

Daily News 28 / 04 / 2017

New Commission guidelines help citizens gain better and fairer access to their national courts on environmental cases

Today the European Commission adopted a [guidance document](#) on access to justice in environmental matters which clarifies how individuals and associations can challenge decisions, acts and omissions by public authorities related to EU environmental law before national courts. The Juncker Commission has taken a step forward with the publication of these guidelines, providing the necessary guidance to citizens for better access to national justice systems. When public authorities fail to respect the rights and obligations under environmental laws, the public can hold them to account. National courts can use it to help identify all the EU Court of Justice cases that they should take into account when they are faced with questions related to access to justice in environmental cases. With this guidance, national administrations are made aware of possible shortcomings in their justice systems and businesses are provided with greater clarity on what EU rights and obligations are at stake in the decisions, acts and omissions that concern them. For more information a full [press release](#) and [fact sheet](#) are online. (*For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Iris Petsa – Tel.: + 32 229 93321*)

European Commission approves disbursement of EUR 23 million in assistance to Georgia

The European Commission, on behalf of the EU, has today approved the disbursement of the second tranche of EUR 23 million under its [Macro-Financial Assistance \(MFA\) to Georgia](#). The funds – EUR 10 million in grants and EUR 13 million in low-interest loans – will be disbursed in May 2017. This is the final instalment of the second of two MFA operations, each in an amount of EUR 46 million. The EU's MFA programme is intended to strengthen Georgia's external and budgetary positions and to support the government's agenda of economic, social and financial reforms. Commenting on the disbursement, Pierre **Moscovici**, Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs, Taxations and Customs, said: *"The disbursement decided today is part of the EU's long-standing support to Georgia and its citizens. On the back of successful completion of critical reform commitments and improved stability, but at a time when our partner continues to face a challenging balance-of-payments and fiscal situation, the EU's assistance will help alleviate Georgia's short-term financing needs. It will also support the implementation of key reforms aimed at boosting economic growth and job creation, reinforcing social safety nets and strengthening the stability of the financial sector."* A full press release is available [here](#). (*For more information: Annika Breidthardt – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Enda McNamara – Tel.: +32 229 51496*)

Commission publishes report following latest round of trade talks with Japan

The Commission published today – as part of [its commitment](#) to a more transparent trade policy – a [report](#) summarising the progress made during the latest round of EU-Japan tradetalks which took place in April in Tokyo. The report offers summary of the progress made in all areas of the negotiations, namely: 1) Trade in goods (including Market Access, and General Rules); 2) Non-Tariff Measures; 3) Rules of Origin; 4) Trade in Services; 5) Procurement; 6) Intellectual Property (including Geographical Indications); 7) Other issues (Institutions and Regulatory Cooperation). Work progressed in a constructive atmosphere, with both sides working with a renewed sense of urgency in order to respect the objective set by the leaders to conclude talks as soon as possible. The recent Commission proposals made in the course of the negotiations can be found on the dedicated [transparency page](#). More information on the EU-Japan talks is available on the [website of DG Trade](#).
(For more information: Daniel Rosario – Tel.: + 32 229 56185; Kinga Malinowska – Tel.: +32 229 51383)

EU to approve new projects to support peace, stability and job creation in the Horn of Africa

The European Commission will today announce the approval of new actions worth under the [EU Trust Fund for Africa](#) to improve stability and address the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement in the Horn of Africa region. At this occasion, Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven **Mimica**, said: *“This new package illustrates how the EU Trust Fund provides sustainable solutions to address instability and lack of economic opportunities, as they are two main root causes of forced displacement in the Horn of Africa. By promoting peace, stability and job creation, these new actions will help create alternatives for people to improve their lives to ensure that migration can become a choice for people, and not a necessity.”* A [press release](#) will be made available as of 17:00 today. (For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz de Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Christina Wunder – Tel.: +32 229 92256)

L’Union européenne et le Chili signent un accord sur le commerce des produits biologiques

