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TRADE: EU-Japan trade agreement enters into force

The Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between the EU and Japan enters into force on 1 February 2019. Businesses and consumers across Europe and in Japan can now take advantage of the largest open trade zone in the world. President of the European Commission Jean-Claude **Juncker** said: *“Europe and Japan are sending a message to the world about the future of open and fair trade. We are opening a new marketplace home to 635 million people and almost a third of the world’s Gross Domestic Product, bringing the people of Europe and Japan closer together than ever before. More than anything, our agreement shows that trade is about more than quotas and tariffs, or millions and billions. It is about values, principles and fairness.”* Cecilia **Malmström**, Commissioner for Trade, said: *“This agreement has it all: it scraps tariffs and contributes to the global rulebook, whilst at the same time demonstrating to the world that we both remain convinced by the benefits of open trade. Our manufacturers, our service providers, our tech start-ups and our farmers all have something to celebrate in this agreement. I am also proud that we have locked in our Paris climate deal commitments into a trade agreement for the first time, as well as setting high standards for workers’ rights and consumer protection.”* For more information about the agreement and EU-Japan trade relations see a full [press release](#), [MEMO](#) and a [dedicated website](#) including thematic [factsheets](#), [text of the trade agreement](#), [exporter testimonies](#), as well as an [interactive map](#) of EU businesses exporting to Japan and factsheets presenting impact on each EU Member State and [a video](#). (For more information: Daniel Rosario – Tel.: +32 229 56185; Kinga Malinowska – Tel: +32 229 51383)

EU report: Georgia making clear progress on its reform agenda

In 2018, Georgia confirmed its strong commitment to political association to and economic integration with the EU, as highlighted by its government’s [high-level meeting with European Commissioners in November](#), and substantial progress in delivering on its Association Agreement commitments. The state-of-play of Georgia’s implementation of its commitments under the [EU-Georgia Association Agreement](#) over the past year is detailed in the [3rd Association Implementation Report on Georgia](#), released today by the European Commission and the European External Action Service. The report comes ahead of the EU-Georgia Association Council, to be held in Brussels on 5 March 2019. *“The European Union and Georgia have excellent relations that we further intensified over the past year. Since March 2017, more than 300,000 Georgian citizens have been able to travel visa-free to the Schengen area for short stays, and since 2009, more than 63,000 businesses and farmers have received loans. The European Union will continue to accompany and support the Georgian authorities in implementing important reforms under the Association Agenda, which provides priorities for our joint work until 2020 – reforms that are bringing more and more benefits to Georgian and EU’s citizens alike”,* said the High Representative/Vice-President, Federica **Mogherini**. *“The implementation of the Association Agreement continues to bring positive*

results to Georgian and EU citizens. The implementation of the [agreed actions](#) of our [High-level Meeting](#) back in November will provide further momentum to our relationship. The EU is Georgia's largest trade partner and we will cooperate to further develop Georgia's export potential. In September 2018, the first European School outside the EU was launched in Tbilisi, and Georgia is stepping up its participation in programmes such as Erasmus+, encouraging student and youth exchanges", said the Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes Hahn. A full press release is [available online](#), as is the [full report](#). For more information on EU-Georgia relations, visit the [website of the EU Delegation](#) and the [dedicated factsheet](#). (For more information: Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Adam Kaznowski – Tel: +32 229 89359; Alceo Smerilli – Tel.:+32 2 296 48 87)

With 2.7 million participants and nearly 44,000 events the 2018 edition of EU Code Week exceeded all expectations

[EU Code Week](#) achieved a new record in 2018 with 2.74 million participants, [43,657 events](#) and over 10% of European schools taking part. Activities took place in 72 countries in Europe and around the globe such as Peru, Malaysia, Egypt and many more. Italy was the most active European country with over 20,000 activities, followed by Turkey (7,700) and Poland (5,000). In France, almost half (49%) of participants were girls or women. Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society, Mariya Gabriel welcomed the results: "I am proud that the European Commission is a strong partner of EU Code Week. Only by working with the young generations and giving them enough opportunities to get ready for their future projects, Europe will succeed in the global digital race. Our goal is to involve at least half of all European schools in the EU Code Week by 2020, hence I encourage even more organisers to get on board and offer coding activities during the EU Code Week 2019." A grassroots initiative that started in 2013 and is run by volunteers, the EU Code Week aims to promote coding, computational thinking and digital literacy in a fun and engaging way. This year the EU Code Week will take place from 5 to 20 October. For more information about the results of EU Code Week 2018 see [here](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083 – Marietta Grammenou Tel.: +32 229 83583)

