

# Daily News 26 / 01 / 2018

## **Juncker Plan supports renewable energy and innovation in Austria with more than €100 million in European Investment Bank finance**

The European Investment Bank (EIB) has signed two new deals in Austria this week: [€48 million to windfarm operator Simonsfeld](#), of which €35 million is backed by the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), and [€70 million to powertrain system developer AVL](#), also backed by the EFSI. Simonsfeld will use the financing boost to build and operate three new wind farms in Austria with a total capacity of 39 MW, which equates to the energy consumption of around 25,000 homes. Commenting on the agreement, Maroš Šefčovič, Commission Vice-President responsible for Energy Union, said: *"This positive decision reflects the new reality – the EU's resolute transition to clean energy. Austria in particular is well on track to reach its 2020 target for renewable energy. These are precisely the steps we need in order to pave the way to a swift implementation of the Paris agreement."* AVL, the powertrain system developer, will use the EFSI-backed loan to expand its research and development activities, developing new, innovative and environmentally-friendly technology to use in hybrid and fully electric powertrains as well as advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS) for connected and autonomous vehicles. (For more information and all the latest EFSI results see the [Investment Plan website](#) or contact Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Siobhán Millbright – Tel.: +32 229 57361)

## **Initiative pour les PME: 1,3 milliard d'euros pour les petites entreprises du Sud de l'Italie**

La Commission salue la signature de cinq nouveaux accords entre le Groupe Banque Européenne d'Investissement et Banca di Credito Popolare, Banca Popolare di Bari, Banco di Napoli, UniCredit et Unione di Banche Italiane sous [l'Initiative pour les PME](#) en Italie. Avec une contribution du Fonds européen de développement régional ([FEDER](#)) de 100 millions d'euros, le programme "Initiative pour les PME" investit les fonds de la politique de Cohésion de manière innovante afin d'améliorer l'accès des petites et moyennes entreprises (PME) aux financements, avec des conditions plus avantageuses. Ici, c'est près de 1,3 milliard d'euros de financement qui devraient être générés par ces cinq accords, pour les PME des régions du Sud de l'Italie. La Commissaire à la politique régionale Corina Crețu a commenté: *"En ciblant spécifiquement les petites entreprises du sud de l'Italie et en améliorant leur accès aux financements, les cinq accords signés aujourd'hui stimuleront l'économie de tout le pays; il y a tant de gens talentueux et d'idées brillantes dans ces régions qui n'attendent qu'un petit coup de pouce financier pour que leurs projets se concrétisent. Je félicite les autorités italiennes pour leur utilisation de cet outil innovant de la politique de cohésion qu'est l'Initiative pour les PME."* Un [communiqué de presse](#) est disponible sur le site du Fonds européen d'investissement. (Pour plus d'information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Sophie Dupin de Saint-

Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)

## **De meilleures connexions ferroviaires dans la région italienne de Puglia grâce à la politique de Cohésion**

67,5 millions d'euros du Fonds européen de développement régional ([FEDER](#)) sont investis dans des travaux de modernisation sur la ligne de chemin de fer reliant le port de Tarante au Port de Bari, dans la région italienne de Puglia, au Sud du pays. La Commissaire à la politique régionale Corina **Crețu** a déclaré: *“En plus de promouvoir un moyen de transport respectueux de l'environnement, ce projet financé par l'UE favorisera le tourisme et le commerce dans le Sud de l'Italie, en réduisant les temps de trajet pour les passagers et les marchandises, tout en assurant une sécurité renforcée pour le trafic.”* Cette section, qui fait partie du réseau transeuropéen de transport global ([RTE-T](#)), se situe sur la ligne de chemin de fer Adriatique, qui relie le Sud de l'Italie au Nord. Les travaux devraient être achevés à la fin de 2018. (Pour plus d'informations: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)

## **Commission publishes report on the collective redress possibilities in Member States**

The Commission has published today a [report](#) looking at the progress made by Member States on the implementation of collective redress measures following the [Commission's 2013 Recommendation](#). The report shows that the availability of collective redress mechanisms as well as the implementation of safeguards against the potential abuse of such mechanisms is still not consistent across the EU. Commissioner Věra **Jourová**, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality said: *“Recent cases, such as the Volkswagen scandal, illustrate the challenges in addressing situations where millions of consumers have suffered the same harm across the EU. We have strong consumer protection rules in place in our Union, but we need to make sure they are also respected and enforced. We will address this in the New Deal for Consumers this spring.”* While EU legislation protects well the rights of consumers, the Commission will propose a “New Deal for Consumers” in spring as announced in the [Commission's work programme](#) for 2018, to further strengthen ways of enforcement and redress for consumers,. Today's report will feed into the preparations for this initiative. The Commission also publishes today a further [study](#) on national procedural laws and their impacts on the protection of consumers under EU consumer law, including redress opportunities. (For more information: Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Mélanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659)

