

Daily News 31 / 10 / 2018

EU ready to help Member States suffering from extreme weather conditions

Several European countries have recently experienced worsening weather conditions resulting in the tragic loss of lives. This month, the [European Commission's Copernicus mapping system](#) has produced satellite maps of affected countries upon request, to help national civil protection authorities across Europe. This includes mapping for floods in Italy, France, Spain as well as forest fires in Greece. *"The EU stands ready to provide all help necessary to our Member States. Our Emergency Responses Coordination Centre in Brussels is closely monitoring the weather conditions across Europe. We are in contact 24/7 with national authorities and ready to provide assistance through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism or our Copernicus satellite system"*, said Christos **Stylianides**, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management. [Photos](#) of the Emergency Centre are available, as well as a video of the EU's [Copernicus](#) programme and a [factsheet](#) on the EU's emergency centre. (For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz de Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)

Trade Report: EU agreements deliver on growth and jobs and support sustainable development

According to the second annual report about the implementation of trade agreements issued today, trade under existing EU trade agreements keeps growing. EU agreements – covering nearly 70 partners all over the world – are proving effective in removing barriers to trade and promoting high standards of labour and environment protection. Also, when it comes to the promotion of EU standards and sustainable development, thanks to specific provisions in EU trade agreements, some EU partners stepped up their workers' protection and ratified International Labour Organisation Conventions. Despite these positive developments, more could still be achieved if EU companies made full use of the opportunities available under the agreements in place.

Commissioner for Trade Cecilia **Malmström** said: *"Our growing list of strategic agreements opens doors and gives a competitive edge to European companies in key markets. It also helps advance the respect of human and labour rights, and environmental standards. We must continue to making sure that the rules in place are followed, and that businesses can make the very most out of these deals."* Commissioner for Trade Cecilia **Malmström** will discuss the contents of the report with EU Trade Ministers at the upcoming Council meeting on 9 November. Discussions with the European Parliament will also follow. For more information, see the [press release](#), [EU trade agreements implementation report](#) and the accompanying [Commission staff working document](#). (For more information: Daniel Rosario – Tel.: +32 229 56185; Kinga Malinowska – Tel: +32 229 51383)

Vocational Education and Training at the heart of Europe: Launch of third European Vocational Skills Week

From 5 to 9 November 2018, the European Commission, in cooperation with the

Austrian Presidency, is organising the [third European Vocational Skills Week](#) in Vienna, building on the success of the first two editions. Under the motto "Discover your Talent", thousands of young people all over Europe will have a chance to learn about training and career opportunities thanks to vocational education and training at more than 1,000 events taking place across Europe until December 2018. The initiative brings together education and training providers, civil society organisations, public authorities, business organisations, trade unions, and the broader public to raise awareness of the benefits of Vocational Education and Training (VET). Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility Marianne **Thyssen**, said: *"We are happy to be back for the third year in a row to show that VET leads to exciting and rewarding careers in all walks of life – pilots, movie makers, aircraft technicians, you name it! What's more, VET and apprenticeships give people the right skills to match labour market needs in the 21st century, therefore I'm delighted that we take again the time and the opportunity, all across Europe, to showcase these benefits."* More information on the Skills Week is available in this [press release](#), as well as on the [dedicated website](#). To launch the VET Skills Week, Commissioner Thyssen will [visit two vocational education schools in Belgium](#) (the Institute Damiaan in Aarschot and Ter Groene Poorte in Bruges) on Monday 5 November. Furthermore, the Commissioner will meet with the First Lady of Germany, Mrs Elke Bündenbender, and the First Lady of Austria, Mrs Doris Schmidauer, and she will also attend the gala dinner on the occasion of the Skills Week in Vienna, Austria. Finally, on Friday 9 November, the Commissioner will give a keynote speech at the closing conference of the Skills Week, also in Vienna, during which the [EU Awards for Excellence in Vocational Education and Training](#) will be handed out. The speech will be published [here](#). *(For more info: Christian Spahr – Tel.: + 32 229 50055; Mélanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659; Sara Soumillion – Tel.: + 32 229 67094)*

Eurostat: Le taux d'inflation annuel de la zone euro en hausse à 2,2% (Estimation rapide – octobre 2018)

