

# Daily News 21 / 03 / 2018

## **COLLEGE MEETING: Commission proposes new measures to ensure that all companies pay fair tax in the EU**

The European Commission has today proposed new rules to ensure that digital business activities are taxed in a fair and growth-friendly way in the EU. The measures would make the EU a global leader in designing tax laws fit for the modern economy and the digital age. The recent boom in digital businesses, such as social media companies, collaborative platforms and online content providers, has made a great contribution to economic growth in the EU. But current tax rules were not designed to cater for those companies that are global, virtual or have little or no physical presence. The change has been dramatic: 9 of the world's top 20 companies by market capitalisation are now digital, compared to 1 in 20 ten years ago. The challenge is to make the most of this trend, while ensuring that digital companies also contribute their fair share of tax. If not, there is a real risk to Member State public revenues: digital companies currently have an average effective tax rate half that of the traditional economy in the EU. Two distinct legislative proposals proposed by the Commission today will lead to a fairer taxation of digital activities in the EU. The first initiative aims to reform corporate tax rules so that profits are registered and taxed where businesses have significant interaction with users through digital channels. This forms the Commission's preferred long-term solution. The second proposal responds to calls from several Member States for an interim tax which covers the main digital activities that currently escape tax altogether in the EU. Valdis Dombrovskis, Vice-President for the Euro and Social Dialogue said: *"Digitalisation brings countless benefits and opportunities. But it also requires adjustments to our traditional rules and systems. We would prefer rules agreed at the global level, including at the OECD. But the amount of profits currently going untaxed is unacceptable. We need to urgently bring our tax rules into the 21st century by putting in place a new comprehensive and future-proof solution."* Pierre Moscovici, Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs, Taxation and Customs added: *"The digital economy is a major opportunity for Europe and Europe is a huge source of revenues for digital firms. But this win-win situation raises legal and fiscal concerns. Our pre-Internet rules do not allow our Member States to tax digital companies operating in Europe when they have little or no physical presence here. This represents an ever-bigger black hole for Member States, because the tax base is being eroded. That's why we're bringing forward a new legal standard as well an interim tax for digital activities."* A [press release](#), [MEMO](#) and [factsheet](#) are available online. Press material will become available soon. (For more information: Vanessa Mock – Tel.: +32 229 56194; Patrick McCullough – Tel.: +32 229 87183)

## **COLLEGE MEETING: Commission puts in place first EU counter-measures on listed non-cooperative tax jurisdictions**

The European Commission is today delivering on its pledge to ensure that the EU's common EU list of non-cooperative tax jurisdictions is backed up by effective countermeasures. Guidelines adopted today mark the first step in stopping the transit of EU funds through non-cooperative tax jurisdictions. They will ensure that EU funds do not inadvertently contribute to global tax avoidance. Today's [guidelines](#) should guarantee in particular that EU external development and investment funds cannot be channelled or transited through entities in countries on the EU's common list. The first-ever list was [agreed and published in December 2017](#) and is being updated on a continuous basis. The new requirements seek to align the EU's objective of tackling tax avoidance at the global level with the rules governing the use of EU funds by International Financial Institutions (IFIs) such as the European Investment Bank (EIB), development financial institutions (DFIs) – including the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD) – and other eligible counterparties. Pierre **Moscovici**, Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs, Taxation and Customs Union said: *"The EU's blacklist of tax havens is a living document and more countries will be added if they don't live up to the commitments they have made to improve their tax systems. The Commission will not allow EU funds to contribute to global tax avoidance. These EU level countermeasures should act as a wake-up call for those jurisdictions as they show the EU is serious about tackling tax avoidance on a global scale."* A press release on the new guidelines is available [here](#). (For more information: Vanessa Mock – Tel.: +32 229 56194; Patrick McCullough – Tel.: +32 229 87183)

#### **COLLEGE MEETING: Antitrust: Commission fines eight producers of capacitors €254 million for participating in cartel**