## **Falsification of medicines: Commission calls for strict enforcement of the rules**

The report on the application of penalties for those involved in the production and circulation of falsified medicines published today shows a wide variation in penalties across the EU. Maximum prison sentences for the falsification of medicines range from one year (Sweden, Finland and Greece) to 15 years (Austria, Slovenia and Slovakia); and maximum fines range from €4300 (Lithuania) to €1 million (Spain) and 'unlimited' (UK). Vytenis

**Andriukaitis**, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, said: *“While the report published today finds measures taken by Member States to be satisfactory, penalties are only effective if they are well-enforced. Falsified medicines can kill. Therefore, I urge all EU countries to make sure that criminals falsifying medicines are punished. I seize the opportunity to remind that thanks to the common EU logo which helps identify legal online pharmacies that sell authentic and safe products, citizens can be helped to steer clear of falsified medicines. I encourage all online shoppers to stay safe by looking out for [the logo](#) and ensuring that an online pharmacy is legitimate before making a purchase.”* The report comes following the requirement enshrined in the [Falsified Medicines Directive \(2011/62/EU\)](#) that all EU countries put in place proportionate, effective and dissuasive penalties for those involved in the production and circulation of falsified medicines. Furthermore, Member States and stakeholders are working on a pan-EU authentication system for medicines scheduled to enter into force in February 2019. This means that the authenticity of prescription medicines will be checked before they are dispensed to patients. More information on falsified medicine available [online](#). Follow us on Twitter: [@V\\_Andriukaitis @EU\\_Health](#) (For more information: Anca Paduraru – Tel.: +32 229 91269; Aikaterini Apostola – Tel.: +32 229 87624)

### **Commission will launch new EU Energy Poverty Observatory**

The new EU Energy Poverty Observatory will be launched on Monday 29 January, at an [event](#) in Brussels hosted by Energy Union Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič and Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy Miguel Arias Cañete. Roughly 9% of the EU population struggle to attain adequate warmth. The Observatory aims to support informed decision making at local, regional and national level by providing a user-friendly and open-access resource that will promote public engagement on the issue of energy poverty as well as serve to disseminate information and good practice among public and private stakeholders. Awareness of energy poverty is rising in Europe and has been identified as a policy priority by European Commission’s in its [‘Clean Energy for All Europeans’](#) package of initiatives. There the Commission proposed to establish a common definition and required Member States to monitor figures and report back to the Commission. This is part and parcel of the implementation of Principle 20 of the European [Pillar of Social Rights](#) and one of the enabling actions are being put in place to support a just and socially fair clean energy transition. A dedicated new [Observatory website](#) will go live on Monday. Follow on twitter: #EPOV (For more information: Anna-Kaisa Itkonen – Tel.: +32 229 56186; Nicole Bockstaller – Tel.: +32 229 52589)

### **Cooperation for building European supercomputers: Czech Republic joins the initiative**

The Czech Republic is the 14<sup>th</sup> country to sign the [European declaration on high-performance computing](#) (HPC). The initiative aims at building European supercomputers that would rank among the world’s top three by 2022-2023. With this signature, the Czech Republic announced that it will join [EuroHPC Joint Undertaking](#) – a new legal and funding structure that was launched earlier this month. The cooperation with a total budget of approximately EUR 1

billion will acquire, build and deploy across Europe world-class High-Performance Computing (HPC) infrastructure and enhance the development of the technologies and machines (hardware) as well as the applications (software) that would run on these supercomputers. Supercomputers are dealing with highly demanding scientific and engineering calculations that cannot be performed using general-purpose computers. They are strategic resource for the future of EU's scientific leadership and industrial competitiveness and are increasingly needed to process ever larger amounts of data. Supercomputing can benefit the society in many areas from health care, renewable energy to car safety and cybersecurity. Other Member States and countries associated to [Horizon 2020](#) framework programme are encouraged to join forces and sign the declaration. Read more about European supercomputing initiative [here](#) and in our recent [press release](#), [Q&A](#) and [factsheet](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Inga Höglund – Tel.: +32 229 50698)

