

More unity, solidarity and competitiveness and no second-hand citizens, the EESC tells President Juncker

European Commission President **Jean-Claude Juncker** was warmly welcomed at the September EESC Plenary by **Georges Dassis**, President of the EESC: *“The fact that you are taking part in our debate shows that civil society and social dialogue are of great importance to you”* (see [debate on EbS](#)). **Dassis** gave **Juncker** the reports from the national debates on [The Future of Europe](#), organised by the EESC in 27 Members States earlier this year. The reports present the views of civil society organisations on the five scenarios in the Commission’s [White Paper on the Future of Europe](#) published in March 2017.

“Europe is back”, said President **Juncker** at the EESC Plenary. *“We have the wind behind us”*. The creation of 8 million new jobs, the reduction of the budget deficit, **more than EUR 225 billion in investments as part of the Juncker Plan**, the launch of the European Solidarity Corps, EU’s progress in international trade were some of the reasons behind his optimism. The EC President shared with the EESC members some of his concerns, too and asked for the Committee’s help in addressing them: *“The Social Pillar is something which I feel very strongly about. I believe Europe must better take on board the concerns and the needs of those who are working. Otherwise Europe is going to break up into two parts – those who are the winners, those who benefit and those who, whether it is wrong or right, believe they have been forgotten by the EU project.”*

“We will not leave you alone in your efforts,” replied EESC President **Dassis**. *“Whatever option for the future of Europe is selected, the EESC wants a cohesive and coherent European Union, a Union that is able to deliver in providing fully-fledged equal opportunities for all. The EESC is determined to help to achieve this.”*

Jacek Krawczyk, President of the Employers’ Group welcomed the Commission’s initiatives related to the European trade agenda and renewed industrial strategy. *“Our goal must be the most attractive ecosystem for investing, for operating and for trading. An ecosystem fit for all businesses: in industry or in services, operating both locally and globally.”* He also added that work needs to continue on strengthening the Monetary Union and developing its governance as well as on completion of the EU Single Market.

Gabriele Bischoff, President of the Workers’ Group, shared President Juncker’s concerns about the growing divide in Europe: *“We welcome very much your emphasis on unity and are deeply concerned about the divisions in Europe. There will be no Future of Europe if there is no strong social dimension and solidarity. For this we need a concrete social agenda with the adoption of a roadmap for the implementation of a European Pillar of Social*

Rights.” She pointed out that there could be no second-hand workers in the EU and underlined the need to revise the Directive on the Posting of Workers.

Luca Jahier, President of the Various Interests’ Group, thanked the Commission President for taking the very ambitious task of reinvigorating the EU project and promoting a common vision of Europe. *“The EU is a community of values and today we need a more ambitious and a more democratic EU that looks beyond Brexit. So let’s jointly push for a citizens’ convention in 2018. Let’s put Culture and Sustainable Development at the heart of EU priorities and policies.”* He also underlined that 2018 as the European Year of Cultural Heritage is an opportunity to mobilize positive forces for the future of Europe.

At the beginning of the Plenary Session on Thursday, the EESC also welcomed the President of the European Committee of the Regions **Karl-Heinz Lambertz** and discussed possible ways for cooperation between the two committees.

Background:

In April 2017 President Juncker asked the EESC to set out the views and priorities of the EU’s civil society organisations on the future development of the European Union, on the basis of the Commission’s [White Paper on the Future of Europe](#) published in March 2017. The Committee adopted a [resolution](#) on 5 July 2017 as the EESC’s first contribution to the EU-wide debate on the future of Europe. In May and June 2017 the EESC held a series of national debates, in the 27 Member States concerned, to hear the views of civil society organisations on the five scenarios in the White Paper on the Future of Europe. A compilation of the outcome of these national debates is available [here](#).

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[Speech by Michel Barnier in front of the Committees of Foreign Affairs and](#)

the Committees of European Affairs of the Italian Parliament

Presidents,

Members of Parliament,

I am happy to be here to give you an update on the ongoing negotiations.

At midnight on 29 March 2019, the United Kingdom will leave the European Union and will become a third country. This is the UK's sovereign decision. It must be respected.

