

Daily News 31 / 08 / 2018

Summertime Consultation: 84% want Europe to stop changing the clock

The European Commission has today published the preliminary results of the public consultation on clock change in Europe. This online consultation, which ran from 4 July to 16 August 2018, received 4.6 million responses from all 28 Member States, the highest number of responses ever received in any Commission public consultation. According to the preliminary results, 84% of respondents are in favour of putting an end to the bi-annual clock change. Commissioner for Transport Violeta **Bulc** presented these preliminary results to the College of Commissioners that held a first discussion on the next steps. Commissioner **Bulc** said: *"Millions of Europeans used our public consultation to make their voices heard. The message is very clear: 84% of them do not want the clocks to change anymore. We will now act accordingly and prepare a legislative proposal to the European Parliament and the Council, who will then decide together."* The final results of the public consultation will be published in the coming weeks. The Commission will now make a proposal to the European Parliament and the Council with a view of changing the current clock change arrangements. More information can be found in [a press release available in all EU languages](#). (For more information: Alexander Winterstein – Tel.: +32 299 93265; Alexis Perier – Tel.: +32 229 69143)

Eurostat: Le taux de chômage à 8,2% dans la zone euro, le plus faible enregistré depuis novembre 2008

Dans la zone euro (ZE19), le taux de chômage corrigé des variations saisonnières s'est établi à 8,2% en juillet 2018, stable par rapport à juin 2018 et en baisse par rapport au taux de 9,1% de juillet 2017. Il s'agit du taux le plus faible enregistré dans la zone euro depuis novembre 2008. Dans l'UE28, le taux de chômage s'est établi à 6,8% en juillet 2018, en baisse par rapport au taux de 6,9% de juin 2018 et au taux de 7,6% de juillet 2017. Il s'agit du taux le plus faible enregistré dans l'UE28 depuis avril 2008. 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)

EU signs agreement on €45 million Macro-Financial Assistance package for Georgia

The European Commission has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Georgia for Macro-Financial Assistance (MFA) of up to €45 million to help Georgia cover part of its financing needs and support economic reforms. Up to €10 million will be provided in the form of grants and the remaining €35 million in medium-term loans, at favourable financing conditions. The policy

conditions in the Memorandum of Understanding build on the government's reform programme and are consistent with the reform path agreed between the EU and Georgia in the context of the Association Agreement. The policy conditions aim to strengthen the Georgian economy in the areas of public finance management, the financial sector, social and labour market policies, and the business environment. By supporting the Georgian government's reform agenda in those areas, the EU is helping Georgia lay the ground for sustainable and inclusive economic growth. Pierre **Moscovici**, Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs, Taxation and Customs, said: *"Georgia has shown strong and lasting commitment to economic reform, which the EU has consistently supported and fostered. This agreement includes policy measures that will help make the Georgian economy more resilient, with stronger and more inclusive growth for the benefit of its citizens."* A full press release is available [here](#). (For more information: Christian Spahr – Tel.: +32 229 50055; Enda McNamara – Tel.: +32 229 64976)

New lightbulb rules save households energy and help reduce Greenhouse Gas emissions

As of tomorrow 1 September energy intensive and inefficient halogen lightbulbs will no longer be sold across the European Union. As a result of these rules, European consumers will be able save on their household bills resulting on significant EU-wide energy savings – equivalent to the electricity consumption of Portugal over 5 years. The changes to the EU rules entering into force tomorrow relate to standard halogen bulbs, but exclude those used in desk lamps and floodlights. The halogen bulbs will be replaced by LED-lightbulbs, which due to innovation have become safer, more affordable, and more energy efficient. The new measures will not apply to products that are already on the shelves in stores, but only to new products produced in or imported to the EU. Originally decided in 2009 by the Member States and the European Parliament, the new rules were reconfirmed in 2015, but their introduction was deferred by two years until September 2018 so as to ensure that sufficient affordable alternatives would be available. The changes are part of the EU's Ecodesign Work Programme – see [here](#) – which is an element of the EU's action to put [energy efficiency first](#) and to lead the clean energy transition. This June, as part of the Clean Energy for All Europeans package, co-legislators reached political agreement on a new 32.5% energy efficient target for 2030 – [see here](#). (For more information: Anna-Kaisa Itkonen – Tel.: +32 229 56186; Lynn Rietdorf – Tel.: +32 229 74959)