Electronic Product Information of EU medicines: launch of a public consultation

When put on the market, every medicine for human use authorised in the EU must be accompanied by product information (PI), which includes the [package leaflet](#) for patients and the [summary of product characteristics](#) for healthcare professionals. Throughout 2018, the European Commission, the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and the Heads of Medicines Agency (HMA) carried out extensive discussions with all stakeholder groups (patients, healthcare professionals, regulators to the pharmaceutical industry) to determine whether this product information could be disseminated electronically. Key principles defining an EU-wide approach to support the harmonised implementation of electronic product information (ePI) have been put together. Today, the European Commission, the European Medicines Agency and the Heads of Medicines Agency are launching a six-month public

consultation on the draft key principles that will form the basis upon which electronic product information (ePI) for medicines will be developed and used in the European Union. Vytenis **Andriukaitis**, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety said: *“The development of electronic product information for medicines is an important step in digitalising health and care. I am convinced that electronic product information for medicines can deliver a practical, tangible benefit for both citizens and healthcare professionals. I look forward to the results of this consultation as it is crucial that electronic product information (ePI) meets the expectations of stakeholders and citizens throughout the EU”*. See also [press release](#). (For more information: Anca Paduraru – Tel.: +32 229 91269; Aikaterini Apostola – Tel.: +32 229 87624)

Commission clears the creation of a joint venture by Sumitomo and Mahindra

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over a newly created joint venture by Mahindra Agri Solutions Limited (“Mahindra”) of India and Sumitomo Corporation (“Sumitomo”) of Japan. The joint venture will manufacture and distribute agrochemical products. Mahindra offers end-to-end solutions for farmers’ needs across the entire agricultural value chain. Sumitomo is a trading and investment company with activities in a wide variety of sectors, including agro-chemicals. Mahindra will transfer its agrochemical business to the joint venture. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns because the joint venture has no actual nor foreseen activities within the European Economic Area. 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.9248](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Eurostat: Le PIB en hausse dans la zone euro et dans l’UE28

Au cours du quatrième trimestre 2018, le PIB corrigé des variations saisonnières a augmenté de 0,2% dans la zone euro (ZE19) et de 0,3% dans l’UE28 par rapport au trimestre précédent, selon l’estimation rapide préliminaire publiée par Eurostat, l’office statistique de l’Union européenne. Au cours du troisième trimestre 2018, le PIB avait également progressé de 0,2% dans la zone euro et de 0,3% dans l’UE28. En comparaison avec le même trimestre de l’année précédente, le PIB corrigé des variations saisonnières a enregistré une hausse de 1,2% dans la zone euro et de 1,5% dans l’UE28 au quatrième trimestre 2018, après respectivement +1,6% et +1,8% au troisième trimestre 2018. Selon une première estimation du taux de croissance annuel pour 2018, le PIB a progressé de 1,8% dans la zone euro et de 1,9% dans l’UE28. Un communiqué de presse est disponible [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d’informations: Annika Breidhardt – Tel.: +32 229-56153; Annikky Lamp– Tél.: +32 229 56151; Enda McNamara – Tél.: +32 229 64976)

Eurostat: Le taux de chômage stable dans la zone euro et dans l’UE28

Dans la zone euro (ZE19), le taux de chômage corrigé des variations saisonnières s'est établi à 7,9% en décembre 2018, stable par rapport à novembre 2018 et en baisse par rapport au taux de 8,6% de décembre 2017. Cela demeure le taux le plus faible enregistré dans la zone euro depuis octobre 2008. Dans l'UE28, le taux de chômage s'est établi à 6,6% en décembre 2018, stable par rapport à novembre 2018 et en baisse par rapport au taux de 7,2% de décembre 2017. Cela demeure le taux le plus faible enregistré dans l'UE28 depuis le début de la série mensuelle sur le chômage en janvier 2000. Ces chiffres sont publiés par Eurostat, l'office statistique de l'Union européenne. Un communiqué de presse est disponible [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Christian Wigand – Tél.: +32 229 62253; Sara Soumillion – Tél.: +32 229 67094)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Gabriel in Cyprus to discuss the Digital Europe Programme and progress on the Digital Single Market

Mariya **Gabriel**, Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society, is travelling to Cyprus today to exchange views on the state of play of various [Digital Single Market](#) files as well as the [Digital Europe Programme](#). The Digital Europe Programme will be a major contributor to helping Cyprus improve its performances in various important policy areas, such as digital skills, e-government, e-banking and e-commerce. During her visit Mariya **Gabriel** will also make a keynote speech to the Conference on "Digital transformation and Innovation – A vision of growth #Cyprus2030" and will meet with the Minister of Finance, Mr. Harris Georgiadis and the Minister of Transport, Communication and Works, Ms. Vassiliki Anastassiadou to discuss the progress made in the last few years in developing the Digital Single Market, and the areas where more focus is needed. (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083 – Marietta Grammenou Tel.: +32 229 83583)

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