

Daily News 28 / 02 / 2019

Facts matter: European Commission responds to Hungarian government campaign

Following the College meeting, the Commissioners have decided to issue today a response following the launch by the Hungarian government of a campaign – complete with billboards, full-page newspaper advertisements and a letter from the Prime Minister addressed to all Hungarian citizens – entitled “You too have the right to know what Brussels is planning!”. The European Commission agrees, citizens do deserve to know the truth about what the EU is doing. But we believe they deserve fact not fiction. The Hungarian government campaign distorts the truth and seeks to paint a dark picture of a secret plot to drive more migration to Europe. The Commission would therefore like to set the record straight, point by point. The Commission’s full response is [available online](#). (For more information: Margaritis Schinas – Tel.: +32 229 60524; Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456)

Journée des maladies rares: Une nouvelle plateforme de l’UE à l’appui des diagnostics et des traitements [updated on 28/02/2019 at 12:37]

À l’occasion de la [Journée des maladies rares](#), la Commission européenne lance aujourd’hui une [nouvelle plateforme de partage de connaissances](#) en ligne destinée à soutenir l’amélioration du diagnostic et du traitement de plus de 30 millions d’Européens atteints d’une maladie rare. À l’heure actuelle, une multitude de données sur les patients atteints de certaines maladies sont dispersées à travers toute l’Europe, dans quelque 600 « registres ». La nouvelle plateforme européenne d’enregistrement des maladies rares permettra de rassembler ces données, permettant ainsi une recherche de qualité capable d’accroître les résultats en matière de diagnostic et de traitement – ce qui contribuera à améliorer la vie des patients et de leur famille. Vytenis **Andriukaitis**, commissaire en charge de la santé et de la sécurité alimentaire, a déclaré à ce sujet: « *Cette nouvelle plateforme de l’UE sur l’enregistrement des maladies rares permettra de remédier à la fragmentation des données sur les maladies rares, de promouvoir l’interopérabilité des registres existants et aidera à en créer de nouveaux. La plateforme sera également utile pour les travaux des réseaux européens de référence, véritable réussite de l’Union européenne, car elle leur permettra d’utiliser les informations anonymisées d’une vaste base de patients et d’offrir un meilleur traitement aux personnes en souffrance.* » Tibor **Navracsics**, commissaire chargé de l’éducation, de la culture, de la jeunesse et du sport, responsable du [Centre commun de recherche](#), s’est exprimé en ces termes: « *Cette plateforme aidera les scientifiques, les décideurs politiques et les patients à tirer le meilleur parti de données sur les maladies rares qui, jusqu’à présent, étaient restées largement inexploitées. En établissant des normes au niveau de l’UE pour la collecte et l’échange des données, la plateforme permettra également de comparer plus facilement les informations collectées à l’avenir aux quatre coins de l’Europe. Et que les patients se rassurent, leurs données privées le resteront, tandis qu’eux-mêmes*

bénéficient de diagnostics et de traitements améliorés. » A [press release](#) and a [factsheet](#) are available online. (Pour plus d'informations: Anca Paduraru – Tél.: +32 229 91269; Nathalie Vandystadt – Tél.: +32 229 67083; Aikaterini Apostola – Tél.: +32 229 87624; Joseph Waldstein – Tél.: +32 229 56184)

The Juncker Plan supports the cultural sector in Denmark

Today, the Juncker Plan is backing an agreement in Denmark, where the European Investment Bank (EIB) Group signed an agreement with the public investment fund Vaekstfonden. The agreement aims to provide financing worth €40 million to 80 small and medium businesses active in the creative and cultural sectors such as design, architecture, visual arts and music. Mariya **Gabriel**, Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society said: *“Europe is recognised throughout the world for its cultural wealth, but the full potential of its cultural and creative industries for job creation and growth remains untapped. It is high time to reverse that trend. This is why I welcome this agreement under the Juncker Plan, which will allow creative Danish businesses to access the financing they need to express their talents as well as create value and jobs.”* A press release is available [here](#). As of February 2019, the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), at the heart of the Juncker Plan, has already mobilised €380 billion of additional investments, including €4.7 billion in Denmark. (For more information: Annika Breidhardt – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)

Agriculture: the Commission approves protected geographical indication from Mexico