### **State aid: Commission opens in-depth investigation on Slovenia's new proposed commitments for Nova Ljubljanska Banka**

The European Commission has opened an in-depth investigation to assess whether new measures proposed by the Slovenian authorities regarding the restructuring of Nova Ljubljanska Banka (NLB) sufficiently compensate for delaying the bank's sale beyond end 2017. The partial sale of Slovenia's shares in NLB is a key commitment to ensure NLB's long-term viability, on the basis of which the Commission was able to approve significant State aid of up to €2.32 billion to NLB [in December 2013](#). In May 2017, Slovenia requested a gradual sale of its shares in NLB in two tranches, which the Commission approved. However, after putting the sale of NLB on hold [in June 2017](#), Slovenia did not complete the sale of a first tranche of its shares in NLB before the end of 2017, nor did Slovenia nominate a trustee to comply with the alternative commitment of divesting its Balkan subsidiaries. Since Slovenia failed to comply with its commitments, the aid granted to NLB in 2013 has not been lawfully implemented. Furthermore, the Commission has doubts that Slovenia's proposed alternative measures of December 2017 can be considered equivalent to Slovenia's original commitment. For these reasons, the Commission has today opened an in-depth investigation. This gives Slovenian authorities and other interested third parties the opportunity to submit comments on the Commission's preliminary views, without prejudging its outcome. Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *"Slovenia has proposed changes to its commitment to sell 75% of its shares in NLB and has missed a deadline under its existing commitment. It is the responsibility of Member States to comply with their commitments. At this stage, we have doubts that Slovenia's new proposal is equivalent to its original commitment, which is why we have opened an in-depth investigation. We have to make sure that NLB, which has received significant State aid, is viable in the long-run, also for Slovenian taxpayers. And we have to ensure equal treatment of all EU countries. We will continue to work constructively with the Slovenian authorities over the course of this investigation."* The press release is available online in [EN](#), [DE](#), [FR](#), [SL](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889)

## **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of joint control over EasyPark by Vitruvian and Verdane**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over EasyPark by Verdane, both of Norway, and Vitruvian of the UK. EasyPark is operating a digital parking marketplace providing mobile parking solutions and connected services to businesses, consumers, parking operators and cities. Vitruvian and Verdane are private equity firms with interests in various industries. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because there is no overlap between the activities of the companies. 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.8749](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **Holocaust Remembrance Day 2018: Statement by President Juncker**

Ahead of Holocaust Remembrance Day tomorrow, President Juncker issued a [statement](#) today, saying: *“The 27<sup>th</sup> of January is a date marked in history by sorrow and grief. On this day 73 years ago, Allied Forces liberated the concentration camp Auschwitz-Birkenau and brought the horrors perpetrated there to an end. To mark this event, we honour today the memories of the six million Jews and others victims who perished during the Holocaust. We also pay tribute to those who survived the Shoah, among them the first President of the European Parliament Simone Veil, who dedicated her life to reconciliation and who has sadly passed away this past year...This day should remind us to be vigilant in the face of hatred, discrimination and dehumanisation. It is a day to confront those who spread lies about our history and who question the Holocaust or negate its fundamental meaning for today’s Europe. As Simone Veil reminded us, it is necessary to recall the names and stories of those we have lost, to spare them from disappearing for a second time...Remembering the atrocities of the Holocaust, this darkest chapter of modern European history, is essential for understanding the value of having a European Union today. It is to prevent these horrors that we founded a Union based on universal human rights, democracy, the rule of law and non-discrimination, and it is in the name of those values that we need to preserve it and constantly improve it.”* President Juncker’s full statement can be found [online here in all official EU languages](#). (For more information: Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456 ; Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253)

### **First Vice-President Timmermans in The Netherlands for the official launch of European Capital of Culture Leeuwarden 2018**

Leeuwarden in The Netherlands and Valletta in Malta are the two [European Capitals of Culture in 2018](#). First Vice-President Frans Timmermans will be in The Netherlands tomorrow (27 January) to take part in the official opening



ceremony for Leeuwarden 2018 at De Harmonie city theatre during a weekend of celebrations across the city. Artistic installations and performances by professional and amateur artists, and museums opening their doors to visitors throughout the region are some of the highlights. Leeuwarden's title as European Capital of Culture coincides with the [European Year of Cultural Heritage](#), an opportunity to highlight the role of Europe's cultural heritage in fostering a shared sense of history and identity. More information on the European Capitals of Culture can be found [here](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: +32 229 56184)