Véhicules propres: de nouveaux tests d'émissions entrent en vigueur pour toutes les nouvelles voitures mises sur le marché

À partir du 1^{er} septembre 2018, les nouvelles voitures devront passer de nouveaux tests d'émissions avant de pouvoir circuler en Europe. La commissaire en charge du marché intérieur, de l'industrie, de l'entrepreneuriat et des PME, Elżbieta Bieńkowska, a déclaré: *"Depuis que le scandale du "Dieselgate" a éclaté il y a trois ans, nous avons*

fondamentalement changé les règles du jeu. Nous avons eu comme objectif d'empêcher la tricherie, de protéger la santé des citoyens et l'environnement ainsi que de stimuler la compétitivité mondiale de notre industrie. Des tests d'émissions plus strictes sont une pièce d'un puzzle. Mais il nous reste encore beaucoup à faire. Je parle des enquêtes nationales en cours, l'état d'avancement des rappels des véhicules non réglementaires et l'application des nouvelles règles sur l'homologation de voitures – et la transition à la mobilité à émissions réduites. Deux nouveaux tests plus stricts assureront des résultats plus fiables du niveau d'émissions: un nouveau test en laboratoire qui reflète mieux la réalité (WLTP, *World Harmonised Light Vehicle Test Procedure*) ainsi qu'une procédure réalisée en conditions de conduite réelles (RDE pour *Real Driving Emissions*). Ces tests ont été introduits pour tous les nouveaux types des véhicules depuis septembre 2017. Maintenant, à partir de septembre 2018, le test WLTP devient obligatoire pour toutes les nouvelles voitures. La procédure RDE devient également obligatoire à la même date. Elle permet d'ors et déjà de mesurer les petites particules et, à partir de septembre 2019, elle permettra de mesurer les oxydes d'azote (NOx). Ces mesures font partie des initiatives de la Commission européenne pour mieux protéger les Européens des gaz d'échappement et pour rétablir la confiance des consommateurs européens dans la performance des véhicules. De plus, la Commission a proposé de [nouveaux objectifs en matière d'émissions moyennes de CO2](#). [Plus d'informations](#) et des [questions-réponses](#) sont disponibles en ligne. (*Plus d'informations: Lucía Caudet – Tél.: +32 229 56182; Victoria von Hammerstein – Tél.: +32 229 55040; Mirna Talko – Tél. +32 229 87278*)

Commission proposes Baltic Sea fishing opportunities for 2019 with increased quotas for plaice, sprat and certain herring and salmon stocks

Today the Commission adopted a proposal for fishing opportunities for the commercially most important fish stocks in the Baltic Sea for 2019. In particular, the Commission proposes to increase catches for plaice, Western cod, sprat, Gulf of Riga herring and the Main Basin salmon stocks. For the remaining stocks covered by this proposal (central herring, Gulf of Bothnia herring, western herring, eastern cod and Gulf of Finland salmon), a reduction in catches is foreseen. The proposed total allowable catches (TAC) are based on scientific advice from the [International Council on the Exploration of the Seas](#) and follow the Baltic multiannual management plan adopted in 2016 by the Council and the European Parliament. Joint efforts by stakeholders in recent years have already succeeded in rebuilding important stocks in the Baltic Sea and in allowing, where complete scientific advice is available, to set 7 out of 8 TACs in line with the principle of maximum sustainable yield, covering 95% of fish landings in volume. Further action remains necessary to ensure all stocks grow to levels that allow for sustainable exploitation. The Council will now examine the Commission proposal, with the aim of an adoption by European Ministers for Fisheries during their meeting of 15-16 October. A news item is available [here](#). (*Daniel Rosario – Tel.: +32 229 56185; Alexis Perier – Tel.: +32 229 69143*)

Eurostat: Le taux d'inflation annuel de la zone euro en baisse à 2,0%

(Estimation rapide – août 2018)

Le taux d'inflation annuel de la zone euro est estimé à 2,0% en août 2018, contre 2,1% en juillet 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 août (9,2%, comparé à 9,5% en juillet), suivie de l'alimentation, alcool & tabac (2,5%, stable comparé à juillet), des services (1,3%, comparé à 1,4% en juillet) et des biens industriels non énergétiques (0,3%, comparé à 0,5% en juillet). Un [communiqué de presse Eurostat](#) est à votre disposition en ligne. (Pour plus d'informations: Christian Spahr – Tel.: +32 229 50055; Enda McNamara – Tel.: +32 229 64976)

