intermediate procedure required to obtain cross-border enforcement, these proceedings will become faster and less costly for the families. The new rules will enter into force 20 days after publication in the Official Journal. More information in a [factsheet](#) and a [Q&A](#). (For more information: Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 2 29 62253; Mélanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659)

La Commission approuve une nouvelle indication géographique protégée de Croatie

La Commission européenne a approuvé la demande d'inscription du « [Zagorski mlinci](#) » dans le registre des indications géographiques protégées (IGP). Il s'agit d'une pâte très fine de forme rectangulaire cuite à base de farine, eau et sel. Les « Zagorski mlinci » sont produits dans la région de Hrvatsko zagorje dans le nord de la Croatie. Après avoir été étalée au rouleau sur de grandes surfaces, la pâte est étirée à la main de manière la plus fine possible, ce qui exige un savoir-faire particulier. Elle est ensuite traditionnellement dégustée en accompagnement d'un plat de dinde rôtie typique de la région. Cette nouvelle appellation va rejoindre plus de 1 445 produits déjà protégés dont la liste est disponible dans la base de données [DOOR](#). Pour plus d'informations, voir aussi les pages sur la [politique de qualité](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Daniel Rosario – Tel: +32 2 29 56185; Clémence Robin – Tel: +32 229 52 509)

STATEMENTS

European Commission statement on the judgment of the European Court of Justice on Poland's Supreme Court law

Yesterday, the European Court of Justice ruled that the Polish 'Law on the Supreme Court', lowering the retirement age of judges of the Supreme Court, is contrary to EU law and breaches the principle of the irremovability of judges and thus that of judicial independence. In response to the judgment of the Court, the European Commission issued the following statement: *"The European Commission takes note of the judgment of the Court of Justice of the EU, which confirms the Commission's position. This is an important ruling in support of the independence of the judiciary in Poland and beyond. It is also a welcome clarification of the principles of irremovability and independence of judges, which are essential elements of effective judicial protection in the European Union. The judgment also clarifies that, although the*

organisation of justice in the Member States falls within national competence, when exercising that competence the Member States are required to comply with their obligations under EU law. Every national court is also a European court when applying EU law. Member States must therefore ensure effective judicial protection for individuals in the fields covered by EU law. The Commission will now carefully analyse the judgment and take it up in the forthcoming Commission Communication on the Rule of Law. The Commission stands ready to support the Polish Government in the application of this judgment and to continue discussions on the resolution of all other outstanding issues related to the rule of law in Poland under the ongoing Article 7 Procedure. The rule of law is a founding pillar of our Union and as the Guardian of the Treaties, the European Commission will always do whatever is necessary to uphold it.” The full statement is available [online](#). (For more information: Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Katarzyna Kolanko – Tel.: +32 229 63444; Tim McPhie – Tel.: +32 229 58602)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Avramopoulos in Egypt

Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris **Avramopoulos** is in Egypt today, where he will meet President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sameh Hassan Shoukry and Minister of Interior General Mahmoud Tawfik. Discussions will focus on cooperation on migration and security. Commissioner **Avramopoulos** will also open the second round of the EU-Egypt Migration Dialogue to continue discussions initiated in December 2017 with the aim to further developing cooperation on migration between Egypt and the EU. (For more information: Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456; Tove Ernst – Tel.: +32 229 86764; Markus Lammert – Tel.: +32 229 58602)

Commissioner King in New Zealand to discuss fight against terrorism – online and offline

Commissioner for the Security Union Julian **King** will be visiting New Zealand on Wednesday and Thursday. Tomorrow, the Commissioner will be in Wellington, where he will meet Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister of New Zealand. He will also hold meetings with Minister of Justice Andrew Little, Minister of Police Stuart Nash and Kris Faafoi, Minister of Broadcasting, Communications and Digital Media, as well as Simon Bridges, Member of Parliament and Leader of the Opposition. On Thursday, the Commissioner will travel to Christchurch, where he will meet Lianne Dalziel, Mayor of Christchurch. The Commissioner will also speak to New Zealand police first respondents and will visit Al Noor Mosque to pay tribute to the victims of the March terrorist attacks. Finally, he will deliver the [2019 Europa Lecture](#) entitled “The Christchurch Call – Bringing the conversation home” at the University of Canterbury. During his visit, Commissioner King will inform his counterparts on ongoing EU efforts to prevent the dissemination of terrorist content online and support counter-narratives, work that is being pursued together with EU Member States and Internet companies including within the EU Internet Forum. The Commissioner will also debrief counterparts on the Commission’s legislative proposal to swiftly detect and remove terrorist content online.

The visit follows the "[Christchurch Call](#)" for action summit in Paris that President **Juncker** attended in May. (*For more information: Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456; Tove Ernst – Tel.: +32 229 86764; Katarzyna Kolanko – Tel.: +32 229 63444*).

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