

European Committee of the Regions: Highlights of the October plenary week

#CohesionAlliance

Cohesion policy – the EU’s main investment and solidarity tool – has reduced disparities, spread innovation and brought sustainable growth. It must continue to be a pillar of the EU in the future and not be undermined by the financial impact of Brexit or the need to fund new tasks. This message was delivered by EU, national local and civil society leaders who gathered in Brussels to launch the

#CohesionAlliance

during the opening of the

European Week of Regions and Cities

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Press releases:

#CohesionAlliance: Europe-wide coalition demands a strong and more effective EU regional policy after 2020

#CohesionAlliance: MEPs join local leaders’ fight for a strong cohesion policy post 2020

Building the Cohesion Alliance

“State of the European Union: the View of Regions and Cities”

In the context of the ongoing political debate on the future of Europe,

President Lambertz’s Address

(

[video](#)

,

[speech](#)

) aimed to take stock of the current achievements of EU's cities and regions and look ahead to the main challenges for the coming years. President Lambertz touched upon a series of key EU issues for local and regional authorities, ranging from regaining citizens' trust and the future of cohesion policy, to migration, Brexit and Europe's social model.

Lambertz insisted that, "

Just as the European level influences the local and regional levels, local and regional levels should now be able to exert their full influence at European level

". To further make the voices of cities and regions heard, he announced that the CoR would hold a "European Union Summit of Regions and Cities" in the first quarter of 2019 to "

send clear, specific messages to the heads of state or government and to the leaders of the Union

".

Press release:

[#SOTREG:](#)

[President Lambertz delivers first annual "State of the European Union: the View of Regions and Cities" address](#)

COP 23

Less than a month ahead UN climate talks in COP23, **Commissioner Cañete** addressed the assembly saying that Europe will pursue its global leadership on climate and reiterated the vital role cities and regions play in combating global warming. Members adopted

[Marco Dus \(IT/PES\) opinion on climate finance](#)

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During the COP23, cities and regions will look for enhanced cooperation with US and Canadian cities and defend

Andrew's Cooper (UK/EA) concept of Locally Determined Contributions

to be established in addition to Nationally Determined Contributions to help bridge the emissions gap.

Press release:

#COP23: Climate change: EU regions and cities look to cooperate across borders to deliver the Paris Agreement

Local targets agreed to tackle climate change

Disaster risk reduction

A call by **Karl-Heinz Lambertz** for the European Union to invest heavily to reduce the risks posed by earthquakes and extreme weather conditions was echoed by the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction, **Robert Glasser**, and the EU's Commissioner for Regional Policy, **Corina Cretu**. The special representative and the EU Commissioner were speaking on 12 October at a conference co-organised by the CoR and the UN to mark the International Day for Disaster Reduction (13 October). Helping cities to become more resilient and adapt to climate change was a major theme at the European Week of Regions and Cities and in the

CoR's plenary

. The UN and the CoR are working together to encourage regional and local governments to adopt risk-reduction strategies.

Press release:

Natural disasters: EU must invest locally today, to save lives tomorrow

Broadband Platform

“High-speed broadband connectivity is a cornerstone of the EU’s Digital Single Market and a prerequisite for competitiveness at global level”

, stated CoR President at the inaugural meeting of the Broadband Platform in the presence of the Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society, **Mariya Gabriel**. The new platform, which has been set up jointly by the CoR and the European Commission, aims to help high-speed broadband reach all European regions, including rural and sparsely populated areas where there is not enough market-driven development. Participants, who include 12 CoR members, will meet twice a year to discuss various topics related to broadband deployment: policy and governance, technology choices, financial sources, regulatory framework.

Press release:

[Broadband Platform: Cities and regions join forces with the Commission to narrow the digital divide](#)

Other topics:

Further material:

Contact:

pressecdr@cor.europa.eu

[**Mergers: Commission opens in-depth investigation into proposed merger of Celanese’s and Blackstone’s acetate tow activities**](#)

The proposed joint venture would combine the acetate flake and tow activities of Celanese with Blackstone’s recently acquired portfolio company Acetow,

which is active in the same areas. The joint venture would be a new market leader in the already highly concentrated acetate tow market.