The European Commission has approved today the addition of ‘[Tequila](#)’, a Mexican spirit drink, in the register of Protected Geographical Indication (PGI). Tequila is obtained by distilling the juices extracted from the heart of the blue agave that may be enriched and blended with other sugars. The source of the raw material used to make the beverage and the processing are both located in several regions in the Centre and West of Mexico, including the actual town of Tequila in the state of Jalisco. The existence of blue agave and its different uses can be traced back to the pre-Colombian era. The word ‘Tequila’ is derived from the Nahuatl terms ‘tequi’ and ‘tlan’, meaning ‘cutting place’ or ‘place of paying tax’. There are currently 31 geographical indications protected in the EU register originating from third countries (food, wines and spirits included), benefitting from the same protection and market added-value than EU protected products. More information: webpages on [quality products](#) and [e-bacchus database](#) of protected wines and spirits. (For more information: Daniel Rosario – Tel: +32 229 56 185; Clémence Robin – Tel: +32 229 52 509)

State aid: Commission opens in-depth investigation into public financing of Øresund fixed rail-road link

The Commission has today opened an in-depth investigation under EU State aid rules into the aid measures granted by Denmark and Sweden to the consortium owning and operating the Øresund fixed rail-road link, which consists in a toll-funded 16 kilometres long bridge, an artificial island and a tunnel for road and railway traffic from the Swedish coast to the Danish island of Amager. The Øresundsbro Konsortiet, a consortium formed by the Danish and Swedish states, owns and operates the Øresund fixed rail-road link on the basis of an intergovernmental agreement. Under this agreement, Denmark and Sweden guarantee the loans that the consortium secured in order to finance the link. Denmark also foresaw a special tax treatment for the consortium as regards depreciation of assets and fiscal loss carry forward. On [15 October 2014](#), the Commission concluded that the Danish and Swedish support measures were in line with EU State aid rules. On 19 September 2018, following an appeal of the Commission's 2014 decision by Scandlines Øresund I/S, the General Court partially annulled the Commission's decision on procedural grounds (Case [T-68/15](#)). While the General Court did not rule directly on the compatibility of the measures with EU State aid rules, it found that the Commission should have opened a formal investigation to assess the case in-depth before adopting its State aid decision. To comply with the General Court's September 2018 judgment, the Commission has today opened an in-depth investigation under EU State aid rules into the guarantees on the consortium's loans by Denmark and Sweden and the tax support measures implemented by Denmark. The opening of the in-depth investigation gives all interested parties the opportunity to submit their comments. It does not prejudge the outcome of the investigation. Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *"The Øresundlink has been instrumental in the cross-border integration of two dynamic regions and brought significant benefits to citizens and businesses on both shores and beyond. The Commission already approved State aid for the building and operating of the link in 2014 but the Court annulled this decision, finding that the Commission should have opened an in-depth investigation. Today's opening of such an investigation is an invitation for all stakeholders to provide their input, which will allow the Commission to adopt a new, well-informed final decision"*. The full press release is available [online](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344)

Mergers: Commission clears the acquisition of StandardAero by The Carlyle Group

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of sole control over StandardAero Holding Corp. ("StandardAero") by The Carlyle Group L.P., both of the US. StandardAero is an independent provider of maintenance, repair and overhaul services ("MRO"), active in aircraft engine and component maintenance. It also manufactures spare parts for aircraft engines. The Carlyle Group is a global alternative asset manager. Its portfolio companies include Chromalloy and Dynamic Precision Group, both active in component maintenance for aircraft engines and in the manufacturing of spare parts for engines. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns given the minor horizontal and vertical overlaps between the companies' activities. 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.9264](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

STATEMENTS

Statement on the Code of Practice against disinformation: Commission asks online platforms to provide more details on progress made

Today the European Commission published reports by Facebook, Google and Twitter covering the progress made in January 2019 on their commitments to fight disinformation. These three online platforms are signatories of the Code of Practice against disinformation and have been asked to report monthly on their actions ahead of the European Parliament elections in May 2019. More specifically, the Commission asked to receive detailed information to monitor progress on the scrutiny of ad placement, transparency of political advertising, closure of fake accounts and marking systems for automated bots. Vice-President for the Digital Single Market Andrus **Ansip**, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality Věra **Jourová**, Commissioner for the Security Union Julian **King**, and Commissioner for the Digital Economy and Society Mariya **Gabriel** said in a joint statement: *“The online platforms, which signed the Code of Practice, are rolling out their policies in Europe to support the integrity of elections. This includes better scrutiny of advertisement placements, transparency tools for political advertising, and measures to identify and block inauthentic behaviour on their services. However, we need to see more progress on the commitments made by online platforms to fight disinformation. Platforms have not provided enough details showing that new policies and tools are being deployed in a timely manner and with sufficient resources across all EU Member States. The reports provide too little information on the actual results of the measures already taken.”* The full statement and more information on the online platforms' reports can be found [here](#). A summary report on the implementation of the Code of Practice can be found [here](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Marietta Grammenou- Tel.: +32 229 83583)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

