

# Statement by President Juncker following the bridge collapse in Genoa, Italy

I am deeply saddened by the bridge collapse in Genoa today that has claimed many lives.

On behalf of the European Commission, I express my deepest sympathy and sincere condolences to the families and friends of those who have died, and to the Italian people.

My best wishes of strength and courage go to all those involved in the rescue operations.

---

## Daily News 14 / 08 / 2018

### **Juncker Plan supports Nordlink interconnector with €100 million EIB investment**

The European Investment Bank (EIB) has signed a €100 million financing agreement with [TenneT](#), a leading European electricity transmission system operator, to support the construction of an electricity interconnector between Norway and Germany. The transaction is backed by the Juncker Plan's European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI). The interconnector will span 624 kilometres, linking Norway and Germany across the North Sea. It will have a capacity of 1,400 megawatts, significantly improving the diversification and security of supply whilst enhancing electricity market integration in both countries. Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič, responsible for the Energy Union, said: *"We need forward-looking investments into modern energy infrastructure with adequate interconnections, in particular to integrate renewables into the grid. It is a vital element of our energy security as well as our climate action. This smart combination of renewable power generation – solar and wind in Germany and hydroelectric in Norway – underlines our firm commitment to bring clean power to millions of people."* A press release can be found [here](#). (For more information: Christian Spahr – Tel.: +32 229 50055; Enda McNamara – Tel.: +32 229 64976)

### **Rule of Law: European Commission takes next step in infringement procedure to protect the independence of the Polish Supreme Court**

Today, the European Commission decided to send a Reasoned Opinion to Poland

regarding the Polish law on the Supreme Court. The new law lowers the retirement age of Supreme Court judges from 70 to 65, which puts 27 out of 72 sitting Supreme Court judges at risk of being forced to retire, including the First President of the Court. The Commission maintains that the Polish law is incompatible with EU law as it undermines the principle of judicial independence, including the irremovability of judges, and thereby Poland fails to fulfil its obligations under Article 19(1) of the Treaty on European Union read in connection with Article 47 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. The Commission has carried out a thorough analysis of the response of the Polish authorities to the [Letter of Formal Notice sent by the Commission on 2 July 2018](#). The response of the Polish authorities does not alleviate the Commission's legal concerns. The Commission has therefore moved to the next stage of the infringement procedure. The Polish authorities now have one month to take the necessary measures to comply with this Reasoned Opinion. If the Polish authorities do not take appropriate measures, the Commission may decide to refer the case to the Court of Justice of the EU. More information is available in a press release in all official languages, [here](#). (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Tim McPhie – Tel.: +32 229 58602)

### **EU scales up humanitarian assistance to victims of Lombok earthquakes**

The European Commission has announced a further €500,000 to step up its emergency response to meet the most pressing needs of those affected by the devastating earthquakes that struck the Indonesian island of Lombok in late July and early August. The latest allocation comes in addition to the initial €150,000 delivered earlier this month, thus bringing the EU's total contribution to €650,000. The EU humanitarian funding complements the response of the Indonesian government and will focus on the most vulnerable groups and the most difficult to reach communities in the affected area. The EU aid will support the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in implementing emergency relief programmes and will directly benefit 80,000 vulnerable people. *"We stand by the Indonesian people affected by the recent earthquakes in Lombok. This additional contribution will provide crucial support to those in need and ensure that the most vulnerable among the affected people have enough means to cope through this difficult time"*, said Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides**. At least 390 people were killed and more than 1,300 injured when a series of major earthquakes and numerous aftershocks hit the popular Indonesian resort island over the course of the last two weeks. The tremors ravaged more than 67,000 homes, leaving over 300,000 people displaced. The EU funding is being made available through the Acute Large Emergency Response Tool (ALERT), which aims to respond to the immediate needs of the most vulnerable in the hours and days after a sudden-onset, large-scale emergency or a new humanitarian crisis. (For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz De Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322 ; Esther Osorio – Tel.: +32 229 62076)

### **Eurostat: Le PIB en hausse de 0,4% tant dans la zone euro que dans l'UE28**

Au cours du deuxième trimestre 2018, le PIB corrigé des variations saisonnières a augmenté de 0,4% dans la zone euro (ZE19) ainsi que dans

l'UE28 par rapport au trimestre précédent, selon l'estimation rapide publiée par Eurostat, l'office statistique de l'Union européenne. Au cours du premier trimestre 2018, le PIB avait crû également de 0,4% tant dans la zone euro que dans l'UE28. En comparaison avec le même trimestre de l'année précédente, le PIB corrigé des variations saisonnières a enregistré une hausse de 2,2% tant dans la zone euro que dans l'UE28 au deuxième trimestre 2018, après respectivement +2,5% et +2,4% au premier trimestre 2018. Au cours du deuxième trimestre 2018, le PIB des États-Unis a augmenté de 1,0% par rapport au trimestre précédent (après +0,5% au premier trimestre 2018). Par rapport au même trimestre de l'année précédente, le PIB a progressé de 2,8% (après +2,6% au premier trimestre 2018). Un communiqué de presse est disponible [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Christian Spahr – Tél.: +32 229 50055; Enda McNamara – Tél.: +32 229 64976)