The question facing us over the coming months is serious, but simple: will the United Kingdom leave in an orderly fashion with an agreement, or not?

From our side, I repeat once again that an agreement is the best outcome. It is in our common interest.

But if we want a deal, time is of the essence. The Treaty on European Union foresees a period of two years to negotiate withdrawal.

- 6 months have gone by since Theresa May's letter on 29 March 2017.
- 6 months will be necessary to allow for ratification before 29 March 2019.

There is therefore only one year left:

- To swiftly reach an agreement on the United Kingdom's orderly withdrawal and to provide certainty where Brexit has created uncertainty: for citizens, for beneficiaries of EU programmes, for the new borders, particularly in Ireland.
- To subsequently define the length and precise conditions of a short transition period, if the British government requests one.
- To begin scoping our future relationship, in parallel to the finalisation of the withdrawal agreement.

The sooner we make real "sufficient progress" on the conditions of the UK's withdrawal, the sooner we can begin discussing our future partnership.

This was the approach set out unanimously by the European Council on 29 April in its guidelines. Above all, this approach is an essential condition for the success of these negotiations.

- Putting things in the right order is the best way to deal with the uncertainty created by Brexit, and the best way to create the necessary trust between us for our ambitious future relationship.
- If we didn't do this, and allowed the uncertainty to continue, and

pushed these difficult subjects to the end of the negotiations, then we would run the risk of failure in the absence of trust between us.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are a few days away from the fourth round of negotiations. I am asking myself questions.

I'm wondering why – beyond the progress we've made on certain points – there is still today major uncertainty on each of the key issues of the first phase.

To make progress, we are waiting for clear commitments from the UK on these precise issues.

We will listen attentively and constructively to Theresa May's important speech tomorrow in Florence.

1/ On citizens' rights, our priority in this negotiation:

- The issue of guaranteeing the rights of EU citizens in the United Kingdom has not been solved.
- It is absolutely necessary that all these citizens, hundreds of thousands of whom are Italian citizens living and working in the United Kingdom, can continue to live as they did before, with the same rights and safeguards.
- This is a human and social question, which the European Parliament and its president, Antonio Tajani, are vigilantly watching, and rightly so.
- Citizens should be able to enforce their rights directly from the withdrawal agreement. This would prevent any possible dilution of these rights, if the rules implementing them in the UK were to change.
- In the same way, we want these rights to be valid in national courts and that national courts have the possibility – or even the obligation – to refer questions related to the interpretation of rights deriving from European law to the Court of Justice of the European Union. The Court of Justice would remain the ultimate guarantor of the agreement.
- This is for a simple reason: rights need to be effectively guaranteed.
- Our citizens have real concerns today – which we share – when the Home Office sends deportation letters or appears to defy High Court orders, as we read in the press.
- Our position on this point has been clear since the beginning. We want to provide the strongest safeguards for the rights of citizens on both sides of the Channel. We are waiting for the United Kingdom to express the same wish.

2/ On the financial settlement:

- All that is necessary in this negotiation is that everyone honours the commitments that they have made to each other. To settle the accounts. No more, no less.
- To settle the accounts in an objective manner, on the basis of all commitments made at 28.
- We want to provide – and we must provide – certainty for project managers working in Europe, such as in Italy and its regions, and in other continents, such as Africa, on the basis of the commitment of the 28.
- But beyond money, this is a question of trust between the 27 and the United Kingdom, based on the respect of one's signature. And everyone knows that we will need this trust to create a solid relationship in the future.

3/ Finally, on Ireland, and the Border in particular, we must act responsibly to respect both the Good Friday Agreement in all its parts and the integrity of the Single Market. We are advancing, but there is still more political work to be done.

As I was saying, I am asking myself questions. These questions, as far as I see it, should not be controversial because this is about protecting our citizens, our businesses, our partners, and the credibility of our promises.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Once we have clarity on these points, we should also define the precise conditions for a possible transition period, if the British government requests one.

This period would begin on 30 March 2019, when the United Kingdom is no longer a member of the European institutions, and therefore no longer takes part in the decision-making process.

An important point: this short transition period will be part of the Article 50 withdrawal agreement.