The European Commission has fined Elna, Hitachi Chemical, Holy Stone, Matsuo, NEC Tokin, Nichicon, Nippon Chemi-Con, Rubycon € 253 935 000. Together with the immunity applicant, Sanyo, these companies operated a cartel for the supply of aluminium and tantalum electrolytic capacitors between 1998 and 2012. The Commission's investigation found that the nine companies participated in multilateral meetings and engaged in bilateral or trilateral contacts to exchange commercially sensitive information. The objective was to coordinate future behaviour and avoid price competition. The investigation found that the cartel participants were aware of the anti-competitive nature of their behaviour, as evidenced by their intention to conceal it. Under the Commission's [2006 Leniency Notice](#): i) Sanyo Electric Co., Ltd. and its parent Panasonic Corporation received full immunity for revealing the existence of the cartel; ii) Hitachi Chemical, Rubycon, Elna and NEC Tokin benefited from reductions of their fines for cooperating with the Commission's investigation; and iii) Rubycon was the first to submit compelling evidence that allowed the Commission to extend the duration of the infringement from June 1998 to August 2003. Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy said: "Capacitors are an essential part of almost all electronic products, ranging from smart phones to appliances in our homes, electronic systems in our cars and wind turbines producing electricity. The nine companies fined today colluded to maximise their profits. This may have happened not only at the expense of manufacturers but also of consumers. Our decision again makes clear that we will not tolerate anti-competitive conduct

that may affect European consumers, even if anticompetitive contacts take place outside Europe.” A full press release is available in [EN](#), [FR](#), [DE](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

#### **COLLEGE MEETING: European Commission decides not to register European Citizens' Initiative entitled 'British friends – stay with us in the EU'**

The College of Commissioners today decided not to register a proposed citizens' initiative, from a group of non-British EU citizens, entitled: “British friends – stay with us in the EU”, whose stated objective is “to create a platform which would enable all European citizens to take part in this initiative and to reach a majority of British Citizens... thereby giving to all British citizens an opportunity to voice their opinion.” No further information was provided about the legislative tool which could potentially support this initiative, and enable EU citizens outside the UK to overturn the sovereign Brexit decision by the British people or compel them to change their minds. The conditions for admissibility of a [European Citizens' Initiative](#) are that the proposed action does not manifestly fall outside the framework of the Commission's powers to submit a proposal for a legal act, that it is not manifestly abusive, frivolous or vexatious and that it is not manifestly contrary to the values of the Union. While the Commission regrets the decision of the United Kingdom to withdraw from the European Union, there is no legal basis in the Treaties which would allow for the adoption of an EU legal act challenging or overturning the UK's decision to withdraw from the Union. As such, the College has no legal basis to register this proposed Initiative. (For more information: Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456; Tim McPhie – Tel.: +32 229 58602)

#### **RÉUNION DU COLLEGE: Propositions de la Commission pour une décision du Conseil sur le Pacte Mondial des Nations Unies pour des migrations sûres, ordonnées et régulières**

Aujourd'hui, la Commission a adopté deux propositions pour des décisions du Conseil visant à autoriser la Commission à approuver, au nom de l'Union européenne, le Pacte Mondial des Nations Unies pour des migrations sûres, ordonnées et régulières. Ces propositions visent à garantir la capacité de l'UE à promouvoir ses politiques et ses intérêts dans les prochains cycles de négociations à New York. (Pour plus d'informations: Catherine Ray – Tel.: +32 229 69921; Esther Osorio – Tel.: +32 229 62076)

#### **RÉUNION DU COLLEGE: La Commission propose de modifier l'accord de partenariat de pêche UE-Maroc et de renouveler son protocole**

Suite à [l'arrêt de la Cour de justice de l'Union Européenne](#) du 27 février dernier, la Commission a adopté aujourd'hui une proposition de décision du Conseil l'autorisant à négocier avec le Maroc l'amendement de l'actuel accord de partenariat UE-Maroc dans le secteur de la pêche ainsi que le renouvellement du protocole. L'objectif est de préserver et de développer davantage le partenariat de pêche entre l'UE et le Maroc, en concluant un

accord et un protocole durables sur le plan environnemental, économiquement rentables et pleinement conformes au droit international et européen. Le Maroc est un partenaire proche de l'UE qui bénéficie du «statut avancé» dans le cadre de la [Politique Européenne de Voisinage](#) et de [l'Accord d'Association UE-Maroc](#). La proposition d'aujourd'hui vise à améliorer la gouvernance des pêches notamment en renforçant le suivi, le contrôle et la surveillance de la pêche dans la région. La continuité de l'accord sera bénéfique aux 2 parties: d'une part en apportant au Maroc un soutien à sa stratégie «Halieutis» en faveur du développement durable du secteur de la pêche, grâce à l'importante contribution financière qui lui sera versée au titre du Protocole et d'autre part, en offrant aux opérateurs de l'UE, y compris les pêcheurs artisanaux de plusieurs États membres, de bénéficier quant à eux des possibilités de pêche offertes par l'accord modifié et le protocole renouvelé. La proposition de l'UE prévoit d'étendre cet accord au Sahara occidental sous certaines conditions. La [proposition](#) et l'[annexe](#) sont disponibles en ligne. (Pour plus d'informations: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Iris Petsa – Tel.: +32 229 93321)