High Representative/Vice-President Mogherini and Commissioner Hahn at the London Initiative conference on Jordan

High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the Commission Federica **Mogherini** and Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes **Hahn** are attending today the international conference [“Jordan: Growth and Opportunity, the London Initiative 2019”](#). The conference, co-hosted by the Government of Jordan and the UK Government in London, will support investment, growth and jobs for Jordan. The HRVP and Commissioner's participation underlines the EU's strong political and economic support for Jordan as a key partner of the EU with an important stabilisation role in the region. High Representative/Vice-President **Mogherini** will deliver a keynote speech this

afternoon. Commissioner **Hahn** will address the panel “Building an international coalition”. The EU welcomes and strongly supports the efforts of Jordan in responding to the Syrian crisis, in particular the hosting of refugees. Since the beginning of the crisis the EU has mobilised over €2 billion in overall assistance to Jordan. Jordan will also be one of the countries of focal attention at the [Brussels III Conference on the Future of Syria and the Region](#), hosted by the EU and co-chaired with the UN on 12-14 March 2019. Images of the conference will be available on [EbS](#). *(For more information: Maja Kocijančič – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Alceo Smerilli – Tel.: +32 229 64887; Matteo Arisci – Tel.: +32 229 80833)*

Vice-President Dombrovskis in Ukraine to meet President Poroshenko

Valdis **Dombrovskis**, Vice-President for the Euro and Social Dialogue, also in charge of Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union, will be in Ukraine today and tomorrow, Friday 1 March 2019. He will meet President Petro Poroshenko, Prime Minister Volodymyr Groysman and Minister of Finance Oksana Markarova. Today he will attend a flower-laying ceremony at Maidan Square with Ivanna Klympush-Tsintsadze, Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration and [deliver a speech](#) at the Taras Shevchenko University. On Friday he will be in Zaporizhzhya and Berdyansk to participate in a round table at the Berdyansk State Pedagogical University and to attend the opening ceremony of a rehabilitation centre for children with disabilities. *(For more information: Annika Breidthardt – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Annikky Lamp – Tel.: +32 229 56151)*

Commissioner Stylianides in Greece

Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management, Christos **Stylianides**, is in Athens today to visit the Panagiotis & Aglaia Kyriakou Children’s Hospital, one of the 50 hospitals where the EU provides funding to support interpretation services to refugee and migrant patients in 27 languages. *(For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz De Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)*

The European Commission at the Delphi Economic Forum

European Commissioners and high officials will participate in the 2019 [Delphi Economic Forum](#), which will take place between Thursday, 28 February, and Sunday, 3 March. More specifically, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management, Christos **Stylianides** will take part in the official opening ceremony today. Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society, Mariya **Gabriel** will also take part in the opening session and will participate in a meeting on “European elections, false news and democracy” on Friday. Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris **Avramopoulos** will take part in a debate on the Future of Europe on Saturday. Finally, Commission Chief Spokesperson Margaritis **Schinias** will participate on Saturday in a discussion on “The Road to Sibiu”. The Delphi Economic Forum aims at identifying the main global trends of the wider Eastern Mediterranean Region. The main theme of its fourth edition is “The Challenge of Inclusive

Growth". For more details, see its [website](#). (*For more information: Giorgos Markopouliotis – Tel.: +30 210 7272100*)

Vice-President Katainen in Finland to address the Parliament's Grand Committee and visit the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats

European Commission Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, will on Friday 1 March address the Finnish Parliament's Grand Committee on the Future of Europe, the forthcoming Finnish Presidency of the Council of the EU and the Single Market. He will also meet with Mr Matti Alahuhta, Chairman of Finnish investment company DevCo and visit the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats. (*For more information: Annika Breidthardt – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169*)

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