Without a withdrawal agreement, there is no transition. This is a point of law.

I would like to be very clear: if we are to extend for a limited period the *acquis* of the EU, with all its benefits, then logically *"this would require existing Union regulatory, budgetary, supervisory, judiciary and enforcement instruments and structures to apply"* – as recalled in the mandate I received from the European Council, under the authority of President Donald Tusk.

I am convinced that a rapid agreement on the conditions of the UK's orderly withdrawal, and a transition period, is possible.

For that to happen, we would like the United Kingdom to put on the table, as

soon as next week, proposals to overcome the barriers.

To quote Machiavel: *“Dove c’è una grande volontà, non possono esserci grandi difficoltà.”*[\[1\]](#).

For all the reasons I have just explained, I repeat that an agreement on the orderly withdrawal is a precondition for any constructive and trustworthy discussion on our future relationship with the United Kingdom.

We want this future relationship!

Ladies and gentlemen,

It was here, in Rome, that the founding treaty of our Union was signed in 1957. And it was here that the Heads of State and Government of the 27 decided, 60 years later, to refound our Union.

This decision was not only symbolic. It has now given a new dynamic to the 27.

This is what President Juncker said in his important State of the Union speech, in the European Parliament on 13 September.

At a time when we are accelerating economically and politically at 27, we are of course open to future cooperation with the United Kingdom, within the framework of a close partnership.

We have been a Global Europe for quite some time now.

We have trade deals with 60 countries with whom we trade goods and services, whilst respecting our social, environmental, data protection and food safety standards.

And we will continue to do so: with Canada and Japan, with Mexico and Mercosur, soon with Australia and New Zealand, as President Juncker announced in his speech last week.

We will obviously continue to trade with the United Kingdom.

The future trade deal with the United Kingdom will be particular, as it will be less about building convergence, and more about controlling future divergence. This is key to establishing fair competition.

Naturally, if the United Kingdom wanted to go further than the type of free trade agreement we have just signed with Canada, there are other models on the table.

For example, Norway and Iceland have chosen to be in the Single Market, to accept the rules, and to contribute financially to cohesion policy.

But one thing is sure: it is not – and will not – be possible for a third country to have the same benefits as the Norwegian model but the limited

obligations of the Canadian model.

And naturally, any agreement must respect the regulatory autonomy of the EU, as well as the integrity of its legal order.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This new relationship will go well beyond a trade relationship and will also involve an external, security and defence dimension.

Under the initiative of Federica Mogherini – and as Italy has often advocated – the EU is moving forward. We are strengthening our ability to work together at our borders, and occasionally beyond.

We want to invest together, to do research together and to develop our common capabilities, with particular thanks to the European Defence Fund, as proposed by the European Commission.

The UK will also become a third country in these areas. But because this is about the stability and security of our continent, the EU and the UK should be ready to cooperate in due course.

There should be an unconditional commitment to the security and stability of our continent, as the UK government's paper correctly stated recently. There can be no trade off here.

We are tied to the UK through a community of values and destiny.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The dialogue we are having here today – as in all national parliaments – is essential because our future partnership with the United Kingdom, and its legal text in the form of a treaty, will have to be ratified by you, when the time comes.

Once again, the future of the Union is our priority, not Brexit.

We will advance together, without delay.

Beyond trade policy, our security and our defence, the EU is taking new initiatives in many other areas, such as research, innovation, the digital agenda, energy, the fight against climate change, and migration.

Allow me therefore to conclude by repeating the words of your President of the Council, Paolo Gentiloni, when he was commenting on the return of the European spirit and economic growth: *"This is not the time to relax, but to take advantage of the momentum, to take the European project into our hands and bring it into the future."*^[2]

^[1] "Where the willingness is great, the difficulties cannot be great".