### **Mergers: Commission clears Bayer's acquisition of Monsanto, subject to conditions**

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of Monsanto by Bayer. The merger is conditional on the divestiture of an extensive remedy package, which addresses the parties' overlaps in seeds, pesticides and digital agriculture. Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *"We have approved Bayer's plans to take over Monsanto because the parties' remedies, worth well over €6 billion, meet our competition concerns in full. Our decision ensures that there will be effective competition and innovation in seeds, pesticides and digital agriculture markets also after this merger. In particular, we have made sure that the number of global players actively competing in these markets stays the same. That is important because we need competition to ensure farmers have a choice of different seed varieties and pesticides at affordable prices. And we need competition to push companies to innovate in digital agriculture and to continue develop new products that meet the high regulatory standards in Europe, to the benefit of all Europeans and the environment."* As part of its [in-depth review](#), the Commission has assessed more than 2,000 different product markets and reviewed 2.7 million internal documents. It concluded that the transaction as notified would have significantly reduced competition on price and innovation in Europe and globally on a number of different markets. The Commission also had concerns that it would have strengthened Monsanto's dominant position on certain markets, where Bayer is an important challenger of Monsanto. The commitments submitted by Bayer meet these competition concerns in full, addressing the parties' overlaps in seeds, pesticides and digital agriculture. On this basis, the Commission concluded that the divestment package enables a suitable buyer to sustainably replace Bayer's competitive effect in these markets and continue to innovate, for the benefit of European farmers and consumers. Bayer has proposed BASF as purchaser for the remedy package. The Commission's assessment is ongoing whether a) the divestiture to BASF meets all purchaser requirements, and b) whether it creates any problematic

overlaps or raises other competition concerns. Bayer and Monsanto can only implement the transaction when the Commission has completed its review of the proposed buyer. The full press release is available online in [EN](#), [FR](#), [DE](#).  
(For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889)

### **Commission welcomes adoption of negotiating directives for a multilateral investment court**

The Commission received yesterday a green light from Member States to start international talks for establishment of a multilateral investment court. For the first time, the Council also made its [negotiating mandate](#) public at the time of adoption. Commissioner for Trade Cecilia **Malmström** said: *“This is a very welcome decision. In the EU’s bilateral trade talks, we have already moved away from the old ISDS model towards the modern and transparent investment court system. Looking ahead to the long term, the multilateral level will be highly important for managing the growing number of bilateral investment agreements. I am delighted that EU Member States in the Council have now given their unanimous backing to this initiative, that we proposed last September. The EU’s new policy on investment is fundamentally based on transparency, so I am glad that the Council decided to make the mandate publicly available. We can now continue working with like-minded partners around the globe, towards launching negotiations to create a multilateral investment court – knowing that EU citizens are fully informed of our negotiating instructions.”* Since 2015, the Commission has followed a new approach to investment dispute settlement, which implies including the Investment Court System (ICS) in the EU’s bilateral agreements. The Commission has in parallel been working on the multilateral investment court project. The new approach was a direct response to problems identified with the traditional ad-hoc mechanism for arbitrating investment disputes and with the Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS), including its lack of legitimacy, consistency and transparency. The multilateral investment court initiative aims to replace existing bilateral mechanisms – including those in the over 1,400 investment treaties concluded by EU Member States and other interested countries – with a permanent body to decide on international investment disputes. More information about the initiative to create a multilateral investment court: [webpage](#), [factsheet](#) and recording of a [stakeholders’ meeting](#). (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Kinga Malinowska- Tel.: +32 22951383)

