

Daily News 26 / 10 / 2018

Deuxième journée de la visite du Président Juncker et du commissaire Hahn en Tunisie

Le président **Juncker** a entrepris aujourd'hui la deuxième journée de sa visite officielle à Tunis. Ce matin il a rencontré le chef du gouvernement tunisien Yousef Chahed avec qui il tiendra un point de presse conjoint vers 12:30 heure locale (13:30 CET) disponible sur [EbS](#). Dans l'après-midi, pour clôturer sa visite, il rencontrera aussi des jeunes représentants de la société civile tunisienne. Le commissaire en charge de la politique européenne de voisinage et des négociations d'élargissement, Johannes **Hahn** a signé hier en présence du Président **Juncker** quatre projets amenant le montant total de l'aide de l'UE en 2018 pour le pays à 300 million d'euros. Ce nouveau financement va permettre d'accompagner la Tunisie dans sa transition démocratique, la modernisation de son économie et de ses politiques publiques. Le Président **Juncker** dans son [discours](#) d'hier au Musée du Bardo, a déclaré: *"Depuis 2011, l'Union européenne, la Commission, les Etats membres, les institutions européennes, ont dédié 10 milliards d'euros à la Tunisie pour l'accompagner sur sa longue marche vers l'avenir. Chaque année, nous dédions un montant de 300 millions d'euros à la Tunisie. Et nous accorderons bientôt, si la loi organique sur le budget sera votée, une autre enveloppe, macro-financière cette fois-ci, de 300 millions d'euros à la Tunisie. Nous avons signé ce matin quatre accords qui portent sur un montant total de 270 millions d'euros, encore pour encourager, pour accompagner l'ambitieux programme de réformes qui est en train d'être appliqué dans ce pays."* Les projets signés visent à renforcer la compétitivité économique (90 millions d'euros), l'efficacité et l'équité fiscale (70 millions d'euros), la réforme du système judiciaire (60 millions d'euros) et la transition énergétique (50 millions d'euros). Plus tôt cette année, 10 millions d'euros ont déjà été ajoutés au programme Erasmus et 20 millions d'euros ont été alloués à la société civile et aux instances constitutionnelles. (Pour plus d'informations: Margaritis Schinas – Tél.: +32 229 6052; Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456; Maja Kocijančič – Tel.:+32 2 298 65 70; Alceo Smerilli – Tel.:+32 2 296 48 87)

Equal Pay Day: Statement by First Vice-President Frans Timmermans and Commissioners Marianne Thyssen and Vera Jourová

Ahead of the EU Equal Pay Day which falls on 3 November, First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans**, Commissioner Marianne **Thyssen** and Commissioner Věra **Jourová** said: *"Women and men are equal. But (...) women in Europe earn 16.2% less than men. This gender pay gap is not only unfair in principle, but also in practice. It puts women in precarious situations during their careers, and even more so after they retire, with a gender pension gap of 36.6%. (...) The Commission has put a number of proposals on the table to address this issue in the workplace and at home, and it is urgent that these are taken forward by the European Parliament and by Member States in the Council to achieve some concrete results, for instance by improving the rights of working*

parents and carers to take leave to support their families. New data published today underlines the importance of urgently adopting the work-life balance legislation the European Commission has tabled. One in three Europeans was not able to take any family leave last year, and only four in ten men took (or intend to take) parental leave. This is not fair or sustainable." The Commission launched an [EU Action Plan on Tackling the Gender Pay Gap](#) for 2018-19, and started an evaluation of the [Directive on equal opportunities and equal treatment of women and men in employment and occupation](#). More information on the Work Life Balance proposal is available [here](#). Today, the European Commission is publishing a Eurobarometer survey on Europeans' views when it comes to work-life balance. See here the [Eurobarometer results, infographic and country factsheets](#). The full [statement](#) is available online. (For more information: Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Mélanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659; Tim McPhie – Tel.: +32 229 58602; Sara Soumillion – Tel.: + 32 229 67094)