Acetate flake is a chemical derivative of wood pulp that is mainly used in the manufacture of acetate tow. Acetate tow is a fibrous material made from acetate flake and is used to manufacture cigarette filters.

The Commission's preliminary concerns

The Commission has preliminary concerns that the proposed transaction could reduce competition in the acetate tow market.

Celanese and Blackstone's Acetow are, respectively, the second and third largest manufacturers of acetate tow at global level excluding China. The merged entity would become the new market leader with the risk of significantly reducing competition in the industry.

After its initial investigation, the Commission considers that Eastman and Daicel, the only two remaining major competitors, would not exert sufficient competitive pressure on the merged entity. Moreover, the industry is characterised by high barriers to entry.

Finally, the Commission has preliminary concerns that the proposed transaction would make tacit coordination between tow suppliers more likely.

The transaction was notified to the Commission on 12 September 2017. The Commission now has 90 working days, until 5 March 2018, to take a decision. The opening of an in-depth inquiry does not prejudice the final result of the investigation.

Companies and products

Celanese Corporation is a US incorporated technology and specialty materials company listed on the New York Stock Exchange. It operates mainly in North America, Europe and Asia. Celanese's business segment relevant to the proposed transaction concerns the manufacture and supply of acetate flake and acetate tow used to manufacture cigarette filters.

Blackstone Group L.P. is a global asset manager. It is headquartered in the US and is listed on the New York Stock Exchange. Blackstone acquired Acetow from Solvay in December 2016. Acetow is active in the manufacture and supply of acetate flake and acetate tow used to manufacture cigarette filters.

Merger control rules and procedures

The Commission has the duty to assess mergers and acquisitions involving companies with a turnover above certain thresholds (see Article 1 of the [Merger Regulation](#)) and to prevent concentrations that would significantly impede effective competition in the EEA or any substantial part of it.

The vast majority of notified mergers do not pose competition problems and are cleared after a routine review. From the moment a transaction is notified, the Commission generally has 25 working days to decide whether to

grant approval (Phase I) or to start an in-depth investigation (Phase II).

In addition to the current transaction, there are three on-going phase II merger investigations: the [proposed acquisition of NXP by Qualcomm](#), the [proposed acquisition of Monsanto by Bayer](#) and the [proposed merger between Essilor and Luxottica](#).

More information will be available on the competition [website](#), in the Commission's public [case register](#) under the case number [M.8547](#).

September 2017 – Annual inflation stable at 1.5% in the euro area – Up to 1.8% in the EU

Euro area annual inflation was 1.5% in September 2017, stable compared with August 2017. In September 2016 the rate was 0.4%. **European Union** annual inflation was 1.8% in September 2017, up from 1.7% in August 2017. A year earlier the rate was 0.4%. These figures come from **Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union**.

[Full text available on EUROSTAT website](#)

EU approves €100 million in financial assistance for Jordan

This disbursement marks the launch of the second [Macro-Financial Assistance programme for Jordan](#) with a total worth of €200 million, which follows a first package of €180 million approved in 2013 and fully disbursed in 2015. The disbursement of the second €100 million instalment is expected to take place during the course of 2018, depending on Jordan fulfilling agreed commitments.

Commissioner Pierre **Moscovici**, Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs, Taxation and Customs, said: *"Today's decision to disburse €100 million to Jordan under a new MFA programme demonstrates the EU's continued support for the country in these challenging times. I look forward to continuing our work with the Jordanian authorities on their reform programme and in securing a stable, stronger economy for Jordan to the benefit of its entire population."*

Macro-Financial Assistance to Jordan is intended to strengthen the country's foreign exchange reserve position and to help Jordan meet its balance of payments and budgetary financing needs.

The Macro-Financial Assistance programme will also support reforms in a number of areas. These include public finance management, the tax and social safety net systems; education and professional training; trade policies and active labour market policies aimed at increasing employment opportunities for both Jordanian citizens and Syrian refugees living in Jordan.

The assistance is part of a wider effort by the EU to help Jordan and other countries in the region mitigate the economic and social impact stemming from regional conflicts and the presence of a large number of Syrian refugees in Jordan. The commitment of the EU and international partners was reiterated at the [EU-Jordan Association Council](#) in July 2017, and at the Brussels conference on ["Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region"](#) in April 2017.

