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Single-use plastics: New EU rules to reduce marine litter

With the amount of harmful plastic litter in oceans and seas growing ever greater, the European Commission is proposing new EU-wide rules to target the 10 single-use plastic products most often found on Europe's beaches and seas, as well as lost and abandoned fishing gear. Together these constitute 70% of all marine litter items. The new rules are proportionate and tailored to get the best results. This means different measures will be applied to different products. Where alternatives are readily available and affordable, single-use plastic products will be banned from the market. For products without straight-forward alternatives, the focus is on limiting their use through a national reduction in consumption; design and labelling requirements and waste management/clean-up obligations for producers. The proposal is one of the deliverables of the [European strategy for plastics in a circular economy](#), launched by the **Juncker** Commission in 2018. Together, the new rules will put Europe ahead of the curve on an issue with global implications. A [press release](#), [Q&A](#) and [factsheet](#) are available. (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: + 32 229 56172; Iris Petsa – Tel.: +32 229 93321; Tim McPhie – Tel.: +32 229 58602)

Water reuse: Commission proposes measures to make it easier and safer for agricultural irrigation

Today, the Commission is proposing new rules to stimulate and facilitate water reuse in the EU for agricultural irrigation. The new rules will help farmers make the best use of non-potable wastewater, alleviating water scarcity whilst protecting the environment and consumers. The proposal includes minimum requirements for the reuse of treated waste water from urban water treatment plants; measures for better risk management and increased transparency where the public will have access to information online about water reuse practice in their Member States. Commissioner **Vella**, responsible for the Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, said: *"This proposal will create only winners – our farmers will have access to a sustainable supply for irrigation water, our consumers will know the products they eat are safe, and our businesses will see new opportunities. The biggest winner of them all will be our environment as the proposal contributes to better management of our most precious resource – water."* A press release is available [here](#). (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: + 32 229 56172; Iris Petsa – Tel.: +32 229 93321)

Pharmaceuticals: Commission refines intellectual property rules

The Commission is proposing today a [targeted adjustment](#) to intellectual property rules to help Europe's pharmaceutical companies tap into fast-

growing global markets and foster jobs, growth and investments in the EU. The EU has a strong intellectual property rights framework in place which protects Europe's know-how and sustains the pharmaceutical industry's world-class innovation capacity. To improve the current system further and remove a major competitive disadvantage of EU manufacturers, the Commission proposes a targeted amendment: the so-called 'export manufacturing waiver' to Supplementary Protection Certificates (SPCs). Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for Jobs, Growth Investment and Competitiveness, said: *"Today we are proposing a well-calibrated adjustment to the current regime to remove a legal barrier that was preventing our companies from competing on equal terms on global markets where competition is fierce. We want to make sure that our pharmaceutical industry reaps the benefits of such competition."* Elżbieta **Bieńkowska**, Commissioner for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, added: *"Today's proposal will help create growth and high-skilled jobs in the EU. It could generate €1 billion net additional sales per year and up to 25 000 new jobs over 10 years. It will particularly benefit the many small and medium-sized enterprises in the field. In the medium term, more competition will improve patients' access to a wider choice of medicines and alleviate public budgets."* Supplementary Protection Certificates extend patent protection for medicinal products which must undergo lengthy testing and clinical trials prior to obtaining regulatory marketing approval. Thanks to the waiver, in the future EU-based companies will be entitled to manufacture a generic or biosimilar version of an SPC-protected medicine during the term of the certificate, if done exclusively for the purpose of exporting to a non-EU market where protection has expired or never existed. With the waiver, intellectual property (IP) protection for medicine production in Europe will remain the strongest in the world and SPC-protected medicines will retain their full market exclusivity in the EU. The proposal is accompanied by a series of safeguards which will create transparency and prevent IP-infringing products from entering Member State markets. Today's proposal was announced in the Commission's 2015 [Single Market Strategy](#), and follows [various studies](#), an [extensive consultation](#) and a [European Parliament resolution](#) endorsing the need to introduce before 2019 an SPC manufacturing waiver. (For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel.: +32 229 56182; Maud Noyon – Tel. +32 229-80379; Victoria von Hammerstein – Tel.: +32 229 55040)