[2]“Non è il momento del relax, ma di approfittare di questo slancio, per prendere in mano tutti insieme questo progetto e riportarlo ancora una volta tutti in avanti”. (Etats généraux des Italiens dans les institutions européennes, 23 juin 2017)

[Pressemitteilung: Prüfer veröffentlichen Prüfungsvorschau \(Audit Brief\) über EU-Maßnahmen zur Verringerung der durch Luftverschmutzung verursachten Gesundheitsrisiken](#)

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[Press release: Auditors publish briefing on EU action to reduce health risks from air pollution](#)

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[Daily News 21 / 09 / 2017](#)

Commission sets out path towards fair taxation of the Digital Economy

The European Commission launched today a new EU agenda to ensure that the digital economy is taxed in a fair and growth-friendly way. The current tax framework does not fit with modern realities. The tax rules in place today were designed for the traditional economy and cannot capture activities which are increasingly based on intangible assets and data. As a result, the effective tax rate of digital companies in the EU is estimated to be half that of traditional companies – and often much less. At the same time, patchwork unilateral measures by Member States to address the problem threaten to create new obstacles and loopholes in the Single Market. The

[Communication](#) adopted by the Commission today sets out the challenges Member States currently face when it comes to acting on this pressing issue and outlines possible solutions to be explored. The aim is to ensure a coherent EU approach to taxing the digital economy that supports the Commission's key priorities of completing the Digital Single Market and ensuring the fair and effective taxation of all companies. Today's Communication paves the way for a legislative proposal on EU rules for the taxation of profits in the digital economy, as confirmed by President **Juncker** in the [2017 State of the Union](#). Those rules could be set out as early as spring 2018. Today's paper should also feed into international work in this area, notably in the G20 and the OECD. For more information, please consult the [press release](#) and [Q&A](#). (For more information: Vanessa Mock – Tel.: +32 229 56194; Patrick McCullough – Tel: +32 229 87183)

Juncker Plan set to trigger €236.1 billion across the EU

The Investment Plan for Europe – the so-called Juncker Plan – is now expected to trigger €236.1 billion in investments. Following this month's meeting of the [European Investment Bank's](#) (EIB) Board of Directors, operations approved under the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) now represent a total financing volume of €46.5 billion and are located in all 28 Member States. The EIB has approved 312 EFSI-backed operations, supported by €36.1 billion in EFSI financing. The European Investment Fund (EIF) has also approved 306 SME financing agreements, with total financing under the EFSI of €10.4 billion. Around 454,000 small and medium-sized businesses are expected to benefit from improved access to finance as a result of these EIF agreements. The European Commission and the EIB Group estimate that the EFSI has so far supported 300,000 jobs across the EU. By 2020 that figure should be 700,000. On 13 September, the European Parliament and Member States came to an [agreement in principle](#) on EFSI 2.0 – the extension and reinforcement of the European Fund for Strategic Investments. (For more information about the EFSI 2.0 agreement, see our [EFSI 2.0 Q&A](#), and for more details on Investment Plan projects and results see the new and updated [website](#) or contact Annika Breidhardt – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Siobhán Millbright – Tel.: +32 229 57361)

EU – US Privacy Shield: Commissioner Jourová wraps up the meetings with US administration on the annual review

Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, Vera **Jourová**, concluded the joint review meetings of the EU-U.S. Privacy Shield, with a phone call with US Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross. The aim of the two-day exercise in the US was to investigate how the US commitments are being met through exchanges on the underlying US legal framework in place and on the functioning of the oversight mechanisms. Both sides agreed that the Privacy Shield is key for the data exchanges in transatlantic relations and expressed mutual commitment to making the Privacy Shield a success. Commissioner **Jourová** said: *“The discussions over the past days were fruitful. I appreciate the commitment the US administration has showed to Transatlantic data transfers and to our concerns. The Privacy Shield can be a win-win for the EU and the US, if implemented correctly.”* The discussions with the US administration together with feedback from businesses, NGOs and other stakeholders will feed into the Commission's annual review report which will

be published in the second half of October. A joint press statement by Commissioner Jourová and US Secretary of Commerce Ross is available [online](#).