A challenge for young language lovers: the European Commission launches its annual translation contest for schools

The European Commission's translation department invites students from across Europe to test their translation skills in the 12th edition of its annual *Juvenes Translatores* contest. This year, teenagers with a taste for languages will translate a text on the topic of cultural heritage. The theme has been chosen to honour the [European Year of Cultural Heritage](#), 2018. Commissioner Günther H. **Oettinger** in charge of budget, human resources and translation said: *"Languages are at the heart of Europe's diversity and a path towards understanding our identity. Through this competition, young people are reminding us of how diverse we actually are and that diversity is one of our biggest assets. I therefore invite everybody who loves languages to participate, and help showcase and build on our linguistic cultural heritage."* Registration for schools opens on 1 September 2018 [here](#). More information is available in the press release [here](#) (available in the 24 official EU languages). (For more information: Alexander Winterstein – Tel.: +32 299 32 65; Andreana Stankova – Tel.: +32 295 78 57)

2018 edition of the European Heritage Days underway

Celebrations of the [European Heritage Days](#) are now getting underway across Europe. Taking account of the ongoing [European Year of Cultural Heritage](#) the common theme in 2018 will be ["The Art of Sharing"](#) – a commitment to promote wider access to our rich cultural heritage in the future. During the European Year, people are being encouraged to discover and engage with Europe's cultural heritage at events taking place at local, regional and European level. The European Heritage Days are an important element of this with a diverse programme. Until the end of October, all over Europe people will have the chance to visit and take part in exhibitions, craft workshops, tours, festivals and much more. Tibor **Navracsics**, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, said: *"Cultural heritage is central to our identity as Europeans and has a vital role in driving social and economic development. The theme of this year's European Heritage Days, "The art of sharing", is in essence what the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 is all about. The European Year will help reinforce a sense of belonging to a common European space. Culture and cultural heritage have a unique power to bring together*

people from different backgrounds and enable them to understand and respect their differences – and to recognise their historical, cultural and human experiences they share. Through this, I hope people come to realise that there is more that unites us than divides us.” The European Heritage Days, a joint initiative of the Council of Europe and the European Commission since 1999, are the most widely celebrated participatory cultural events in Europe. More than 70,000 events are taking place over the next two months to help raise awareness of Europe’s common heritage and the need to protect it, as well as to create shared cultural heritage experiences, promote inclusiveness and foster creativity and imagination. More information can be found [here](#).
(For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Inga Höglund – Tel.: +32 229 50698)

State aid: Commission approves prolongation of the Italian guarantee scheme for non-performing loans

The European Commission has approved, under EU State aid rules, the prolongation of the Italian guarantee scheme to facilitate the securitisation of non-performing loans (GACS). The scheme was [initially approved](#) in February 2016 and last [prolonged](#) in September 2017. Under the scheme Italian banks meeting certain conditions will continue to be able to request a State guarantee on the lower-risk senior notes issued by private securitisation vehicles that help them to finance the sale of their non-performing loan portfolios. The more risky funding tranches of the securitisation vehicles are to be sold to private investors and will not be guaranteed by the State. By assisting banks to securitise and move non-performing loans off their balance sheet, the scheme is an important component of Italy’s strategy to tackle banks’ asset quality problems and has already made a significant contribution. Since its entry into force until June 2018, the scheme has been accessed six times by five different banks, removing €33 billion (gross book value) of non-performing loans from the Italian banking system, which corresponds to over 60% of the total reduction of non-performing loans in Italy during that period. The Commission’s assessment showed that, under the scheme as notified by Italy, the State guarantees on the senior notes will continue to be remunerated at market terms according to the risk taken, i.e. in a manner acceptable for a private operator under market conditions. On this basis, the Commission was able to maintain its conclusion that the measure is free of State aid within the meaning of EU State aid rules. Today’s authorisation is granted until 7 March 2019. More information will be available on the Commission’s [competition](#) website in the public [case register](#) under the case number SA.51026 once any confidentiality issues have been resolved. (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100)