### **Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy opens headquarters in Brussels**

The new headquarters of the Global Covenant of Mayors will be opened in Brussels on 22 March following on the European Covenant’s recent 10th anniversary in February this year. To mark this occasion, an inauguration ceremony will take place in the presence of His Majesty King Philippe of the Belgians, together with European Commission Vice-President for the Energy Union Maroš **Šefčovič** and Michael R. Bloomberg, UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for Cities and Climate Change and Co-Chair of the Global Covenant and other leaders and personalities. The Covenant is the world’s largest movement for local climate and energy actions. It has more than 7500 city signatories

across 6 continents, all committed to implement clean energy solutions and stem the tide of climate change. The opening ceremony will be an opportunity to highlight the central role cities play in meeting the objectives agreed in the Paris Agreement on climate change. Speaking before the event, Vice-President **Šefčovič** said: *“The EU Covenant of Mayors, now 10 years young, has proven to be a real success story. As the global fight against climate change will not succeed without cities, the Global Covenant of Mayors has to become a similar success story. With its headquarters based in the EU’s capital, Brussels, we signal Europe’s leadership on the clean energy transition and its engagement in this quest to save our planet, and to give our citizens a healthier environment, greener jobs, and higher quality of life.”* The European Commission has supported the Global Covenant of Mayors, as well as cooperation between cities and regions from Europe and third countries, with more than €21 million under the International Urban Cooperation Programme of the [Partnership Instrument](#) (PI). The ceremony will take place on Thursday 22 March from 12:00-13:00, at the new headquarters located at Boulevard Charlemagne 1 (Mezzanine Floor, 1000 Brussels). More information [here](#). (For more information: Anca Padurarú – Tel.: +32 229 91269; Nicole Bockstaller – Tel.: +32 229 52589)

#### **Mergers: Commission clears joint venture between Marubeni-Itochu and Sumitomo Corporation**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over Hiroshima Steel Center by Marubeni-Itochu Steel Inc. (“MISI”) and Sumitomo Corporation, all of Japan. Hiroshima Steel Center processes and sells steel products outside the European Economic Area (EEA). MISI trades, manufactures and processes iron and steel products, and it is controlled by Marubeni Corporation and Itochu Corporation. Sumitomo Corporation is a conglomerate producing products and services in a wide range of sectors, including metal products and mineral resources. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because the joint venture will have no or negligible activities within the EEA. More information is available on the Commission’s [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.8799](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

#### **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of YOOX Net-a-Porter by Richemont**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of YOOX Net-a-Porter of Italy by Richemont of Switzerland. YOOX Net-a-Porter is an online retailer of luxury goods and operates four multi-brand online stores. Richemont is active in the design, production and distribution of luxury goods, mainly jewellery and watches. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns given: i) the companies’ moderate combined market positions after the proposed transaction; and ii) the limited horizontal overlaps or vertical links between the activities of the companies. 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.8806](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32

229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

### **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Pro bAV Pensionskasse by Frankfurter Leben Holding**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of sole control over Pro bAV Pensionskasse AG (“PPAG”) of Germany by Frankfurter Leben Holding GmbH & Co (“FL Group Holding”) of Germany and controlled by Fosun International Holdings Ltd of the British Virgin Islands. PPAG is active in the pension insurance sector in Germany. FL Group Holding is specialised in the acquisition and administration of life insurance portfolios and life insurance undertakings. Fosun is an investment group active in the insurance, investment and wealth management and innovative finance sectors, as well as in the health, tourism and entertainment, real property and natural resources industries. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns given its limited impact on the market structure and the very limited overlaps and vertical links between the companies’ activities. 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.8784](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

### **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of joint control of Bayport Polymers by Borealis, Nova and Total**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over the joint venture Bayport Polymers LLC, by NOVA Chemicals Inc, Total Petrochemicals & Refining, all three of the US, and Borealis AG of Austria. The joint venture will be active in the production and marketing of polyethylene. NOVA Chemicals produces and sells ethylene, polyethylene, styrene and co-products thereof. Total is engaged in the oil and gas industry, as well as other energy sectors. Borealis is active in the production and commercialisation of polyolefin, base chemicals and fertilisers. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns because the envisaged joint venture will have negligible actual or 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.8772](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

### **La Commission lance un programme de formation en ligne pour les sociétés sur le droit de la consommation**

Afin de continuer à améliorer la protection des consommateurs dans l’UE et de soutenir les entreprises, plus particulièrement les PME, la Commission a lancé un programme de formation en ligne pour aider les sociétés à mieux comprendre et appliquer le droit européen de la consommation. Věra Jourová, commissaire en charge de la justice, des consommateurs et de l’égalité des genres a déclaré: “Les entreprises ne sont toujours pas suffisamment