### **Commissioner Neven Mimica meets African leaders in the margins of the African Union Summit**

Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica, will be travelling to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on the occasion of the [African Union \(AU\) Summit of Heads of State and Government](#), on 28 and 29 January. In the margins of this Summit, he will hold bilateral meetings with the Presidents of Liberia, Ghana, Rwanda, Zimbabwe and Somalia and the Vice-Presidents of Botswana and Zambia. He will also meet the Chairperson of the African Union Commission Moussa Faki, and the Executive Secretary of the [United Nations Economic Commission for Africa](#) (UNECA), Vera Songwe.

Commissioner Mimica affirmed: *“I am pleased to represent the EU to this AU Summit, two months after our successful Summit in Abidjan. There, we agreed on our common political priorities in order to jointly invest on jobs and growth. We want this partnership, backed by €31 billion of official development assistance for the period 2014-2020, to become even stronger and mutually beneficial for citizens of both our continents.”* The AU Summit theme is *“Winning the Fight against Corruption: A Sustainable Path to Africa's Transformation”*.

### **Joint-Statement by First Vice-President Timmermans, Vice-President Ansip, Commissioners Jourová and Gabriel ahead of Data Protection Day**

*“28 January marks European Data Protection Day. Data is everywhere. When using your smartphone, data could be collected on your whereabouts, your tastes, your friends, your health... In Europe, data protection is a fundamental right, we need to protect it. 2018 is going to be a landmark year for data protection in Europe. Modernised EU data protection rules will become a reality in May 2018. These rules respond to the challenges our digital world poses to our right to data protection. With just over 100 days left before the application of the new law, the Commission adopted guidance for national data protection authorities, national administrations and businesses to be ready for the big day. The Commission will also raise awareness to make sure Europeans are fully aware of their rights.(...) We are committed to making sure that security, trade and protection of personal data go hand in hand with modernisation and innovation, both at European and global level.”* The full statement is available [here](#), as well as material on data protection. (For more information: Christian Wigand– Tel.: +32 229 62253; Mélanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659)

## Vice-President Šefčovič in Croatia for second Energy Union Tour

Commission Vice-President for the Energy Union Maroš Šefčovič is due to visit Croatia on 29-30 January as part of the second [Energy Union Tour](#). The Vice-President will meet Croatian President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, Prime Minister Andrej Plenković, and the Minister of Environment and Energy Tomislav Čorić, in addition to members of the Croatian parliament. Their discussions will focus on the preparation of Croatia's National Energy and Climate Plan for 2021-30, the development of its internal energy market, and its role in regional energy cooperation, including the [Central and South Eastern Europe Energy Connectivity \(CESEC\)](#) initiative. The Vice-President will also give a keynote speech at a conference on 'The New Croatian Energy Strategy' and participate in a [Citizens' Dialogue](#) that will focus on the Energy Union and the benefits it can bring to Croatia. Prior to the visit, Vice-President Šefčovič said: *"I am pleased to see that Croatia is already achieving its 2020 targets for renewable energy and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, thanks not least to its strong hydropower sector. I encourage it to further develop its renewables industry, and also to make additional efforts to meet its energy efficiency target. The EU's new Smart Finance for Smart Buildings initiative, announced as part of the '[Clean Energy for All Europeans](#)' package, will be able to help finance the energy efficient renovation of buildings in Croatia. The EU is [also financing the construction](#) of a liquefied natural gas terminal at Krk. This will help to diversify sources of energy supply in Croatia and the wider region and make its energy markets more competitive. Croatia's story is a testimony to the Energy Union's impact on the ground. It has already fulfilled its 2020 targets for CO2 emissions, renewables and energy efficiency, although the latter's potential should be tapped further. Moreover, Croatia's energy security is being gradually strengthened, in particular thanks to the regional cooperation under CESEC as well as a prospective Krk LNG terminal. What the Energy Union means for Croatia will also be a central theme of my interactive discussion with students in Zagreb."* For more information on the visit see [here](#). (For more information: Anna-Kaisa Itkonen – Tel.: +32 229 56186; Anca Paduraru – Tel.: +32 229 91269; Nicole Bockstaller – Tel.: +32 229 52589)

Calendar

The Commissioners' weekly activities

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