Commissioner Malmström meets her counterparts from Africa, Caribbean and Pacific to discuss trade prospects under the new Africa-Europe Alliance

Commissioner for Trade Cecilia Malmström met today with her counterparts from African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states for the first discussion since the announcement last September of the Commission's proposal for a new ['Africa – Europe Alliance'](#). The proposal presented at the occasion of the President Juncker's State of the Union address suggests to turn the numerous EU-African trade agreements into a continent-to-continent free trade agreement, as an economic partnership between equals. 29 ACP countries are currently implementing Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with the EU and another 21 countries have concluded negotiations. The Joint EU-ACP Ministerial Trade Committee, set up by the Cotonou Partnership Agreement, is an annual occasion to discuss trade issues. Beyond the new EU proposal and the Economic Partnership Agreements, the Committee is an occasion to exchange views on subjects such as the EU trade-related capacity building, issues related to the World Trade Organisation, EU trade negotiations with other partners and other policies that have an impact on trade between the EU and ACP, like commodities and fisheries. For more information about the EU-Africa trade relations and the new alliance, please see the [factsheet](#). (For more information: Daniel Rosario – Tel.: +32 229 56185; Kinga Malinowska – Tel.: +32 229 51383)

New digital performance index comparing the EU with other major world economies

The European Commission is publishing today the [International Digital Economy and Society Index](#) (I-DESI) comparing the digital performance of EU Member States with those of 17 non-EU countries in 5 areas: connectivity, human capital and digital skills, use of internet by citizens integration of technology and digital public services. Denmark tops the ranking, followed by the Republic of Korea and Finland. Four other EU Member States are in the 'top ten' of the index: the Netherlands, the UK, Sweden and Luxembourg. On this occasion, Andrus Ansip, Vice-President for the Digital Single Market,

and Mariya **Gabriel**, Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society, said: “Our Member States, on average, compare well with the non-EU countries and the very best EU countries are among the best global performers. But more needs to be done to run and lead this fierce international competition, notably to improve the performance of ALL Member states and address digital divide within the EU. Moreover, more needs to be done in digital public services where the EU Member States have consistently tended to perform below their 17 non-EU counterparts. This is one of the reasons the EU is keen to develop an e-government culture – key to this is the European Union’s Electronic Identification and Trust Services Regulation (eIDAS) which recently entered into force. It will help European citizens use electronic identification throughout the EU and facilitate business across borders. Completing the Digital Single Market as soon as possible will help boosting our performance in the upcoming years. We need to do it not for ranking, but for the real benefits of the European citizens and the economy.” I-DESI uses a similar methodology to the [EU Digital Economy and Society Index \(DESI\)](#), which every year compares the performance of Member States. More information on I-DESI is available [online](#). An overview of the Digital Single Market is available [here](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: +32 229 56184)

WTO reform – participants in Ottawa meeting agree on concrete steps

The 13 members of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), participating in a ministerial meeting held in Ottawa on 24 and 25 October – including the EU represented by Commissioner for Trade Cecilia **Malmström** – unequivocally reiterated their commitment to safeguarding the rules-based multilateral system. In a Joint Communique, the partners agreed to work on solutions to fix the dispute settlement system and resolve the Appellate Body crisis, while preserving its essential features; supported the need to reinvigorate the WTO negotiating function by recognising the need to move forward in various formats and the necessity to address the realities of today’s economy and in particular market distortions caused by subsidies, reiterated their commitment to concluding the fisheries subsidies negotiations by 2019 and welcomed the work being undertaken under the Joint Statement Initiatives, which are tackling such issues as e-commerce. Finally, the participants recognised the importance of ensuring effective monitoring and transparency in the WTO, and committed to work on concrete solutions, including engaging constructively on proposals to improve compliance with notification obligations. The outcome of the ministerial meeting broadly supports the proposals made by the EU in its [WTO reform concept paper](#) published on 18 September 2018. The EU will continue to take these proposals forward in different configurations and will work closely with like-minded countries, including those present in at the Ottawa ministerial (Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Japan, Kenya, Korea, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Singapore and Switzerland). (For more information: Daniel Rosario – Tel.: +32 229 56185; Kinga Malinowska – Tel: +32 229 51383)