Le premier accord de commerce de nouvelle génération pour les produits biologiques a été signé entre l’Union européenne et le Chili. Cet accord, [finalisé l’année dernière](#), permettra une reconnaissance mutuelle des règles de production des produits biologiques et des systèmes de contrôles de ces derniers. Grâce à cette équivalence, l’UE devrait augmenter ses exportations de produits bios vers le Chili. L’accord, signé par le Commissaire **Arias Cañete**, le vice-Premier Ministre de Malte M. Louis Grech et le Ministre chilien de l’agriculture M. Carlos Furche Guagardo, prévoit également une coopération accrue, comprenant un échange régulier d’informations, des mises à jour régulières des produits couverts par les règles sur le bio, et un système de règlement des différends à propos du commerce de ces produits. Le logo bio européen sera aussi protégé par cet accord, le premier de ce type

conclu avec un pays d'Amérique Latine. Son entrée en vigueur se fera une fois les processus de ratifications des deux côtés conclus. Cet accord ouvrira de nouvelles opportunités de croissance pour le secteur du bio dans l'UE qui grandit en moyenne au rythme de 5,5% par an. Près de 6% de la surface agricole disponible dans l'UE est utilisée pour le bio. La vidéo de la signature de l'accord est disponible [ici](#). Plus d'informations sur cet accord [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Daniel Rosario – Tel: +32 229 56 185; Clemence Robin – Tel.: +32 229 52509)

EU agri-food exports remain higher than previous years

The monthly value of EU agri-food exports increased by +1.2% (+ €131 million) compared with February last year, according to the [latest figures](#) published today. The monthly exports particularly increased for Russia (+86 million), China (+77 million), the USA (+58 million) and Korea (+55 million). For the 12-months period covering March 2016 to February 2017, EU agri-food exports reached a value of €132.2 billion, corresponding to an increase by 2.2% in value terms compared to the same period one year ago. Exports of pig meat did particularly well over the last 12 months with a recovery of +33% compared to the same period one year ago. Monthly values for EU agri-food imports also increased in February 2017 compared to the year before (+1.5%) which means that the trade balance remains stable compared to February last year at €19 billion. This month's report focuses on EU agri-food trade with Serbia. The EU is a net-importer of agri-food products from this country. While the EU is more oriented towards exporting processed products, the imports from Serbia are mainly commodities and other primary products. The full report is [online](#). (For more information: Daniel Rosario – Tel.: +32 229 56185; Clémence Robin – Tel: +32 229 52509)

Mergers: Commission clears creation of joint venture between BMW, Daimler, Ford and Porsche

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the creation of a joint venture by BMW, Daimler, Porsche, all three of Germany, and Ford of the US. The parties produce and distribute passenger cars and commercial vehicles, and also provide mobility services based on battery-electric vehicles. The joint venture will install, operate and maintain a publicly accessible high power charging infrastructure for battery-electric vehicles in several Member States. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would not raise competition concerns because of its limited competitive impact 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.8376](#). (For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Eurostat: Euro area annual inflation up to 1.9%

Euro area annual inflation is expected to be 1.9% in April 2017, up from 1.5% in March 2017, according to a flash estimate from Eurostat, the statistical

office of the European Union. Looking at the main components of euro area inflation, energy is expected to have the highest annual rate in April (7.5%, compared with 7.4% in March), followed by services (1.8%, compared with 1.0% in March), food, alcohol & tobacco (1.5%, compared with 1.8% in March) and non-energy industrial goods (0.3%, stable compared with March). A press release can be found [here](#). (For more information: Annika Breidthardt – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Juliana Dahl – Tel.: +32 229 59914)

Eurostat: Quatrième trimestre 2016 – Le revenu réel des ménages par habitant en baisse dans la zone euro mais en hausse dans l'UE28

Dans la zone euro, en termes réels, le revenu des ménages par habitant a diminué de 0,2% au quatrième trimestre 2016, après avoir augmenté de 0,2% au trimestre précédent. La consommation réelle des ménages par habitant a progressé de 0,1% au quatrième trimestre 2016, après une hausse de 0,4% au troisième trimestre 2016. Croissance réelle du revenu et de la consommation des ménages par habitant dans la zone euro (en %, données corrigées des variations saisonnières). Un communiqué de presse est disponible [ici](#). (Plus d'informations: Annika Breidthardt – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Juliana Dahl – Tél.: +32 229 59914)