*informées sur les droits de la consommation. Afin d'améliorer leur connaissance, j'encourage toutes les entreprises, particulièrement les PME, à s'inscrire au programme de formation [ConsumerLaw Ready](#). Cela contribuera à une meilleure protection des consommateurs au sein de l'UE." Grâce à ce site web, les entreprises pourront se former à l'aide de programmes en ligne, s'inscrire à des cours en ligne ou demander conseil à des experts. Elles bénéficieront d'une formation sur les droits des consommateurs en matière de garantie, sur le droit de rétractation des consommateurs, sur les informations à fournir à leurs clients, sur les solutions alternatives de résolution des litiges et sur comment éviter les pratiques déloyales. L'information est adaptée aux besoins de chaque pays et est disponible dans sa propre langue. Le programme de formation a été élaboré conjointement par le Bureau Européen des Unions de Consommateurs (BEUC), l'Association Européenne pour les PME (UEAPME) et l'Association Européenne des Chambres de Commerce (Eurochambres). La formation est disponible ici: [ConsumerLaw Ready](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Mélanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659)*

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **EU solidarity on energy: Leaders discuss integration of the Baltic States' electricity network**

Commission President Jean-Claude **Juncker** has invited the Heads of State or Government of the Baltic States and of Poland to meet on Thursday 22 March 2018 in the European Commission premises ahead of the European Council. President **Juncker** and the President of Lithuania Dalia Grybauskaitė, the Prime Minister of Estonia Jüri Ratas, the Prime Minister of Latvia Māris Kučinskis and the Prime Minister of Poland Mateusz Morawiecki will discuss the integration of the Baltic States' electricity network into the European system, building on the political commitment expressed by Ministers in December 2017 (see [STATEMENT/17/5271](#) and [MEMO/17/5316](#)). From early in the mandate the Juncker Commission has been committed to working towards implementing strategic energy infrastructure projects and addressing the various aspects required to end the energy isolation of the Baltic Sea region by reinforcing its integration into the European Union energy market. This includes the objective to ensure the synchronisation of the electricity grids of the Baltic States. The synchronisation of the three Baltic States' electricity grid with the continental European network will increase solidarity and energy security in the region and is of key for completing the Energy Union. Photo opportunities will take place on Thursday 22 March at 11:15 at the Commission Berlaymont building. For accreditation contact [Oscar.SANCHEZ-BENITEZ@ec.europa.eu](mailto:Oscar.SANCHEZ-BENITEZ@ec.europa.eu). (For more information: Anna-Kaisa Itkonen – Tel.: +32 229 56186; Nicole Bockstaller – Tel.: +32 229 52589)

### **La Commission accueillera demain une conférence de haut niveau sur la finance durable**

Le président Jean-Claude **Juncker** et le vice-président Valdis **Dombrovskis** organiseront demain une [conférence de haut niveau](#) sur "Financer une croissance durable", avec la participation du Président de la République française,



Emmanuel Macron, et de l'Envoyé spécial des Nations Unies pour les villes et le changement climatique, Michael Bloomberg. Les principaux intervenants de la Commission comprendront le vice-président Jyrki **Katainen**, ainsi que les Commissaires Miguel Arias **Cañete** et Karmenu **Vella**. L'événement à Bruxelles sera l'occasion pour les décideurs européens de réitérer leur engagement envers l'historique [accord de Paris](#) et de mobiliser le secteur financier pour soutenir les efforts de l'Union européenne dans la lutte contre le changement climatique. À cette fin, les participants discuteront du [plan d'action sur la finance durable](#) de la Commission, qui vise à réorienter les flux de capitaux privés vers des projets verts et durables et à mettre la finance au service de notre planète. Le plan d'action a été publié le 8 mars dans le cadre de [l'union des marchés des capitaux \(UMC\)](#) et marque une étape clé dans la mise en œuvre de l'accord de Paris, ainsi que dans le [programme de développement durable de l'UE](#). Parallèlement, la Commission lance également aujourd'hui une consultation afin de recueillir les points de vue des parties intéressées sur la question de savoir si les exigences actuelles de l'UE en matière de publication d'information sont toujours adaptées à l'objectif poursuivi. Cette consultation – première initiative du plan d'action en matière de divulgation et de comptabilité – demande si les exigences actuelles facilitent les activités transfrontalières, si elles sont adaptées à la digitalisation croissante de l'économie et si elles contribuent à la stabilité financière et à la durabilité. Les répondants sont encouragés à fournir autant de preuves que possible en utilisant [ce lien](#). (For more information: Vanessa Mock – Tel.: +32 229 56194; Letizia Lupini – Tel.: +32 229 51958)