European Commission joins forces with world aquariums to fight plastic pollution

The European Commission is joining forces with United Nations Environment Programme and other international partners to launch a coalition of aquariums to fight plastic pollution. Aquariums all over the world will organise permanent activities in their facilities and will be invited to change their procurement policies, for example in canteens and shops, to eliminate all single use plastic items. The aim is to have on board at least 200 aquariums by 2019 raising public awareness about plastic pollution and we already have to date 106 confirmed aquariums from 33 countries, among which 67 based in the EU. This campaign announcement follows the overwhelming vote in the European Parliament this week on the [Commission's proposal](#) to ban certain single use plastics by 2021. The call for global cooperation is one of the official commitments to be announced by the European Union at the 5th edition of the ["Our Ocean" international conference](#) on 29-30 October in Bali. On that occasion, EU Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Karmenu **Vella**, said: "The European Commission has been working for 18 months to instigate and build this global coalition. Aquariums are a window to our ocean. With their collections and their educational programmes, they show us what we need to protect, and they inspire the ocean lovers of tomorrow. Millions of people visit aquariums around the world every year. This will mobilise them to rethink the way we use plastic." A press release is available [online](#). (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: + 32 229 56172; Daniela Stoycheva – Tel.: +32 229 53664)

Competition/Agriculture: Commission publishes report on application of competition rules in the agricultural sector

The European Commission has published the first [report](#) on the application of competition rules in the agricultural sector. The report shows that the work of European competition authorities can help farmers to obtain better conditions when selling their products to large buyers or cooperatives. The main findings of the report concern the (a) work of the European competition authorities, (b) derogations from competition rules for producer and interbranch organisations, and (c) sectoral tools in the agricultural industry. On the basis of the insights gained from the report, the Commission will continue its dialogue with stakeholders in the agricultural sector, as well as with Member States, the European Parliament and the Council, on future policy choices concerning the application of competition rules to the agricultural sector. The Commission will also intensify its monitoring of the market, in particular as regards collective agreements that segment the internal market. Margrethe **Vestager**, Commissioner in charge of competition policy, said: "This report provides key insights into the valuable work that European competition authorities have been doing in the agricultural sector, especially in protecting farmers from anti-competitive behaviour and ensuring farmers and consumers can benefit from a fully open internal market. We will continue the work together with the national competition authorities". Phil **Hogan**, Commissioner for agriculture and rural development, said: "Strengthening the position of the farmer in the food supply chain, in a market oriented policy context, is of utmost importance. This report highlights how agricultural law and competition law go hand-in-hand in

achieving fairer and more efficient outcomes for both producers and consumers. Let us not forget that farmers have a special place insofar as competition law is concerned. Recognised producer organisations can help them strengthen their position in the food supply chain". A full press release is available [online](#) in all EU languages.(For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526 Daniel Rosario – Tel.: +32 229 56185)

State aid: Commission opens in-depth investigation into measures in favour of Ryanair at Frankfurt-Hahn airport in Germany