STATEMENTS

Statement by Commissioner Thyssen on the occasion of International Labour Day

"Europe is home to the world's most advanced welfare systems. The European social model has been a success story. But this is not a given. There are plenty of opportunities and challenges ahead of us. Globalisation, digitalisation and an ageing society – we need to shape these developments and make good use of them. Creating a more social Europe, one that protects and empowers workers, not only today but also in tomorrow's world of work, has been this Commission's priority from the very start. This is a matter of both social fairness and economic necessity: economic growth goes hand in hand with social progress. On 26 April, the European Commission presented the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#). It includes 20 key principles and rights for citizens and workers, which will support fair and well-functioning labour markets and welfare systems. The Pillar will be our reference framework to guide future policy, so that we make sure that we safeguard and improve where needed the rights and protection of workers. We aim for broad political support and high-level endorsement of the Pillar towards the end of this year. Already now, the Pillar is accompanied by [four concrete initiatives](#) to update and complement current EU rules in key areas of work-life balance, the information for workers, access to social protection and working time. And we will not stop here. Delivering on the Pillar's principles and rights is a work in progress, and further initiatives will follow where needed." Read the full statement [here](#). (For more information: Christian Wigand– Tel.: +32 229 62253; Sara Soumillion – Tel.: + 32 229 67094)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Vice-President Ansip participates in Citizens' Dialogue in Romania

This morning, Vice-President for the Digital Single Market Andrus **Ansip** opened the [Eurosfat 2017](#) conference on European Affairs in Bucharest, Romania. This year's forum is dedicated to the 10th anniversary of Romania's EU membership and addresses the country's outlook as a Member State. Its opening session served as a [Citizens' Dialogue](#) with an active Q&A session that mainly focused on digital topics with a strong emphasis on digital skills, the opportunities presented by digital transformation, and social empowerment. Vice-President **Ansip** also met representatives of the Romanian Parliament and will meet Prime Minister Sorin Mihai Grindeanu this afternoon as well as hold a roundtable with several other Romanian Ministers. The many topics addressed during these meetings range from Romania's digital progress, digital skills, eGovernment and digitisation of the economy. Vice-President **Ansip** will also hold a discussion with the local startup community and visit [Innovation Labs](#), a project by Romanian ITC Ministry for young Romanian teams to turn their ideas into IT products. *(For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Inga Höglund – Tel.: +32 229 50698)*

Commissioner Arias Cañete in Iran for the first-ever Iran-EU Business Forum on Sustainable Energy

On 29 and 30 April, Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy Miguel **Arias Cañete** will be in Tehran to strengthen energy and climate ties with Iran. On 29 April, he will kick off the first-ever [Iran-EU Business Forum on Sustainable Energy](#). The Forum will gather more than 50 European companies and business associations and some 40 Iranian energy companies to enable business relations and partnerships between Iran and the EU and lay the ground for further cooperation and joint partnerships in the energy sector. It will provide a platform for investors and businesses to look into investment opportunities for clean energy, renewables, energy efficiency and energy conservation actions in Iran. On 30 April, Commissioner **Arias Cañete** will open the High-Level Conference on Climate Change, which will bring together Iranian and European policymakers as well as representatives from International organisations. The aim is to review progress within the Paris Agreement and discuss the role of clean energy in the transition to a low-carbon economy and urgent actions needed to adapt to the consequences of climate change. Ahead of the visit Commissioner Miguel **Arias Cañete** said: *"Only 16 months after the historic nuclear deal was signed in January 2016, trade between the EU and Iran has risen by 79%, exports from Iran to the EU have increased by 450%, and we have established a dynamic energy partnership. Now we want to take this success story one step further. The energy sector will feature prominently in our future relations and we are committed to fully tap into its economic and social potential while contributing to achieve our climate commitments"*. The Commissioner will also meet with Vice-President of Iran and Head of the Atomic Energy Organization Salehi, Vice-President of Iran and Head of Environmental Protection Organization Ebtekar, the Minister of Petroleum Zanganeh and Minister for Energy Chitchian. Following the conclusion and implementation of the [Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action \(JCPOA\)](#), the EU and Iran have resumed bilateral relations and launched cooperation in energy ([Joint Statement on](#)

[Energy](#) and [Joint Statement on Nuclear Energy Cooperation](#)). (For more information: Anna-Kaisa Itkonen – Tel.: +32 229 56186; Nicole Bockstaller – Tel.: +32 229 52589)

Citizens' Dialogue with Commissioner Andriukaitis in Seville

Today, Vytenis **Andriukaitis**, the Commissioner for Health & Food Safety, took part in a Citizens' Dialogue in Seville, Spain. He answered questions concerning health issues and the future of Europe alongside Manuel Jiménez Barrios, Vice-President and Minister of Presidency of Regional Government of Andalucía. The event which took place this morning can be found [here](#). And click [here](#) to read more about the Citizens' Dialogues. (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Aikaterini Apostola – Tel.: +32 229 87624)

[Calendar](#)

The Commissioners' weekly activities

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