State aid: Commission approves prolongation of Danish resolution scheme for small banks

The European Commission has authorised, under EU State aid rules, the prolongation of a Danish resolution scheme for small banks with total assets below €3 billion. It is open to banks that would be found to be in distress by the competent national authorities. The objective of the scheme is to facilitate the work of the Danish resolution authorities to wind up a small bank should a concrete case and need arise for it. The Commission found the

scheme to be in line with EU State aid rules, in particular the [2013 Banking Communication](#), and EU banking rules. The Commission initially approved the scheme in [September 2010](#). It has been prolonged and amended several times, most recently in [August 2017](#). Today's authorisation is granted until 31 August 2019. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website in the public [case register](#) under the case number SA.51200 once any confidentiality issues have been resolved. *(For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100)*

State aid: Commission approves prolongation of Polish credit union liquidation scheme

The European Commission has authorised, under EU State aid rules, the eighth prolongation of the Polish credit union liquidation scheme. The measure will continue to be available for credit unions that are member-owned entities and provide loans, savings accounts and payment services only to their membership. Credit unions fall outside the scope of the bank resolution regime in Poland. The Commission found the prolongation of the scheme to be in line with EU State aid rules, in particular its [2013 Banking Communication](#). This is because it is well targeted, proportionate and limited in time and scope. The scheme was initially [approved in February 2014](#) and has been prolonged several times since then, the last time in [August 2017](#). Today's authorisation is granted until 15 July 2019. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website in the public [case register](#) under the case number SA.51482 once any confidentiality issues have been resolved. *(For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100)*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Hahn visits Serbia to open Žeželj bridge

On Saturday, Johannes **Hahn**, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, will visit Novi Sad to open the Žeželj bridge together with Aleksandar *Vučić*, President of Serbia. The bridge is a crucial link of the [Trans-European network](#) that will enable improved navigation along the Danube, restore road and rail traffic and bring new dynamism to regional cooperation. The support to the project illustrates the European Union's commitment to the [Connectivity Agenda](#), which aims to develop transport, energy and digital links within the Western Balkans and with the EU. Commissioner **Hahn** will deliver a speech at the opening of the bridge, which along with pictures and videos of the event will be available via [EbS](#). *(For more information: Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Adam Kaznowski – Tel: +32 229 89359)*

Commissioner Navracsics in Vienna for ministerial meetings on youth policy

Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor **Navracsics**, will

be in Vienna, Austria on Monday and Tuesday for a series of meetings on youth policy. On Monday, 3 September, the Commissioner will participate in the [Informal Youth Council](#) organised by the Austrian Presidency of the EU, where he will present the Commission's proposals for the [future Erasmus programme](#) and its links with the new [European Youth Strategy](#). The Commissioner and Youth Ministers will then discuss with delegates of the European Youth Conference – taking place in parallel – in an informal setting how to further strengthen the dialogue between young people and decision-makers and boost youth participation. In the evening, Commissioner **Navracsics** and Austrian Minister for Women, Families and Youth, Juliane Bogner-Strauß, will hold a Citizens' Dialogue – more details [here](#). On Tuesday, 4 September the Commissioner will take part in the closing ceremony of the European Youth Conference which will be attended by Austrian President Alexander Van der Bellen with whom Commissioner **Navracsics** will also have a bilateral meeting. *(For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Inga Höglund – Tel.: +32 229 50698)*

Vice-President Katainen attends “Europe Forum Turku” in Finland

Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, will be in Turku on 31 August and 1 September to attend [Europe Forum Turku](#), an event bringing together citizens, political decision-makers, non-governmental organisations, businesses and researchers to discuss Finland's current and future roles in Europe and the European Union from a long-term perspective. The Vice-President will also participate in a Citizens' Dialogue on Saturday 1 September from 10.30–12.00 (Finnish time) on EU values and the rule of law, together with MEPs Sirpa Pietikäinen and Miapetra Kumpula-Natri. You can follow the livestream [here](#). *(For more information: Christian Spahr – Tel.: +32 229 50055; Siobhán Millbright – Tel.: +32 229 57361)*

[Calendar](#)

Commissioners' weekly activities

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

[**EU concludes agreement on €45 million Macro-Financial Assistance package for Georgia**](#)

While Georgia has made significant progress, the country's economy faces regional economic risks, as well as its own economic imbalances. This context

has formed the base for the proposal for the MFA programme.