The European Commission has opened an in-depth investigation to assess whether measures in favour of Ryanair at the German airport of Frankfurt-Hahn are in line with State aid rules. The Commission will also investigate certain measures in favour of the airport operator FFHG. Frankfurt-Hahn airport, a regional airport located in the German State of Rhineland-Palatinate 120 km west of Frankfurt am Main, is operated by the company Flughafengesellschaft Frankfurt-Hahn GmbH (FFHG), which between 2009 and 2017 was controlled by the State of Rhineland-Palatinate. The Commission received a complaint alleging that certain measures in favour of Ryanair with respect to its operations at Frankfurt-Hahn Airport, as well as other measures in favour of airport operator FFHG amounted to illegal State aid. With respect to Ryanair, following a preliminary assessment, the Commission has decided to open an in-depth investigation in relation to (i) certain marketing agreements between the State of Rhineland-Palatinate and Ryanair and (ii) several other agreements governing the financial relationships between Ryanair and FFHG. At this stage, the Commission has concerns that the agreements in question may give Ryanair an undue economic advantage and might amount to incompatible aid in favour of Ryanair. With respect to airport operator FFHG the Commission has today: (i) opened an in-depth investigation with respect to two measures adopted by the State of Rhineland-Palatinate to verify whether these measures are in line with EU State aid rules and (ii) concluded that the other measures in favour of FFHG covered by the complaint either do not constitute State aid or are in line with EU State aid rules. The opening of proceedings gives interested third parties an opportunity to submit comments on the measures under assessment. It does not prejudice the outcome of the investigation. Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *"Fair competition is essential for consumers, jobs and growth – also for air transport operators. We will investigate whether regional and local authorities in Germany, against the rules, gave an unfair advantage to Ryanair over its competitors, potentially harming other airlines and having spill-over effects on other regions in Europe."* The full press release is available online in [EN](#), [FR](#), [DE](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission clears the acquisition of joint control over a distribution warehouse in Spain by SEGRO and PSPIB

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over a distribution warehouse in Spain by SEGRO of the UK and Public Sector Pension Investment Board ("PSPIB") of Canada. The

distribution warehouse in Granollers is currently under development, with completion scheduled for November 2018. SEGR0 is an owner, asset manager and developer of modern warehousing and light industrial properties. PSPIB invests the pension plans of the Canadian public sector in a diversified global portfolio. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, because of the limited impact it would have on the market. 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.9119](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of sole control of ARLANXEO by Saudi Aramco

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of sole control over ARLANXEO Holding B.V. (“ARLANXEO”) of the Netherlands, by the Saudi Arabian Oil Company (“Saudi Aramco”) of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, through its wholly owned subsidiary Overseas Holdings Coöperatief U.A. also of the Netherlands. ARLANXEO is a specialty chemicals company that produces and offers a broad range of synthetic rubbers products. Saudi Aramco is engaged in the exploration, production and marketing of crude oil and in the production and marketing of refined products. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns as Saudi Aramco already has joint control over ARLANXEO, which will change to sole control following the 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.9117](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of indirect sole control of VetPartners by BC Partners

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of indirect sole control over VetPartners Group Limited (“VetPartners”) by BC Partners LLP, both of the UK. VetPartners is a veterinary practice group, active almost exclusively in the UK. BC Partners is an international private equity firm with investments in a diverse range of sectors. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because there is no horizontal overlap between the activities of the companies and the shares of the companies in vertically linked markets remain moderate. 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.9115](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Announcements

Commissioners Crețu in Romania to discuss the future Cohesion Policy

On 29 and 30 October, Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina **Crețu** will be in Bucharest, Romania, to discuss the future of Cohesion Policy in the context of EU's next long-term budget. On Monday, 29 October, Commissioner **Crețu** will meet Ms Viorica Dăncilă, Prime Minister of Romania, Mr Vazil Hudák, Vice-President of the European Investment Bank, as well as representatives of the National Coalition for the Modernisation of Romania, an organisation whose goal is to speed-up the absorption of EU funds in the country. The Commissioner will also give a key note speech at the EuroIMPACT conference. On Tuesday, 30 October, Commissioner **Crețu** will participate in the high level conference "*An Inclusive Cohesion Policy for a Union Closer to Our Citizens*", alongside Commissioner for Budget and Human Resources Günther H. **Oettinger**. Commissioner **Crețu** said: "*My intervention at this conference will highlight the concrete benefits of Cohesion Policy for EU citizens. It creates jobs for local communities, it creates growth for the EU economy and it changes the life of people for the better in a very concrete way, whether we talk about new broadband connections or better water supply.*" On the same day, Commissioner **Crețu** will also meet Mr Jerzy Kwieciński, Minister of Investment and Development of Poland, as well Mr Victor Negrescu, Minister Delegate for European Affairs of Romania. (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Sophie Dupin de Saint Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)

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