

Commission welcomes Council decision to close Excessive Deficit Procedure for Greece

The Commission welcomes the Council decision to close the [Excessive Deficit Procedure \(EDP\) for Greece](#) adopted at today's meeting of the General Affairs Council. This decision follows the [Commission's recommendation to close the EDP](#) in July. The Commission made this recommendation on the basis of the substantial efforts undertaken by Greece to consolidate its public finances coupled with the progress made in the implementation of its ESM stability support programme. The general government balance has improved from a deficit of 15.1% in 2009 to a surplus of 0.7% in 2016. This is well below the 3% threshold set out in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. According to the [Spring 2017 Economic Forecast](#), the positive fiscal performance of Greece is expected to be durable, with the deficit projected to remain below 3% over the forecast horizon. This progress is in addition to the substantial and wide-ranging structural reform packages that Greece has adopted as part of its commitments under the Greek stability support programme, reforms that are being implemented. Following today's Council decision, only three Member States now remain under the corrective arm of the Stability and Growth Pact (France, Spain and the United Kingdom), down from 24 countries during the financial crisis in 2011. Pierre **Moscovici**, Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs, Taxation and Customs, said: *"Today's decision by the Council is a recognition of the tremendous efforts and sacrifices the Greek people have made to restore stability to their country's public finances. The turnaround since 2009 has no parallels in Europe. We now need to ensure there is constructive cooperation between all institutions and the Greek authorities to ensure a smooth and swift conclusion of the third review. That will pave the way for a successful conclusion of the programme next summer and for the opening of a new and optimistic chapter for Greece and for the euro area as a whole."* (For more information: Annika Breidthardt – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Enda McNamara – Tel.: +32 229 64976)

Moving forward on the European Pillar of Social Rights: Commission continues work on fair and predictable employment contracts

The European Commission has entered into further discussions with trade unions and employers' organisations at EU level on how to modernise the rules on employment contracts, in order to make these contracts fairer and more predictable for all types of workers. With this initiative, the Commission continues to roll out the European Pillar of Social Rights, aiming to create convergence between Member States towards better working and living conditions. Valdis **Dombrovskis**, Vice-President responsible for the Euro, Social Dialogue, Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union said: *"The role of the social partners is central for moving forward with the European Pillar of Social Rights. This is particularly the case when it comes to addressing challenges related to new forms of employment and providing adequate working conditions in atypical forms of employments. (...)*

The Commission is mindful of the need to balance essential protection for workers with companies' scope for job creation and labour market innovation. That is what our proposal is about". Marianne **Thyssen**, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, added: *"Workers have the right to be informed in writing at the start of employment about their rights and obligations. But millions of Europeans working in non-standard contracts are uncertain about their rights. (...) Ensuring fairer and more predictable employment contracts is a basis for fair working conditions across the EU. This is what we strive for with the European Pillar of Social Rights, which I hope will be proclaimed at the highest political level during the Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth in Gothenburg on 17 November."* The Commission wants to broaden the scope of the current Directive on employment contracts (the so-called [Written Statement Directive](#)), extending it to new forms of employment, such as on-demand workers, voucher-based workers and platform workers, so that no one is left behind. The current rules should also be modernised, taking account of developments on the labour market in the past decades. By improving the information that is given at the start of an employment contract, workers will be better aware of their rights, and therefore more able to enforce these rights. For employers, bringing the rules up to date will bring more legal clarity and certainty and will avoid unfair competition. Social partners will be able to share their views on the envisaged updates of EU legislation on employment contracts until 3 November 2017. The Commission aims to present a legislative proposal before the end of the year. A full [press release](#) and a [Q&A](#) are available online. (For more information: Christian Wigand– Tel.: +32 229 62253; Mélanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659)

Better access to clean drinking water in Bulgaria thanks to Cohesion Policy investments

€35 million from the [Cohesion Fund](#) is invested in the drinking and waste water network of the city of Vratsa, in North-West Bulgaria. With this investment, the urban area's 111,600 inhabitants will be connected to a modern water distribution system while the upgrading works will result in a considerable decrease in water losses. The project also involves the renovation of a wastewater treatment plant. Commissioner for Regional policy Corina **Crețu** said: *"In some of our regions, easy access to clean drinking water is not a given. The EU invests to improve the everyday lives of all our citizens, to protect their health and preserve their environment. This is EU solidarity at work."* More information on EU funds in Bulgaria is available on the [Open Data Platform](#). (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)

L'UE investit pour de meilleures connexions ferroviaires en Italie

74,7 millions d'euros du [Fonds européen de développement régional \(FEDER\)](#) sont investis dans des travaux de modernisation sur 70 km de ligne de chemin de fer reliant la Calabre, à partir de la province de Cosenza, à la région des Pouilles. La Commissaire à la politique régionale Corina **Crețu** a déclaré: *"Cette modernisation de la connexion ferroviaire régionale contribuera à la croissance de l'économie locale, en favorisant le tourisme et les échanges."* Cette ligne fait partie du réseau transeuropéen de transport global ([RTE-T](#)).