### **Commissioner Arias Cañete at The Economist 2018 Sustainability Summit in London**

On 22 March, Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy Miguel **Arias Cañete** will deliver a keynote speech at [2018 Sustainability Summit in London](#), setting out the urgent need to reorient global capital flows towards sustainable investment and how European financial players can capitalise on the massive investment opportunities presented by the Paris Agreement on climate change. The third edition of The Economist Sustainability Summit 2018 will convene business leaders, policymakers, scientists, researchers, advocates and investors to gauge the scale of the task and work out how best to lead and encourage co-operation on the path to progress. Commissioner **Arias Cañete** will also take part in a high-level panel debate on the changing role and responsibilities of businesses and multinational companies, which have the unique ability to influence operations along supply chains and in various markets to make them climate-compatible. The Commission's new [action plan on sustainable finance](#) highlights the crucial role the financial sector will need to play if the world is to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement. "Financing sustainable growth" will also be a central element at the High-Level Conference on Sustainable Finance which takes in Brussels on the same day with the participation of Miguel **Arias Cañete**, see full program [here](#). (For more information: Anna-Kaisa Itkonen – Tel.: +32 229 56186; Nicole Bockstaller – Tel.: +32 229 52589)

### **Vice-President Ansip in Germany to participate in a Citizen's Dialogue and**

## **discuss Digital Single Market**

Vice-President **Ansip** visits Germany today and tomorrow to discuss the latest developments related to the [Digital Single Market](#). The Vice-President will talk about the importance of data flows, the General Data Protection Regulation, the relevance of cyber cooperation as well as high-quality and high-speed connectivity. Tonight at 19:15 CET he will hold a [Citizens' Dialogue](#) at the Leuphana University of Lüneburg, discussing the benefits a fully functional Digital Single Market could bring to our societies in particular on local level. Real time updates of the event are available on [@Ansip\\_EU](#). Tomorrow in Hamburg, the Vice-President will visit the CityScienceLab of Hamburg Hafen City University for presentations on intelligent transport systems (ITS) as well as case examples of smart cities initiatives and urban data hubs. Later tomorrow, Vice-President Ansip will meet several representatives of Hamburg Government and join a public debate at the Online Marketing Rockstars Festival, where he will talk about ePrivacy, eCommerce and geoblocking. *(For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Inga Höglund Tel.: +32 229 55040)*

## **La commissaire Crețu organise un talk-show sur le 30e anniversaire de la politique de Cohésion aujourd'hui à Bruxelles**

Le talk-show débattrà ce que la politique de Cohésion a réalisé au cours des trois dernières décennies, en étant au cœur de chaque étape importante de l'Histoire de l'UE, de la création du Marché Unique aux élargissements successifs. La commissaire à la politique régionale Corina **Crețu** accueillera Antonio Tajani, président du Parlement européen, Antonio Costa, Premier ministre du Portugal et Karl-Heinz Lambertz, président du Comité des régions. Le Président **Juncker** participera à l'évènement avec un message vidéo. Dans le panel figureront Michel Barnier et Danuta Hübner, qui partageront leurs points de vue sur la politique de cohésion en tant qu'anciens commissaires en charge de ce dossier, ainsi que Karin Wanngård, maire de Stockholm, et Johanna Mikl-Leitner, présidente de la région de Basse-Autriche, en duplex. *«La politique de cohésion a toujours été un élément essentiel d'une réponse commune aux défis auxquels nous sommes confrontés en tant qu'Union», a déclaré le commissaire **Crețu**, «Au cours de ce talk-show, nous explorerons comment la politique de cohésion après 2020 peut aider relever ces défis; la migration, la révolution numérique, la mondialisation, les évolutions démographiques et la cohésion sociale, la convergence économique et le changement climatique. »* L'évènement sera [retransmis en direct sur YouTube](#) à partir de 17h00 cet après-midi et sera diffusé à plusieurs reprises entre le 24 et le 28 mars sur Euronews. *(Pour plus d'informations: Johannes Bahrke – Tél .: +32 229 58615, Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tél .: +32 229 56169)*