Juncker Plan: €200 million for innovative SMEs in Poland

The European Investment Fund (EIF) and Polish financial intermediary CVI Dom Maklerski have signed a guarantee agreement for a €200 million portfolio of bonds to innovative Polish companies. Thanks to this EU support, CVI – together with Open Finance Corporate Bonds Fund – will purchase new bonds from innovative SMEs and small mid-caps at favourable terms. The agreement was made possible by the Juncker Plan's European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI). Commissioner Elżbieta **Bieńkowska**, responsible for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, said: *"Today's Juncker Plan agreement between the European Investment Fund and CVI Dom Maklerski will allow us to provide an additional €200 million in financing to small businesses in Poland. CVI will purchase new bonds from innovative Polish*

SMEs, benefitting around 60 companies. Using the EU budget guarantee to support this, and therefore provide easier access to financing to more businesses, is precisely the aim of the Juncker Plan.” (Full press release is found [here](#). For more information: Christian Spahr – Tel.: +32 229 50055; Siobhán Millbright – Tel.: +32 229 57361)

Tableau de bord de la justice 2018: le rôle clé des systèmes de justice pour le respect de l'état de droit et les valeurs européennes

Aujourd'hui, la Commission européenne publie le [tableau de bord 2018 de la justice](#) qui donne un aperçu comparatif de l'efficacité, de la qualité et de l'indépendance des systèmes de justice des États membres de l'UE. Le tableau de bord vise à aider les autorités nationales à améliorer l'efficacité de leurs systèmes de justice. *“Le tableau de bord 2018 est publié au moment où le respect de l'état de droit occupe une place centrale dans l'agenda européen. Sans état de droit, la démocratie, les droits civils et la bonne gestion des fonds européens sont mis en danger, ” a déclaré Věra Jourová, commissaire européenne chargée de la justice, des consommateurs et de l'égalité des genres. “Grâce au tableau de bord, nous encourageons et donnons des exemples de bonnes réformes des systèmes de justice. Sans normes européennes élevées garantissant l'indépendance des systèmes de justice, il ne peut y avoir d'état de droit. Ce point est essentiel pour assurer la réussite de telles réformes. Le nouveau tableau de bord se penche sur les indicateurs clé et aide les Etats membres à appliquer ces normes.”* En comparaison avec les éditions précédentes, le [tableau de bord 2018](#) approfondit les différents indicateurs analysant l'efficacité, la qualité et l'indépendance des systèmes de justice. Il se concentre en particulier sur l'indépendance des systèmes de justice, un élément nécessaire pour évaluer la situation de l'état de droit. Il procède à une analyse plus élaborée des conseils de la justice, à l'implication de l'exécutif et des parlements dans la nomination et le licenciement des juges et des présidents des cours de justice, ainsi que des services des procureurs. Pour la première fois, le tableau de bord présente des statistiques sur la durée des procédures à tous les niveaux d'instance. Le tableau de bord de la justice fait partie des outils de la Commission pour évaluer les réformes des systèmes de justice des États membres, au même titre que le Semestre européen, le cadre pour l'état de droit, les mécanismes de coopération et de vérification (CVM) et les procédures d'infraction. La version intégrale du tableau de bord est disponible en ligne, ainsi qu'un [communiqué de presse](#), des [questions/réponses](#) et une [fiche d'information](#) résumant les principaux graphiques du tableau de bord. *(Pour plus d'informations: Christian Wigand- Tel.: +32 229 62253; Mélanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659)*

Commissioners Vella and Hogan launch two new investment projects for nature conservation in Ireland and Croatia

Today, the Commission and the European Investment Bank have announced two new investment operations in Ireland and Croatia to support forestry and

biodiversity conservation. The two operations are backed by the Natural Capital Financial Facility, a financial instrument of €125 million that supports **projects** through tailored loans and investments, backed by an EU guarantee. In a [stakeholder event](#) in Brussels, Commissioner **Vella** said: “The two operations demonstrate how crucial, new investment in nature conservation across Europe can be unlocked by a well-designed financial instrument. It makes EU financing go further for nature.” For Ireland, €12.5 million were unlocked to support continuous cover forestry, a method that sustainably manages the forests and provides an alternative to clear felling that leaves hillsides bare. “Agriculture and forestry play a key role as custodians of natural capital. This new forestry investment in Ireland, with participation of the EU’s LIFE Programme and the European Investment Bank, shows how conservation considerations can be combined with commercial activity,” said Commissioner **Hogan**. In Croatia, a dedicated technical assistance programme is rolled out with the Croatian Bank for Reconstruction and Development that will ensure that the Bank can better identify natural capital projects with the greatest environmental impact and improve preparation of individual schemes by local businesses and public bodies. More information [here](#). (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: + 32 229 56172; Daniel Rosario – Tel.: + 32 229 56185; Iris Petsa – Tel.: +32 229 93321; Clémence Robin – Tel.: +32 229 52509)