Background

Macro-Financial Assistance (MFA)

[Macro-Financial Assistance](#) is an exceptional EU crisis-response instrument available to the EU's neighbouring partner countries experiencing severe balance of payments problems. It is complementary to the assistance provided by the International Monetary Fund.

MFA loans are financed through EU borrowing on capital markets. The funds are then on-lent with similar terms to the beneficiary countries.

The new MFA programme for Jordan was adopted by the European Parliament and the Council on 14 December 2016. It follows a €180 million MFA operation that was disbursed in the course of 2015.

The policy conditions were agreed between the EU and Jordan, and laid down in the Memorandum of Understanding [signed](#) on 19 September 2017.

EU-Jordan relations

Since the beginning of the Syrian crisis in 2011, the EU has made available more than [€1.6 billion to Jordan](#) under different instruments to help the country preserve economic stability, sustain political and economic reform momentum, and address its related humanitarian, development and security needs.

In addition, the [European Investment Bank](#) has made available €264 million in loans to Jordan.

For more information

More information on [past MFA operations](#)

Detailed information on MFA [for Jordan](#)

Daily News 17 / 10 / 2017

EU approves €100 million in financial assistance for Jordan

Today, the European Commission will disburse a €100 million loan to Jordan under the [EU's Macro-Financial Assistance \(MFA\) programme](#). Commissioner Pierre **Moscovici**, Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs, said: *"Today's decision to disburse €100 million to Jordan under a new MFA programme demonstrates the EU's continued support for the country in these challenging times. I look forward to continuing our work with the Jordanian authorities on their reform programme and in securing a stable, stronger economy for Jordan to the benefit of its entire population."* This disbursement marks the launch of the second [Macro-Financial Assistance programme for Jordan](#) with a total worth of €200 million, which follows a first package of €180 million approved in 2013 and fully disbursed in 2015. The disbursement of the second €100 million instalment is expected to take place during the course of 2018, depending on Jordan fulfilling agreed commitments. The aim of this assistance is to strengthen the country's foreign exchange reserve position and to help Jordan meet its balance of payments and budgetary financing needs. The MFA programme will also support reforms in a number of areas. These include public finance management, tax and social safety net systems, education and professional training, trade policies and active labour market policies aimed at increasing employment opportunities for both Jordanian citizens and Syrian refugees living in Jordan. A press release is available [here](#). (For more information: Annika Breidthardt – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Enda McNamara – Tel.: +32 229 64976)

EU-funded physicists involved in ground-breaking astronomic discovery

For the first time ever scientists have observed a collision of two neutron stars. They used two different kinds of methodologies, gravitational waves and light. These ground-breaking results were presented yesterday by the research teams behind the discovery of gravitational waves – work which recently earned three of their leading researchers the [2017 Nobel Prize in Physics](#). 11 fellows from the EU funded project GraWIToN have participated in this observation. The project is funded with €3.7 million under the [Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions](#). Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, Carlos **Moedas**, underlined the extraordinary nature of the observation: *"Today marks a new approach in astronomy. From now on researchers are able to both see and hear cosmic events to better understand them. I am proud that EU funding contributed to their pioneering revelations."* Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor **Navracsics**, emphasised that *"this discovery again proves that our investment in excellent researchers leads to important scientific breakthroughs. Here, the results have the potential to revolutionise astrophysics, but the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions support research that helps us tackle the big challenges facing Europe across the board"*. The discovery will further deepen our grasp of the universe

demonstrating that gold and platinum are formed in large cosmic collisions. The research was conducted by the LIGO observatory in the US, the Virgo detector in Italy, and other facilities including the European Southern Observatory (ESO). The EU has supported ESO with over €14 million in the past ten years. Further information is available in a Horizon magazine [article](#) and a [news item](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Lucía Caudet – Tel.: +32 229 56182; Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: +32 229 56184; Victoria von Hammerstein – Tel.: +32 229 55040)