Pierre **Moscovici**, Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs, Taxation and Customs, said: *“Georgia has shown strong and lasting commitment to economic reform, which the EU has consistently supported and fostered. This agreement includes policy measures that will help make the Georgian economy more resilient, with stronger and more inclusive growth for the benefit of its citizens.”*

The MFA programme is designed to help the country cover part of its financing needs and support the implementation of structural reforms. It will complement Georgia’s programme with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Up to €10 million will be provided in the form of grants and the remaining €35 million in medium-term loans, at favourable financing conditions.

The assistance will be distributed in two tranches. It is conditional on the implementation of specific policy conditionality agreed between Georgia and the EU, which are enumerated in the Memorandum of Understanding. Disbursements are also dependent on the fulfilment of the political precondition, which requires Georgia to continue respecting effective democratic mechanisms, including a multi-party parliamentary system and the rule of law, and guaranteeing the respect for human rights. Finally, disbursements will also be contingent on good progress with the IMF programme.

The policy conditions in the Memorandum of Understanding build on the government’s reform programme and are consistent with the reform path agreed between the EU and Georgia in the context of the Association Agreement. The policy conditions aim to strengthen the Georgian economy in the areas of public finance management, the financial sector, social and labour market policies, and the business environment. By supporting the Georgian government’s reform agenda in those areas, the EU is helping Georgia lay the ground for sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

The next step in the implementation of the MFA programme is the ratification of the Memorandum of Understanding by the Parliament of Georgia.

Background

MFA is an exceptional EU crisis response instrument available to the EU’s neighbouring countries. It is complementary to assistance provided by the IMF. MFA loans are financed through EU borrowing on capital markets. The funds are then on-lent with similar financial terms to the beneficiary countries. MFA grants come from the EU budget.

The Commission proposed a new MFA programme for Georgia in September 2017. The proposal was adopted by the European Parliament and the Council in April 2018.

The new MFA operation is the third since 2008. At an International Donors’ Conference in Brussels in October 2008, the EU pledged two MFA operations of €46 million each. The first of those operations (€46 million, fully in the

form of grants) was implemented in 2009-2010 and the second (again 46 million – half in grants, half in loans) in 2015-2017. The last tranche of the second operation was disbursed in May 2017.

Further information:

Press release: [Commission proposes fresh macro-financial assistance to Georgia of up to €45 million](#)

[More information on MFA](#)

[More information on MFA to Georgia](#)

Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the alignment of certain countries concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine

On 5 July 2018, the Council adopted Decision (CFSP) 2018/964^[1].

The Council Decision prolongs the restrictive measures for a further six months, until 31 January 2019.

The Candidate Countries Montenegro* and Albania*, and the EFTA country Norway, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, align themselves with this declaration.

They will ensure that their national policies conform to this Council Decision.

The European Union takes note of this commitment and welcomes it.

^[1] Published on 09.07.2018 in the Official Journal of the European Union no. L 172, p 3.

*Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

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Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the alignment of certain countries concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in the Republic of Maldives

On 16 July 2018 the Council adopted Decision (CFSP) 2018/1006^[1] concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in the Republic of Maldives. This Decision establishes a sanctions framework in response to the continuing deterioration of the rule of law and human rights in the Maldives and ahead of the presidential elections scheduled for end September 2018.

The Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia* and Albania*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA countries Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of Moldova and Armenia, align themselves with this declaration.

They will ensure that their national policies conform to this Council Decision.

The European Union takes note of this commitment and welcomes it.

[1] Published on 17.07.2018 in the Official Journal of the European Union no. L 180/24.

*The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

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Declaration by the High Representative

on behalf of the EU on the alignment of certain countries concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine

On 30 July 2018, the Council adopted Decision (CFSP) 2018/1085^[1].

The Decision adds additional entities to the list of persons, entities and bodies subject to restrictive measures as set out in the Annex to Decision 2014/145/CFSP.

The Candidate Countries Montenegro* and Albania*, and the EFTA country Norway, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, align themselves with this declaration.

They will ensure that their national policies conform to this Council Decision.

The European Union takes note of this commitment and welcomes it.

^[1] Published on 31.07.2018 in the Official Journal of the European Union no. L 194, p 147.

*Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

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