Le taux d'inflation annuel de la zone euro est estimé à 2,2% en octobre 2018, contre 2,1% en septembre selon une estimation rapide publiée par Eurostat, l'office statistique de l'Union européenne. S'agissant des principales composantes de l'inflation de la zone euro, l'énergie devrait connaître le taux annuel le plus élevé en octobre (10,6%, comparé à 9,5% en septembre), suivie de l'alimentation, alcool & tabac (2,2%, comparé à 2,6% en septembre), des services (1,5%, comparé à 1,3% en septembre) et des biens industriels non énergétiques (0,4%, comparé à 0,3% en septembre). Un communiqué de presse est à votre disposition [en ligne](#). *(Pour plus d'informations: Christian Spahr – Tél.: + 32229 50055; Enda McNamara – Tél.: + 32 229 64976)*

Agriculture: the Commission approves a new geographical indication from Croatia

The Commission today decided to add to the register of Protected Geographical Indications (PGI) a new Croatian product: 'lička janjetina'. 'Lička janjetina' is lamb meat from local Lika Curly sheep breed raised in Lika-Senj and Zadar Counties. The specific aromatic profile of the cooked meat of 'Lička janjetina' is due to the botanical composition of the meadows and

pastures on which the Lika lambs are raised. This new denomination will be added to the list of over 1,400 [quality products](#) protected at the EU level. More information about each of the registered products can be found in the [D00R database](#). (For more information: Daniel Rosario – Tel: +32 229 56 185; Kinga Malinowska – Tel: +32 22951383)

Eurostat: Le taux de chômage à 8,1% dans la zone euro, à 6,7% dans l'UE28 en Septembre 2018

Dans la zone euro (ZE19), le taux de chômage corrigé des variations saisonnières s'est établi à 8,1% en septembre 2018, stable par rapport à août 2018 et en baisse par rapport au taux de 8,9% de septembre 2017. Cela demeure le taux le plus faible enregistré dans la zone euro depuis novembre 2008. Dans l'UE28, le taux de chômage s'est établi à 6,7% en septembre 2018, stable par rapport à août 2018 et en baisse par rapport au taux de 7,5% de septembre 2017. Il s'agit du taux le plus faible enregistré dans l'UE28 depuis le début de la série mensuelle sur le chômage en janvier 2000. Un communiqué de presse est à votre disposition [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Christian Wigand – Tél.: +32 229 62253; Sara Soumillion – Tél.: + 32 229 67094)

State aid: Commission approves support for Klaipėda LNG terminal in Lithuania

The European Commission has approved under EU State aid rules the compensation granted by Lithuania to LITGAS for supplying a mandatory quantity of liquefied natural gas (LNG) to the LNG terminal in Klaipėda. In [November 2013](#), the Commission approved under EU State aid rules an aid scheme to support the construction and operation of an LNG terminal at the Klaipėda seaport in Lithuania. In June 2018, Lithuania notified the Commission of certain changes to the aid scheme [approved in 2013](#), namely: (i) the decision by Lithuania in 2016 to entrust LITGAS, a liquefied gas supplier, with a public service obligation to ensure the supply of a mandatory quantity of liquefied natural gas to the LNG terminal in Klaipėda. In exchange, LITGAS receives a compensation from the Lithuanian State to cover the costs incurred for performing this public service obligation; and (ii) the removal of an existing purchasing obligation. As part of the support scheme approved by the Commission in 2013, Lithuania introduced a "purchase obligation" whereby heat and electricity generators were obliged by law to purchase a certain quantity of gas from LITGAS. However, taking into account the developments on the gas market, Lithuania considers that, as of January 2019, the purchase obligation will no longer be necessary and can be abolished. The Commission assessed the changes to the Lithuanian aid scheme under the EU [State aid rules on services of general economic interest](#) (SGEI) and found that the modifications to the initial scheme, in particular the removal of the purchase obligation, will contribute to enhancing competition on the Lithuanian gas market. Moreover, the Klaipėda seaport will contribute to the EU's Energy Union objective to reduce energy import dependency by diversifying supply and creating a fully interconnected EU wide energy market. A full press release is available in [EN](#), [FR](#), [DE](#) and [LT](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229

80100; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344)

Mergers: Commission opens in-depth investigation into new joint venture proposed by steel suppliers Tata Steel and ThyssenKrupp