Le projet vise en particulier à développer le transport intermodal de marchandises, depuis la ville portuaire de Gioia Tauro vers le Nord de l'Italie par les villes de Tarente et Bari, dans les Pouilles. Les travaux devraient être achevés à l'été 2019. Plus d'informations sur les fonds européens en Italie sont disponibles sur la [plateforme Open Data](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)

Circular Economy: Commission hosts stakeholder conference on 'Reinventing Plastics'

The Commission will host tomorrow, [26 September](#), a fully-booked [stakeholder conference](#) addressing the challenges and opportunities of plastics. Input from civil society and industry will be an essential contribution in the development of the Commission's Plastics Strategy, an integral part of the new [Industrial Policy Strategy](#) announced by the Juncker Commission to modernise and make industry stronger and more competitive. First Vice-President **Timmermans** and Commissioners **Bieńkowska** and **Vella** will speak at the conference and listen to stakeholders' views on how the plastics industry can evolve to reduce its environmental impact and further boost its economic contribution in Europe. More than 1.4 million people work in the European plastics industry, which is worth over €350 billion each year. However, opportunities for further growth are being missed because of low recycling rates and a high reliance on raw materials. As part of the push to improve the [Circular Economy](#), the Commission's upcoming Plastics Strategy will aim to improve the conditions for investment and innovation, help the industry become more circular, competitive and resource-efficient, create more jobs and further boost growth. The conference is expected to discuss designing products for durability and recyclability, elimination of hazardous substances, sorting, traceability, incorporating recycled content, alternative feedstocks and biodegradability. The conference will also explore the issue of marine litter, including microplastics and protection of the health of EU citizens, and will look ahead to the discussions on this topic at the [Our Ocean](#) conference in Valletta, Malta [on 5-6 October](#). Tomorrow's stakeholder conference will be webstreamed live [here](#). The full programme can be found [online](#). (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: + 32 229 56172; Iris Petsa – Tel.: +32 229 93321)

Aides d'État: la Commission autorise l'aide à l'investissement de 5,3 millions d'euros octroyée à l'aéroport de Tarbes en France

La Commission européenne a estimé que l'aide à l'investissement de 5,3 millions d'euros que la France entend accorder à l'Aéroport de Tarbes-Lourdes-Pyrénées en vue de moderniser son infrastructure était conforme aux règles de l'UE en matière d'aides d'État. La modernisation consiste en la rénovation des chaussées aéronautiques, y compris la piste, les voies de circulation et les aires de stationnement, sans une augmentation de leur capacité. Sans ces travaux, les chaussées aéronautiques ne seraient plus en

conformité avec les normes de sécurité et le trafic commercial devrait cesser. La rénovation facilitera le développement régional, favorisera la mobilité des citoyens européens et assurera une bonne connectivité de la région, sans fausser indûment la concurrence au sein du marché unique. La Commission a donc conclu que le projet était conforme aux règles en matière d'aides d'État, et en particulier aux critères établis dans les [lignes directrices de 2014 concernant l'aviation](#). De plus amples informations seront disponibles sous le numéro [SA.42413](#) dans le [registre des aides d'État](#) figurant sur le [site web de la DG Concurrence](#) de la Commission une fois que tous les problèmes de confidentialité auront été résolus. *(Pour plus d'informations: Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)*

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Miller Homes by Bridgepoint

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of Miller Homes Holdings Limited by Bridgepoint Group Limited, both of the UK. Miller Homes is mainly active in residential real estate development across the UK. Bridgepoint is a private equity group. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because the companies are not active in the same or related markets. 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.8619](#). *(For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel.: +32 229 56182; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)*

Mergers: Commission approves the acquisition of Fujitsu Ten by DENSO

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of sole control over Fujitsu Ten Limited by DENSO Corporation, both of Japan. Both DENSO and Fujitsu Ten are suppliers of advanced automotive technology, systems and components. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns given the limited overlap between the companies' activities in Europe. 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.8625](#). *(For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel.: +32 229 56182; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)*

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Prénatal Retail Group by Artsana

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of sole control of Prénatal Retail Group by Artsana, both of Italy. Prénatal Retail Group is active in the retail sale of baby care products and toys through its specialised stores Prénatal, Bimbo Store, Toys Center and King Jouet. Artsana is active in the manufacture and supply of baby care products, including the brand *Chicco*, and health care products, as well

as in the retail sale of baby care products through specialised stores. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because Artsana already controlled Prénatal Retail Group (jointly with Giochi Preziosi) before the transaction, and the change from joint control to sole control by Artsana will not result in a significant change in competitive conditions. 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.8600](#). (For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel.: +32 229 56182; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Vice-President Ansip, Commissioners Thyssen and Moedas participate in the G7 ministerial meetings in Turin, Italy