1 million refugees in Turkey reached by EU's Emergency Social Safety Net

The EU funded Emergency Social Safety Net programme has now reached one million refugees living in Turkey. Launched by the European Commission in September 2016, and implemented by the World Food Programme and the Turkish Red Crescent in collaboration with the Turkish government, the flagship programme is the largest ever humanitarian aid operation funded by the European Union. Visiting Turkey today, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides** said: *"Today is a milestone for the life-changing results achieved by our biggest ever aid programme; and for the EU delivering on its commitments to Turkey. We have made a difference for a staggering 1 million people already. With the commitment and work of our partners, the impact of the programme grows by the day. Turkey continues to host the largest refugee population in the world. It is our humanitarian and moral duty to help refugees that have fled war and persecution."* The €348 million programme is financed through the [EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey](#). A full press release is available [here](#). (For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz de Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)

Criminal justice: making better use of the European Arrest Warrant

The European Commission is releasing today a handbook to support judicial authorities to make better use of the European Arrest Warrant (EAW) to improve the fight against cross-border crime. Commissioner **Jourová** opened the High Level Expert meeting on the European Arrest Warrant today, where this handbook was presented. She said ahead of this event: *"The European Arrest Warrant is a success story. It shortens drastically the time for criminals to be transferred from one EU country to the other. It allows these criminals to be brought to justice in the country where they committed their crime. A more efficient cooperation between justice authorities will improve safety in Europe "*. Since its launch in 2004, the European Arrest Warrant has been the most used EU instrument of judicial cooperation in criminal matters, with 16,144 European Arrest Warrants issued in 2015. The European Arrest Warrant allowed for the speedy extradition of, for example, a terrorist involved in the Paris attacks caught in Brussels and a gang of armed robbers sought by Italy whose members were arrested in six different EU countries. The handbook provides a series of tips and recommendations to help judges and practitioners when they issue or execute a European Arrest Warrant. The

handbook, factsheets and statistics are available [online](#). (For more information: Christian Wigand– Tel.: +32 229 62253;Mélanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659)

Developing Europe's Digital Platform for cultural heritage: public consultation opens

How can digital culture enrich your daily life and work? Do you share, access or use cultural heritage materials online? Today, the Commission launches a [public consultation](#) to hear the opinions from citizens and organisations with a personal or professional interest in digital culture available online. The Commission wants to know how citizens, professionals and organisations use [Europeana](#), the European online platform for culture heritage that is visited approximately 700,000 times per month. The platform gives access to over 53 million items including image, text, sound, video and 3D material from the collections of over 3,700 libraries, archives, museums, galleries and audio-visual collections across Europe. The platform can be used by teachers, artists, data professionals in cultural institutions and creative fields but also everyone looking for information on culture. The public consultation will help to identify through an independent evaluation how Europeana is currently used and how this can be improved and made more accessible for everyone. For example, the platform provides content also for re-use in the education, research or creative sectors of which many people are not yet aware. The results of the consultation will contribute to further develop Europeana's offers and increase its visibility and use for the European culture heritage online. Europeana will also be closely associated to the [European Year of Cultural Heritage](#) in 2018. The public consultation will be open in all EU languages until 14 January 2018 [here](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Inga Höglund – Tel.: +32 229 50698)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Pattonair by Platinum

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of Pattonair Holdings Limited of the UK by Platinum Equity Group of the US. Pattonair is a global aerospace distributor, providing aircraft parts, value-adding logistics and supply chain management services. Platinum is specialised in mergers, acquisitions and operation of companies in a broad range of businesses, including information technology, telecommunications, logistics, metal services, manufacturing and distribution. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, because Platinum is not engaged in any business activity related to Pattonair's business. 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.8646](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

Eurostat: Le taux d'inflation annuel stable à 1,5% dans la zone euro

Le taux d'inflation annuel de la zone euro s'est établi à 1,5% en septembre 2017, stable par rapport à août 2017. Un an auparavant, il était de 0,4%. Le taux d'inflation annuel de l'Union européenne s'est établi à 1,8% en septembre 2017, contre 1,7% en août 2017. Un an auparavant, il était de 0,4%. Ces chiffres sont publiés par Eurostat, l'office statistique de l'Union européenne. Un communiqué de presse est disponible [ici](#). *(Pour plus d'informations: Annika Breidthardt – Tel.: Juliana Dahl – Tel.: +32 229 59914)*

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