(For more information: Christian Wigand– Tel.: +32 229 62253; Mélanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659)

EU and China sign memorandum on water protection against pollution, wastage and climate change

Today, Commissioner for the Environment, Marine Affairs and Fisheries, Karmenu **Vella**, and Chinese Minister of Water Resources, Chen Lei, signed a Memorandum of Understanding to establish a Water Policy Dialogue between the EU and China. The signature which took place at the High Level Conference of the Water Platform in Turku, Finland, is a sign of political commitment to the co-operation on water policy, and will help implement the joint priorities between the EU and China in the water sector. Commissioner **Vella** said: *“Today’s signature of a Memorandum of Understanding on establishing an EU-China Water Policy Dialogue is not just welcome, it is essential. We are demonstrating our commitment to jointly address common water challenges. Water is the source of life. Climate change, pollution, increasing demand and wastage have put pressures like never before. We are showing that a global problem needs global action.”* The Dialogue between the EU and the Ministry of Water Resources will give political steer to the [Chinese Europe Water Platform](#) and cover a number of areas such as developing and enforcing legislation to protect water, integrated water resources management, dealing with water disasters, adaptation to climate change, and improving cooperation on international water issues. Today’s signature with China comes less than a year after the [EU – India Memorandum of Understanding on water cooperation](#). More information [here](#). *(For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: + 32 229 56172; Iris Petsa – Tel.: +32 229 93321)*

Cohesion Policy invests in a gas pipeline in Poland

€79 million from the [European Regional Development Fund](#) will cover a part of the construction costs of the 130 km-long Zdzieszowice – Wrocław pipeline in South-West Poland. The new pipeline will reinforce the existing regional gas transmission system and increase its capacity. Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina **Crețu** said: *“This Cohesion Policy project improving gas connectivity in Eastern Europe is a concrete example of EU solidarity. We invest in thousands of transport, digital and energy networks throughout Europe so our Union can grow faster and ever closer.”* Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy Miguel **Arias Cañete** said: *“Well-connected energy infrastructure is essential to achieving the Energy Union. This EU support will help fill existing gaps in energy infrastructure, putting us on the path to a truly connected European energy market. This is necessary to strengthen the security of energy supply and a more efficient use of the energy resources.”* The Zdzieszowice – Wrocław pipeline is part of the North-South Corridor included in the European Network of Transmission System Operators for Gas (ENTSO-G), Ten Year Network Development Plan (TYNDP) 2017, as an important part of the North-South gas interconnections in Central Eastern and South Eastern Europe. It was defined as a [project of common interest](#) for trans-European energy infrastructure. *(For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)*

Commission acts to prevent mis-selling of insurance products

The Commission has today adopted rules to protect consumers when they buy insurance products in the EU. New rules on product oversight and governance will for the first time oblige insurers to prioritise the interest of consumers when designing, developing and distributing all insurance products from 2018 onwards. In addition, new conduct of business rules will ensure that consumers benefit from a high level of protection when they invest their savings in insurance-based investment products, such as certain types of life-insurance policies. Sellers of insurance products will have to comply with new standards on preventing and managing conflicts of interest, and on accepting commissions and payments from third parties (so-called "inducements"). The rules also set out which information sellers must gather from their customers when providing advice and in which cases investment products might be sold with limited advice or without advice. The implementing rules adopted today, in the form of two delegated regulations, stem from the Insurance Distribution Directive (IDD). They will enter into force on 23 February 2018 along with the IDD, following scrutiny by the European Parliament and the Council. They follow the adoption in August 2017 of an implementing technical standard (ITS) on the Insurance Product Information Document (IPID). More information is available [online](#). (For more information: Vanessa Mock – Tel.: [+32 229 56194](tel:+3222956194); Letizia Lupini – Tel: [+32 229 51958](tel:+3222951958))

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Civica by Partners Group

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of Civica Group Ltd ("Civica") of the UK, by certain investment funds advised and/or managed by Partners Group AG or its affiliates of Switzerland. Civica is a provider of software and IT related services. Partners Group is a global private markets investment management company with portfolio companies active in various businesses. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, because the overlaps between the activities of Civica and Partners Group's portfolio companies, as well as their activities on related markets, are limited. 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.8616](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

EU at UN General Assembly: standing in for a credible rules-based global order

The European Union on Wednesday at the 72nd UN General Assembly demonstrated a strong commitment to multilateralism and joint solutions for global challenges. President of the European Council Donald **Tusk**, [speaking on behalf of the EU at the General Assembly](#), underlined the EU's support for the United Nations. First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** at a high-level ministerial event on the Role of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in the