The European Commission has opened an in-depth investigation to assess the proposed creation of a joint venture by Tata Steel and ThyssenKrupp, under the EU Merger Regulation. Tata Steel and ThyssenKrupp are major integrated producers of flat carbon steel and electrical steel with significant production facilities in the European Economic Area, in particular in Germany, the Netherlands and the UK. The Commission's initial market investigation raised several issues relating in particular to combining both companies' offer of certain specialty flat carbon steel and electrical steel products, namely: (i) steel for automotive applications, (ii) metallic coated steel for packaging, and (iii) grain oriented electrical steel. At this stage, the Commission is concerned that, following the transaction, customers, which include various European companies, ranging from major corporations to numerous small and medium-size enterprises, would face a reduced choice in suppliers, as well as higher prices. The Commission will now carry out an in-depth investigation into the effects of this transaction to determine whether its preliminary competition concerns are confirmed. Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: "Steel is a crucial input for many of the goods we use in our everyday life, and competitive steel prices are vital for the European economy. Industries dependent on steel employ over 30 million people in Europe and we must be able to compete in global markets. This is why we will carefully investigate the impact of the planned combination of Tata Steel's and ThyssenKrupp's steel businesses on effective competition in the steel markets." A full press release is available in [EN](#), [FR](#) and [DE](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Single Market as a Driver of Investment in Europe: Commission to discuss remaining barriers to investment

On Monday 5 November, Commission Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen** and Commissioner **Malmström** will speak at the High-Level Conference on '[The Single Market as a Driver of Investment in Europe](#)', organised by the Commission's in-house think tank, the European Political Strategy Centre. This conference will gather key stakeholders from the European institutions and Member States, as well as international private sector representatives, to discuss the steps needed to build on the success of the Single Market; how the EU compares globally and how to tackle the remaining barriers to investment. The debate will feed into the reflection on two upcoming Commission Communications on the Single Market and on Investment, announced in President **Juncker's** [Letter of Intent](#) in the context of the [2018 State of the Union Speech](#). Indeed, in line with the objectives of the [Investment Plan for Europe](#), the Juncker Commission has already put forward a number of initiatives to establish a growth-conducive environment in Europe, with the right conditions to maximise the potential of public and private investments alike. The Commission will soon issue an assessment of the remaining barriers

and options for action to tackle them. The event will take place at the Commission's Charlemagne building and is open to the press. *(For more information: Christian Spahr – Tél.: +32 229 50055; Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169; Mirna Talko – Tel.: +32 229 87278)*

Commissioner Stylianides in Germany

Today Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides** travels to Germany to meet Interior Minister of Schleswig-Holstein, Hans-Joachim Grote and the First Mayor of Hamburg, Dr Peter Tschentscher. Throughout his visit Commissioner **Stylianides** will also discuss how EU humanitarian aid operations contribute to efforts for peace, security and stability. He will also address the EU's proposals to strengthen the EU civil Protection Mechanism via "[rescEU](#)" – the Commission's comprehensive plan to strengthen Europe's emergency response to disasters, which is currently in the last phase of negotiations between the Council and the European Parliament. The Commissioner will also deliver a speech on "The Human Face of Europe – Humanitarian Aid at the Crossroads of Foreign, Security and Migration Policy" at the Hamburg-based Übersee-Club and participate in a Citizens Dialogue in Kiel. *(For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz de Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)*

Commissioner Andriukaitis in China, 4-9 November

Commissioner for Health and Food Safety Vytenis **Andriukaitis** is in China from 4th to 9th November 2018. On 5th November, he will be at the China International Import Expo (CIIE) in Shanghai, for the official opening by Chinese President Xi Jinping. On 6th November, also at the CIIE, he will officially open the EU stand, which aims to promote the best of EU agricultural produce. In addition, he will give a speech at the Ecological Agriculture and Food Safety Forum organised by State Administration for Market Regulation at the CIIE. Later that same day he will visit a teaching hospital of Shanghai's Jiaotong University to discuss practical aspects of antimicrobial resistance prevention and will also deliver a speech at the "One Belt, One Road" Ecological Agriculture and Food Safety Forum organised by the State Administration for Market Regulation. On 7th November, the Commissioner will deliver a keynote speech at the 12th China International Food Safety & Quality (CIFSQ) Conference. Also on this occasion he will meet with Mr Steve Ostroff, US Deputy Commissioner for Foods and Veterinary Medicines, to discuss food safety and ongoing cooperation in this field. After traveling to Beijing on 8th November, the Commissioner will meet, among others, Ms Jiao Hong, Director of the National Medical Products Administration of China (NMPA) and Mr Ni Yuefeng, Secretary of the CPC Leadership Group and Minister of the General Administration of Customs of China (GACC). *"During my visit to China, I look forward to continue our discussions on common issues in the areas of food safety, food waste, animal health and welfare, as well as building on the progress we have made thus far. In particular, I hope to focus on some of the important global challenges ahead of us in these areas, and how the EU and China can work together to make concrete steps to address and overcome them."* said

Commissioner **Andriukaitis** ahead of the visit. (*For more information: Anca Paduraru – Tel.: +32 229 91269; Aikaterini Apostola – Tel.: +32 229 87624*)

[CALENDAR](#) – Commissioners' weekly activities

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