## **La commissaire Gabriel rencontre des représentants de l'Alliance pour une meilleure protection des mineurs en ligne**

Mariya **Gabriel**, Commissaire à l'économie et à la société numériques, participe aujourd'hui à Bruxelles à la réunion des représentants de [l'Alliance pour une meilleure protection des mineurs en ligne](#). L'Alliance est une initiative multipartite lancée par la Commission européenne lors de "Journée pour un internet plus sûr 2017" et dans le cadre de la stratégie ["Un](#)

[meilleur internet pour les enfants](#)". Il comprend 40 membres dont la Commission, 26 membres venant de l'industrie, 12 ONG et l'UNICEF. L'objectif de l'initiative est d'améliorer l'environnement en ligne pour les enfants et les jeunes. Les membres ont signé une déclaration d'intention en mai 2017 avec des engagements individuels et des actions concrètes à mettre en œuvre dans les 18 mois qui visent à améliorer la capacité d'autonomie des jeunes internautes, à renforcer la coopération et la sensibilisation dans le domaine de la protection des enfants en ligne. L'Alliance contribuera également à la campagne [#SaferInternet4EU](#), récemment lancée, dont le but est de promouvoir la sécurité en ligne, l'éducation aux médias et la cyber-hygiène afin de sensibiliser les enfants, les parents et les enseignants aux opportunités et aux défis numériques. La commissaire Gabriel et les membres de l'Alliance discuteront des travaux actuels et futurs de l'Alliance, dresseront un bilan de l'initiative, discuteront des défis et des risques émergents en matière de sécurité en ligne et souligneront l'importance des enjeux dans un contexte multipartite. *Vous trouverez plus de détails sur la [fiche d'information et les dépliants sur #saferinternet4EU](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tél .: +32 229 56172, Inga Höglund Tél .: +32 229 50698)*

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

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## **[As millions remain exposed to racism, equality bodies must be strengthened, say heads of European human rights institutions on International Anti-Racism Day](#)**

As millions remain exposed to racism, equality bodies must be strengthened, say heads of European human rights institutions on International Anti-Racism Day | European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights

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## [Déclaration de la Commissaire Mariya Gabriel sur le lancement du portail WiFi4EU et la création de points d'accès à internet sans fil gratuit dans les municipalités de l'UE](#)

*" Bonjour à tous,*

*La Commission a à cœur de répondre aux besoins grandissants de connectivité des Européens et d'accroître la compétitivité européenne.*

*L'initiative WiFi4EU répond à ces besoins ! Il s'agit d'un programme auquel je suis particulièrement attachée et que je suis fière de lancer aujourd'hui publiquement.*

*Le contexte est simple. Tout le monde veut être connecté, de plus en plus, que ce soit au travail ou en vacances ; que ce soit pour payer une facture ou voir sa famille à distance.*

*Avec l'initiative WiFi4EU que nous lançons aujourd'hui, la Commission finance pour la première fois l'acquisition et l'installation par les municipalités de points d'accès wifi gratuits dans les centres de la vie publique de leur choix. Grâce à l'initiative WiFi4EU, les municipalités pourront offrir une connectivité internet gratuite et de haute qualité à leurs citoyens et visiteurs et encourager le développement de services numériques locaux innovants.*

*L'accès à ce financement est extrêmement simple, il est à la portée de tous à travers un portail numérique qui est disponible dans les 24 langues officielles. Le financement se fait par le biais de coupons – de 15.000 euros chacun – et la municipalité est libre de choisir son installateur Wi-Fi qui sera payé par la Commission.*

*L'objectif est de rendre l'Europe visible et utile pour nos citoyens dans leurs activités quotidiennes. Je tiens aussi à répondre aux besoins locaux, avec l'engagement direct des autorités locales et une identité visuelle dynamique, commune et reconnaissable.*

*D'ici à 2020, nous organiserons 5 appels à candidature. Environ 6,000 municipalités devraient pouvoir bénéficier de ce nouveau projet.*