Economic Empowerment of Women stressed that violence against women is a challenge for every society and that fighting for the rights for women is the way forward. He as well as High Representative/Vice-President Federica [Mogherini](#) also spoke at the Bloomberg Global Business Forum which brought together the public and private sector. High Representative/Vice-President **Mogherini**, most notably, [chaired the E3/EU+3 and Iran Ministerial Meeting on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action \(JCPOA\)](#). On top of a number of bilateral meetings, she also addressed a [high-level event on Libya under the auspices of the UN Secretary General](#), participated at a [trilateral EU-UN-African Union meeting](#) and delivered a [statement on behalf of the European Union at the ministerial meeting of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organisation \(CTBT\)](#), urging the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to make credible progress on its obligations to denuclearise. She also hosted an [informal session with Western Balkans leaders](#), where she was joined by Commissioner Johannes **Hahn**, who earlier in the day met with the Foreign Ministers of the region. Commissioners **Hahn** and Neven **Mimica** presented the European External Investment Plan as part of the EU's contribution to Global Goals at an event with UNDP, while Commissioner Christos **Stylianides** spoke at [humanitarian event on South Sudan](#). Commissioner Dimitris **Avramopoulos** [spoke at the event marking one year of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants](#), at the [GCTF Ministerial Meetings](#) as well as at a [high level event Preventing Terrorist Use of the Internet](#), where he highlighted the EU action in this field. On the agenda on Thursday a meeting of the Libya Quartet and a high level event on Syria. (For more information: Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Esther Osorio – Tel.: +32 229 62076)

Additional \$293.89 million in support to Iraq pledged at the [Ministerial event on Iraq](#)

A total of \$293.89 million additional support to Iraq was pledged on Wednesday at the Ministerial-level event on Iraq, co-chaired by the EU together with the Republic of Iraq, the US, UNOCHA and Germany. Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides** said: *“The end of the Mosul military campaign has marked the beginning of a new phase of international support to Iraq. A new phase in which the need for humanitarian aid and protection continues, in order to save and protect the lives of all Iraqis affected by the conflict. In addition, it is now more important than ever to bolster complementarities between humanitarian aid, stabilisation, early recovery and development support: this is crucial to enable Iraqi families to also rebuild their lives. The additional funding announced today by the EU is for lifesaving humanitarian action to the most vulnerable Iraqis, including survivors of violence, children who have lost their parents and childhood to the war. The European Union will stand by them”*. Funding aims to provide lifesaving support to the affected populations in retaken areas and those affected by displacement, including in the aftermath of the Mosul military campaign. It will also provide physical rehabilitation and gender-based, psychosocial and mental health support to the survivors of violence during the conflict. More information on EU support to Iraq in our factsheet [here](#). (For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz de Gordejuela –

Tel.: +32 229 65322; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)

EU and UN presented a new initiative worth €500 million to eliminate violence against women and girls

In order to help eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, the European Union and the United Nations have presented yesterday their new "Spotlight Initiative". At the official launch at the United Nations General Assembly in New York, High Representative/Vice President Federica **Mogherini** said: *"The European Union is committed to combatting all forms of violence against women and girls, as they undermine our core fundamental rights and values, such as dignity, access to justice and gender equality. We need first to ensure that we keep women and girls safe, in order to empower them to deploy their full potential."* Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development Neven **Mimica** added: *"Violence against women and girls is one of the greatest injustices of our time, which crosses all borders, generations, nationalities and communities. It deeply touches our hearts and our minds. And it is a serious barrier to any society's full development potential. To make a real change, I invite all partners to join our Spotlight Initiative for a world in which all women and girls can truly shine!"* Over the next few years, comprehensive programmes and large-scale targeted actions will be implemented to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, such as sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices, including female genital mutilation; trafficking and economic (labour) exploitation; femicide; and domestic and family violence. Core areas of intervention will include strengthening legislative frameworks, policies and institutions, preventive measures, access to services and improving data gathering in Africa, Latin America, Asia, the Pacific and the Caribbean. Read also our [press release](#), [Q&A \(MEMO\)](#) and [Joint Communiqué](#), and watch the interventions of High Representative/Vice President Federica **Mogherini** and Commissioner **Mimica** [here](#). (For more information: Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Esther Osorio – Tel.: +32 229 62076; Christina Wunder – Tel.: +32 229 92256)