Poland is the 16th Member State to join the European cooperation on supercomputing

Poland has become the sixteenth EU Member State to sign the [European declaration on high performance computing](#) (HPC). It joins European collaborative efforts to boost research, further development and skills training in the area, enabling processing of vast amounts of data. The European supercomputing efforts are crucial to major innovations in many fields such as personalised medicine, energy saving and smart urban planning. With this signature Poland announced its intention to join the [EuroHPC Joint Undertaking](#). The Joint Undertaking is a legal and funding instrument aiming to pool European and national resources to build and deploy across Europe supercomputers to rank among the world’s top three by 2022-2023. Andrus **Ansip**, Vice-President for the Digital Single Market, and Mariya **Gabriel**, Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society, said: “We are very happy to welcome Poland into this bold European initiative. Only by aligning our efforts and pooling resources will we be able to acquire and deploy an integrated world-class supercomputing infrastructure at European level. This infrastructure will provide a large set of advanced computing, data and networking resources and services. They will support many key HPC scientific, industrial and public sector applications such as solid state physics and fluid dynamics, epidemiology, biomolecular modelling, and neuroscience for a wide variety of users from Poland and from all over Europe.” The declaration was [launched](#) in March 2017 at the first EU [Digital Day](#) in Rome and initially signed by France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain. More details are available [here](#) and in a [factsheet](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Inga Höglund – Tel.: +32 229 50698)

Eurostat: Citoyens de l'UE dans d'autres États membres – 4% des citoyens de l'UE qui sont en âge de travailler vivent dans un autre État membre – Une mobilité plus forte parmi les diplômés de l'enseignement supérieur que dans le reste de la population

Au total, 3,8% des citoyens de l'Union européenne (UE) en âge de travailler (20-64 ans) résidaient dans un autre État membre que celui dont ils avaient la citoyenneté en 2017. Cette part a progressé par rapport aux 2,5% d'il y a dix ans. La situation varie considérablement selon les États membres, et la proportion s'échelonne entre 1,0% des citoyens en âge de travailler dans le cas de l'Allemagne et 19,7% dans celui de la Roumanie. Un communiqué de presse Eurostat est à votre disposition [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Sara Soumillion – Tel.: +32 229 67094)

State aid: Germany needs to recover illegal aid from certain large electricity users exempted from network charges in Germany in 2012-2013

The European Commission has concluded that the exemption for certain large electricity users in Germany from network charges in 2012-2013 was against EU State aid rules. This concerns electricity users that had an annual consumption above 10 gigawatt hours and a particularly stable electricity consumption. The Commission investigation found that there were no grounds to fully relieve those users from paying network charges, which are part of the usual electricity costs that any electricity user connected to the grid has to pay. Large electricity users, even if they have a stable electricity consumption, also generate network costs and make use of network services and it is for them to bear these costs. It is now for Germany to determine the amount of network charges generated by each beneficiary of the exemption in 2012 and 2013, in line with the methodology set out under the Commission decision, and recover the illegal aid. Commissioner Margrethe Vestager, in charge of competition policy, said: "All electricity users have to pay network operators for the services they use – fully exempting certain large users from these charges is an unfair advantage and increases the financial burden on other electricity users. That is why Germany must now recover the unpaid network charges from these users." The full press release is available online in [EN](#), [DE](#), [FR](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889)

State aid: Commission approves compensation granted by Denmark to Post Danmark for its universal service obligation

The European Commission has concluded that the compensation granted by Denmark to Post Danmark to fulfil its public service mission during the period 2017-2019 is in line with EU State aid rules. In February 2018, Denmark notified plans to compensate Post Danmark for carrying out its universal postal service obligation during the period 2017-2019. This includes the provision of basic postal services throughout Denmark at affordable prices and at certain minimum quality requirements. Post Danmark will, through its parent company, the PostNord Group (jointly-owned by Denmark and Sweden), receive a maximum of in total DKK 1.192 billion (SEK 1.683 billion or approx. €160 million) for the period 2017-2019. The