*Les financements seront alloués selon la règle du "premier arrivé, premier servi" mais un équilibre géographique entre tous les pays participants sera respecté. Le dispositif ne touchera pas toutes les municipalités européennes, mais je suis persuadée qu'il encouragera les États membres à compléter l'initiative via des fonds nationaux et à stimuler la demande d'accès à des services numériques de plus en plus innovants, y compris des services publics.*

*Je vous invite à vous inscrire dès aujourd'hui, c'est simple.*

*Le premier appel à candidature sera le 15 mai. Pré-inscrivez-vous dès aujourd'hui et tenez-vous prêts le 15 mai: premier arrivé premier servi ! "*

### **Pour de plus amples informations**

[Communiqué de presse](#)

[Questions et réponses](#)

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## **[Brexit report: social and economic](#)**

# impact on cities, regions and businesses

The European Committee of the Regions (CoR) published a report today in Brussels detailing the consequences of Brexit on trade and the economy in the EU27 regions and cities. Based heavily on data gathered from a joint survey with EUROCHAMBRES, the report reveals a lack of awareness, information and preparation and recommends greater flexibility in state aid rules and inter-regional cooperation.

A year ahead of the scheduled departure of the UK from the EU, uncertainty surrounding the nature of the future EU27-UK relationship complicates the process of adjustment for many EU regions. This uncertainty which was also not eased out by the [latest transition deal](#) is compounded in many cases by a lack of analysis of the likely impact on local economies. In turn, this restricts local and regional authorities' capacity to formulate strategies to address the adverse effects of the UK leaving the EU on their economies.

*"The results of both this report and the CoR's territorial impact assessment show that there will be no winner from Brexit and that Europe's local and regional authorities already know it. After the UK, Irish regions will be the most economically and socially impacted by Brexit because of their close relations and direct border with the UK. However, regions in Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Italy and Spain also anticipate a severe impact. Whilst still difficult to assess the precise consequences for each European region or city, it is already possible and necessary to take action at European level to counter negative impacts and soften the blow "*, said **Michael Murphy**, Head of the Irish delegation in the CoR and member of Ireland's Tipperary County Council.

The CoR and EUROCHAMBRES conducted a survey of regional and city authorities and chambers of commerce to feed into a process of analysing and debating the exposure of EU27 regions and cities to Brexit. This resulted in the report presented at a joint briefing in Brussels today ([read the full report here](#)), summarising the expected economic and social effects and the impact on public administrations, and setting out conclusions and recommendations.

*"The survey results show that chambers sense a greater exposure to the effects of Brexit. This is not surprising given that EU27 businesses will directly feel the additional friction in trade that will result from the UK leaving the EU customs union and single market "*, said **Arnaldo Abruzzini**, CEO of EUROCHAMBRES. *"We must now seek to minimize that friction, which requires precise quantitative and qualitative feedback, so it's worrying that this process also reveals a lack of analysis in many regions of the specific effects of Brexit. This needs to be addressed swiftly if the EU27's regions, cities and businesses are going to be well-placed to adjust effectively."*

The report concludes that there is a need for more specific, localised impact studies to get a better understanding of the potential impact and of the linkages across and between business sectors. Awareness raising and information sharing will further help businesses, notably SMEs, to be better prepared to face the ensuing structural and economic adjustments.

The report also echoes proposals from the CoR's opinion on "[The European Commission Report on Competition Policy 2016](#)", drafted by Mr Murphy, to allow greater flexibility of State aid rules. It further highlights the importance of continued interregional cooperation between EU27 and UK regions post-Brexit and the need for territorial cooperation programmes and macro-regional strategies to share information and pool resources.

### **Background:**

The CoR started a process of analysing and debating the exposure of EU27 regions and cities to Brexit, to prepare for the repercussions of the UK's withdrawal and the potential asymmetric territorial impact within the EU27 (with some regions substantially affected). The process resulted in a shared report and included a discussion between CoR members and the chief EU negotiator Michel Barnier, the adoption of a resolution, a study, a Territorial Impact Assessment workshop and a survey in cooperation with EUROCHAMBRES.

The dedicated CoR interregional group on Brexit, made up of 29 members from seven Member States, will meet for the first time in Brussels on 23 March 2018. Meanwhile, EUROCHAMBRES Brexit Working Group will convene on 20 March and EUROCHAMBRES President, Christoph Leitl, will speak at a European Parliament Trade (INTA) Committee on Brexit and future trading relations on 21 March.

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