Le Vice-Président Šefčovič et la Commissaire Bulc à Tallinn

Le Vice-Président pour l'Union de l'Énergie Maroš **Šefčovič** et la Commissaire aux Transports Violeta **Bulc** sont à Tallinn pour une série de discussions sur la politique européenne d'infrastructure dans le domaine des transports. Le dossier était à l'agenda du [Conseil informel Transport](#) organisé par la Présidence estonienne où le Vice-Président pour l'Union de l'Énergie **Šefčovič** a mené une rencontre conjointe des Ministres de transport et d'énergie (écouter [sa déclaration](#) sur EbS). Il a souligné que la modernisation de l'infrastructure et la réduction des gaz à effet de serre dans le transport vont de pair et qu'il convient d'y faire face ensemble. Quant à La Commissaire **Bulc**, elle a eu un échange de vue avec les ministres européens sur les besoins de financement pour l'après 2020 afin de mettre en œuvre le [réseau transeuropéen de transport](#). Selon les estimations de la Commission, ceux-ci sont de l'ordre de 500 milliards d'euros pour le seul réseau "central" lors de la période 2021-2030. Par ailleurs, la Commissaire **Bulc** a profité de cette réunion pour attirer l'attention des ministres sur le deuxième Journée européenne sans mort sur les routes ([projet EDWARD](#)) qui se tient aujourd'hui à travers l'Europe. A partir de cet après-midi, le Vice-

Président **Šefčovič** et la Commissaire **Bulc** participeront à la conférence "[Connecting Europe](#)" organisé conjointement avec la présidence estonienne. L'objectif est de réunir décideurs et parties prenantes afin de dresser un bilan des investissements d'infrastructure réalisés jusqu'à présent et d'identifier des actions et solutions de financement pour l'après 2020. La conférence est disponible en webstreaming à [cette adresse](#). (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Alexis Perier – Tel.: +32 229 6 91 43)

Commissioner Gabriel in Athens to talk about cybersecurity and digital priorities for Europe

Today, Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society Mariya **Gabriel** is in Athens to deliver a speech on "Digital Policy Priorities for Europe" in front of members of standing Committees on European Affairs and on Public Administration, Public Order and Justice of the Hellenic Parliament. The Commissioner's meetings include Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, Nikos Pappas, Greek Minister for Digital Policy, Telecommunications and Media, the first Vice-President of the Hellenic Parliament Anastasios Kourakis and Kyriakos Mitsotakis, President of the party Nea Dimokratia. She will also visit the site of the project "Development of e-prescription system and provision of related support services" in the e-Government Center for Social Security Services in Athens. Following the [Commission's proposals to scale up European tools to enhance cybersecurity in the EU](#), Commissioner **Gabriel** will also visit the European Union Agency for Network and Information Security (ENISA) Athens office on which the EU Cybersecurity Agency will be based. (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel. +32 229 67083; Inga Höglund – Tel.: +32 229 50698; Julia Bräuer – Tel.: +32 229 80707)

Urban Agenda for the EU: Commissioner Crețu meets mayors of capitals in Riga

Commissioner for Regional policy Corina **Crețu** attends the annual Capital Mayors meeting in Riga, Latvia, today and Friday to discuss the implementation of the [Urban Agenda for the EU](#). "I want capital cities to be strongly involved in the Urban Agenda for the EU", said the Commissioner ahead of the meeting, "they are on the forefront of most challenges faced by urban areas. In the current Cohesion policy framework, cities are given more autonomy to deal with the funds than ever; I'm also here to invite them to actively participate in the discussion on the future Cohesion Policy after 2020." During her visit to Latvia, Commissioner **Crețu** will also meet Dana Reizniece-Ozola, the Latvian Finance minister to discuss the future EU budget and Cohesion Policy. The Commission will report on the progress made under the Urban Agenda for the EU in October. The next Cities Forum on 27-28 November in Rotterdam will be another occasion to discuss the Urban Agenda further. (For further information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)

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