Commission examined the measure under [EU State aid rules on public service compensation](#) adopted in 2011. According to these rules, Member States can grant State aid to companies to compensate them for the extra cost of providing a public service mission, subject to certain criteria. The Commission's assessment showed that the compensation granted by Denmark to Post Danmark will not exceed the net cost of the public service mission, meaning there is no overcompensation. On this basis, the Commission concluded that the measure is in line with EU State aid rules. Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *"Easy access to postal services is vital for all EU citizens. Today's decision enables Post Danmark to continue performing its fundamental social and economic role and important public service mission, without unduly distorting competition."* The full press release is available online in [EN](#), [FR](#), [DE](#), [DA](#), [SV](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889)

State aid: Commission approves public service compensation to Bacau International Airport in Romania

The European Commission has found public service compensation granted to Regia Autonoma "George Enescu" Bacau International Airport for the operation of Bacau airport to be in line with EU State aid rules. Bacau airport is located in the north east of Romania, near the border with the Republic of Moldova. The public funding will facilitate regional connectivity and contribute to the area's development, without unduly distorting competition in the Single Market. The approved public compensation amounts to approximately €57 million and is granted for ten years. The Commission assessed this measure under its [2014 Guidelines on State aid to airports and airlines](#) and [the Services of General Economic Interest Framework](#), which allow Member States to grant aid in the form of compensation to airports that have an important role for regional connectivity and the social as well as economic development of the area served. The Commission found that the compensation allows for the provision of a genuine service of general economic interest because the closest airports are located at a long distance, particularly in Iasi and Suceava, where the road infrastructure is poor and there is no high speed rail. In addition, Bacau airport is important for the mobility of the residents, and for numerous Romanian citizens working abroad coming from the region. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the [State Aid Register](#) under the case number SA.49203. (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Scandlines by 3i Group, FSI and Hermes

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of Scandlines of Denmark by First State Investments International Limited (FSI) of Australia, 3i Group plc and Hermes Investment Management Group (Hermes), both of the UK. Scandlines provides ferry services for passengers and freight on two short-distance routes between Germany and Denmark. 3i Group is an international investor and investment manager, focused on midmarket private equity and infrastructure investments. FSI is

the asset management division of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia. Hermes is a UK investment manager specialising in developing bespoke and diversified private equity and infrastructure portfolios on behalf of its clients. 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.8895](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Le président Juncker prononcera un discours lors du Forum économique de Bruxelles, le 5 juin

Le président **Juncker** participera cette année au [Brussels Economic Forum](#), la conférence économique annuelle phare de la Commission, qui donnera la septième conférence Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa. Le vice-président **Valdis Dombrovskis** et le commissaire Pierre **Moscovici** participeront également. Le Forum rassemble des décideurs politiques européens et internationaux, des leaders d'opinion, des universitaires, des représentants de la société civile et des chefs d'entreprises pour débattre de sujets économiques brûlants et partager de nouvelles perspectives sur les défis économiques de l'Europe. L'événement de cette année se concentrera sur l'avenir de l'économie européenne dans une ère de perturbation numérique. Parmi les autres participants figurent Mario Centeno, président de l'Eurogroupe, et Kristalina Georgieva, directrice générale de la Banque mondiale. Ceux qui souhaitent participer au Forum doivent s'inscrire à l'avance [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Christian Spahr – Tel.: +32 229 50055; Enda McNamara – Tel.: +32 229 64976)

TRADE: Commissioner Malmström to meet with civil society organisations in Brussels

Commissioner for Trade Cecilia **Malmström** is meeting today in Brussels with a variety of civil society organisations, including trade unions, trade and business associations and NGOs. In a [web streamed](#) event started at 11.00 (CET), Commissioner Malmström is presenting the latest developments in EU trade policy and exchange views with the participants about all policy aspects. This is part of the European Commission trade department's long-running outreach programme of [civil society dialogues](#). This will be the seventh such event held in 2018. The next one will be on 29 May to specifically discuss the EU's ongoing negotiations for a new trade agreement with Chile, in the presence of the chief negotiators from both sides. (For more information: Daniel Rosario – Tel.: + 32 22956185; Kinga Malinowska – Tel.: +32 229 51383)

Le Commissaire Avramopoulos à Paris

Dimitris **Avramopoulos**, le Commissaire européen pour la migration, les affaires intérieures et la citoyenneté, sera à Paris cet après-midi, où il rencontrera le Ministre de l'intérieur, Gérard Collomb. Ils discuteront des questions relatives à la politique migratoire, les frontières extérieures de l'UE et la sécurité. (*Pour plus d'informations: Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456; Tove Ernst – Tel.: +32 229 86764; Markus Lammert – Tel.: +32 229 80423*)

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