### **Eurostat: La production industrielle en baisse de 0,7% dans la zone euro**

En juin 2018 par rapport à mai 2018, la production industrielle corrigée des variations saisonnières a diminué de 0,7% dans la zone euro (ZE19) et de 0,4% dans l'UE28, selon les estimations d'Eurostat, l'office statistique de l'Union européenne. En mai 2018, la production industrielle avait augmenté de 1,4% dans la zone euro et de 1,3% dans l'UE28. En juin 2018 par rapport à juin 2017, la production industrielle a augmenté de 2,5% dans la zone euro et de 2,6% dans l'UE28. Vous pouvez trouver plus d'informations dans un communiqué de presse [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Ricardo Cardoso – Tél.: +32 229 80100; Maud Noyon – Tél.: +32 229 80379; Victoria von Hammerstein – Tél.: +32 229 55040)

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

---

## **Rule of Law: European Commission takes next step in infringement procedure to protect the independence of the Polish Supreme Court**

The new Polish law on the Supreme Court lowers the retirement age of Supreme Court judges from 70 to 65, which puts 27 out of 72 sitting Supreme Court judges at risk of being forced to retire. This measure also applies to the First President of the Supreme Court, whose 6-year mandate, set out in the Polish Constitution, would be prematurely terminated.

According to the law, current judges affected by the lowered retirement age are given the possibility to request a prolongation of their mandate by the

President of the Republic, which can be granted for a period of three years, and renewed once. There are no criteria established for the President's decision and no judicial review is available if the request is rejected. The Commission believes that the introduction of a consultation of the National Council for the Judiciary (NCJ) does not constitute an effective safeguard, as claimed by the Polish authorities. The NCJ's opinion is not binding and is based on vague criteria. Moreover, following the reform of 8 December 2017, the NCJ is now composed of judges-members appointed by the Polish Parliament, in violation of European standards on judicial independence.

The Commission has carried out a thorough analysis of the response of the Polish authorities to the [Letter of Formal Notice sent by the Commission on 2 July 2018](#) concerning the Law on the Supreme Court. **The response of the Polish authorities does not alleviate the Commission's legal concerns.**

The European Commission maintains its position that the **Polish law on the Supreme Court is incompatible with EU law as it undermines the principle of judicial independence, including the irremovability of judges**, and thereby Poland fails to fulfil its obligations under Article 19(1) of the Treaty on European Union read in connection with Article 47 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

The Commission has therefore moved to the next stage of the infringement procedure. **The Polish authorities now have one month to take the necessary measures to comply with this Reasoned Opinion.** If the Polish authorities do not take appropriate measures, the Commission may decide to refer the case to the Court of Justice of the EU.

## **Background**

The rule of law is one of the common values upon which the European Union is founded. It is enshrined in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union. The European Commission, together with the European Parliament and the Council, is responsible under the Treaties for guaranteeing the respect of the rule of law as a fundamental value of our Union and making sure that EU law, values and principles are respected.

Events in Poland led the European Commission to open a dialogue with the Polish Government in January 2016 under the Rule of Law Framework. The process is based on a continuous dialogue between the Commission and the Member State concerned. The Commission keeps the European Parliament and Council regularly informed.

On 29 July 2017 the Commission launched an infringement procedure on the Polish Law on Ordinary Courts, also on the grounds of its retirement provisions and their impact on the independence of the judiciary. The Commission referred this case to the Court of Justice on 20 December 2017. The case is pending before the Court.

On 20 December 2017, due to a lack of progress through the Rule of Law Framework, the Commission invoked the Article 7(1) procedure for the first time, and submitted a Reasoned Proposal for a Decision of the Council on the

determination of a clear risk of a serious breach of the rule of law by Poland. Article 7(1) of the Treaty on European Union provides for the Council, acting by a majority of four fifths of its members, to determine that there is a clear risk of a serious breach by a Member State of the common values referred to in Article 2 of the Treaty.

At the General Affairs Council hearing on the rule of law in Poland on 26 June 2018, in the context of the Article 7(1) procedure, no indication was given by the Polish authorities of forthcoming measures to address the Commission's outstanding concerns. Given this fact, and the lack of progress on this issue in the Rule of Law dialogue with Poland, the College of Commissioners decided on 27 June 2018 to empower First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** in agreement with President **Juncker** to launch this infringement procedure. The Commission decided on 2 July 2018 to issue a Letter of Formal Notice, clearly setting out the Commission's legal concerns. The Polish authorities replied to the Letter of Formal Notice on 2 August 2018.

This infringement does not stop the ongoing rule of law dialogue with Poland, which is still the Commission's preferred channel for resolving the systemic threat to the rule of law in Poland.

#### **For more information**

On the general infringements procedure, see [MEMO/12/12](#)

[Press release on Letter of Formal Notice concerning the law on the Supreme Court](#)

[Press release on the Reasoned Proposal, the Fourth Rule of Law Recommendation, and the infringement procedure concerning the law on the Ordinary Courts Organisation](#)

---

## **Flash estimate for the second quarter of 2018 – GDP up by 0.4% in both euro area and EU28 +2.2% in both areas compared with the second quarter of 2017**

Seasonally adjusted GDP rose by 0.4% in both the euro area (EA19) and the EU28 during the second quarter of 2018, compared with the previous quarter, according to a flash estimate published by Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. In the first quarter of 2018, GDP had also grown by 0.4% both in the euro area and in the EU28.

[Full text available on EUROSTAT website](#)

---

## **June 2018 compared with May 2018 – Industrial production down by 0.7% in euro area – Down by 0.4% in EU28**

In June 2018 compared with May 2018, seasonally adjusted industrial production fell by 0.7% in the **euro area** (EA19) and by 0.4% in the **EU28**, according to estimates from **Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union**. In May 2018, industrial production rose by 1.4% in the **euro area** and by 1.3% in the **EU28**.

[Full text available on EUROSTAT website](#)