Several Commissioners participate in the [G7 innovation week](#) dedicated to Industry and ICT, Science and Labour taking place in Turin, Italy ([programme](#)). Tonight and tomorrow Vice-President Andrus **Ansip** will take part in the ministerial meetings dedicated to industry and ICT, which will focus on the competitiveness of SMEs in the next production revolution; the free flow of information, digital infrastructure, standards and artificial intelligence; and cybersecurity and intellectual property rights. This will be the occasion for the Vice-President to present the recent proposals of the Commission on the free flow of non-personal data ([press release](#)) and cybersecurity ([press release](#)). A press conference will take place on Tuesday at 12:30 CET. In the margins of the event, the Vice-President will meet Canadian Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development Navdeep Bains. He will also meet Japan's State Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications Shinsuke Okuno and Vice-Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Daisaku Hiraki. Commissioner Carlos **Moedas** will travel to Turin on Wednesday 27 September and participates in the G7 Science Ministerial Meeting until Thursday 28 September. The objective of the thematic discussion he will attend is to analyse how researchers could better contribute to the economic growth. A press conference will take place on Thursday at 17.30 CET. Commissioner Marianne **Thyssen** will represent the EU in the meeting of the [G7 labour and employment ministers](#) on 29 and 30 September. More info on her visit will be published later in the week. (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel. +32 229 67083; Lucia Caudet – Tel.: + 32 229 56182; Christian Wigand– Tel.: +32 229 62253; Inga Höglund – Tel.: +32 229 50698; Maud Noyon – Tel.: +32 229 80379)

Vice-President Katainen and Commissioners Moedas and Navracsics at the “EU for facts: evidence for policy in a post-fact world” conference

[On 26 September](#) the Commission's science and knowledge service, the Joint Research Centre (JRC) is organising its annual conference on “EU for facts: evidence for policy in a post-fact world”. Tibor **Navracsics**, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, responsible for the JRC, said ahead of the conference: “Just like Gutenberg's printing press, social media has enabled a paradigm shift in communication, wresting control from traditional information ‘gatekeepers’. In policymaking, values and emotions have always

had an important place alongside evidence and facts, but the lines have become increasingly blurred. The JRC is working with scientists, politicians, the media and citizens to develop new thinking and new narratives, finding a better balance between facts and values in the political discourse.” Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, will deliver a key-note speech and Carlos **Moedas**, Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, will give opening remarks in a session dedicated to the question of trust in science. Other speakers will include Pascal Lamy, former Director-General of the World Trade Organisation, Sir Peter Gluckman, Chair of the International Network for Science Advice to Governments, Rush Holt, Chief Executive Officer of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), and Professor Steven Sloman of Brown University’s Department of Cognitive, Linguistic, & Psychological Sciences. Leading experts from the fields of science, policy and media will discuss, among others, issues of trust in science, and the need to re-design policymaking using behavioral and decision science. The conference is the highlight of [JRC’s](#) 60th Anniversary celebrations. The conference will be [webstreamed](#). More information can be found [here](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: +32 229 56184; Julia-Henriette Bräuer – Tel.: +32 229 80707)

European Researchers’ Night 2017 going to 12th round this Friday

The 12th edition of [European Researchers’ Night](#) takes place this week on Friday giving people across Europe the chance to discover science in a fun way in more than 340 cities in the EU and neighbouring countries. All the events are supported by the European Commission as part of the [Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions](#). A special event called “[Science is Wonder-ful!](#)” is being organised at the Parliamentarium in Brussels on 26 and 27 September. Visitors will have the possibility to take part in experiments by Marie Skłodowska-Curie researchers ranging from neuroscience to geology and psychology to multilingualism. The event will already begin this evening with a science contest showcasing the most promising scientific projects – the [Falling Walls Lab-Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions](#) – at the House of European History. During the Brussels event (26 September), Tibor **Navracsics**, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, will take part in a special ceremony to mark the funding of the [100 000th MSCA fellow](#), featuring 30 exemplary researchers and their projects. Ahead of the award ceremony, Commissioner **Navracsics** said: “*I am proud that the EU’s Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions have funded more than 100,000 fellows so far. This is a great achievement for our programme which trains and supports the most promising researchers. As passionate scientists, every single one of them works towards a better future for us all. For a first-hand experience of research and science, come to the European Researchers’ Night events, one of the biggest science events in Europe.*” The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, named after the double Nobel Prize-winning Polish-French scientist famed for her work on radioactivity, support excellent researchers at all stages of their careers, irrespective of nationality. More information can be found in this [factsheet](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel. +32 229 67083; Joseph Waldstein – Tel. +32 229 56184; Julia-Henriette Bräuer Tel. +32 229 67083)

Commissioner Moedas meets Prime Minister Tsipras in Athens today

Carlos **Moedas**, European Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, will meet Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras today in Athens. They will encounter in the Prime Minister residence, Maximos Mansion, from 15.30 (GMT+3, 16.30 CET), and discuss the importance of science and innovation, and the role of EU funding, in particular the programme Horizon 2020, in the economic recovery of the country. The Commissioner has participated this morning in the Conference on the [Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean area](#) (PRIMA) and gave a keynote speech on the PRIMA initiative. He then met with the Alternate Minister for Research and Innovation Mr. Costas Fotakis with whom he discussed research infrastructures among other topics. Commissioner Moedas will have a discussion with Greek [ERC](#) Grantees in the early afternoon. *(For more information: Lucia Caudet – Tel.: + 32 229 56182; Mirna Talko – Tel.: +32 229 87278; Maud Noyon – Tel.: +32 229 80379)*

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