

Large prostitution ring dismantled

16 July 2018

On 3 July, a joint action day in France, Bulgaria and Germany resulted in searches of more than 20 locations and the arrest of 10 pimps.

The pimps had been operating since 2015, promising young Bulgarian women legal employment in France. The women were transported first to Germany and then to Strasbourg and Annecy, where they were forced into prostitution. The women were compelled to give their earnings to the pimps, who kept the women under close watch.

Eurojust held two coordination meetings, which led to the signing of a joint investigation team (JIT) agreement between France and Bulgaria. Eurojust also provided funding for the JIT.

The joint action day was carried out by authorities from JIRS Nancy, the Bulgarian Prosecutor General and the Prosecutor's Office of Oryahovo. The pimps were arrested in France, Bulgaria and Germany, charged with pimping, trafficking in human beings, organised crime and money laundering.

At the time of the arrests, several prostitutes were put in contact with support groups and organisations to help them return safely to their country.

Maldives: EU adopts a framework for targeted sanctions

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Uzbekistan: EU to open negotiations on new comprehensive agreement

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On 16 July 2018, the Council adopted negotiating directives for the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the European Commission to negotiate an Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Uzbekistan. The new agreement will replace the 1999 Partnership and Cooperation Agreement and further strengthen the EU-Uzbekistan relations.

The future agreement is expected to cover areas such as political dialogue and reforms, rule of law, justice, freedom and security, human rights, migration, trade, as well as economic and sustainable development. It will promote favourable business and investment environment. It will also provide for cooperation on foreign policy issues and global challenges such as climate change, corruption and the fight against terrorism.

Under its new leadership, Uzbekistan has achieved significant progress in recent years as regards reforms, to improve human rights, to develop regional cooperation with its Central Asian neighbours and international partners, and to promote security and stability in the region. Through the envisaged Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, the EU is ready to step up its engagement to further support these efforts and to bring the bilateral relations to a new level in the interest of both the EU and Uzbekistan.

[Visit the meeting page](#) [Download as pdf](#)

Mergers: Commission opens in-depth

investigation into Siemens proposed acquisition of Alstom

Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *“Trains and the signalling equipment that guide them are essential for transport in Europe. The Commission will investigate whether the proposed acquisition of Alstom by Siemens would deprive European rail operators of a choice of suppliers and innovative products, and lead to higher prices, which could ultimately harm the millions of Europeans who use rail transportation every day for work or leisure.”*

Siemens and Alstom are global leaders in rail transportation. Both companies have a wide product portfolio and compete in tenders for the manufacture and supply of:

- **high speed, mainline and urban rolling stock** (trains). High speed rolling stock includes trains operated for long-distance travel at speeds above 250 km/h, mainline rolling stock includes intercity and regional trains and urban rolling stock includes metros and trams.
- **mainline and urban signalling solutions**. Signalling solutions include signalling systems that provide safety controls on mainline and urban rail networks.

The proposed transaction would combine the two largest suppliers of rolling stock and signalling solutions in the European Economic Area (EEA) not only in terms of size of the combined operations, but also in terms of geographic footprint of their activities.

The Commission's competition concerns

At this stage, the Commission is concerned that the proposed transaction would reduce competition in the markets where the merged entity would be active. In particular, the Commission is concerned that the proposed transaction could lead to higher prices, less choice and less innovation due to reduced competitive pressure in rolling stock and signalling tenders. This would be to the detriment of train operators, infrastructure managers and ultimately European passengers who use trains and metros on a daily basis.

More specifically, the Commission's initial investigation found that:

- For **rolling stock**, the proposed transaction would remove a very strong competitor and reduce the number of suppliers. In relation to high speed trains, the Commission has examined the impact of the transaction both within the EEA and on a worldwide basis (excluding China, Japan and Korea which appear to have barriers preventing imports from foreign suppliers). On both of these geographic markets, the merged entity would be the undisputed market leader, over three times larger than the closest competitor. The merged entity will also become the market leader in mainline (including regional trains) and metro rolling stock in the

EEA. Furthermore, after the proposed transaction, competitors in the sector would struggle to compete against the merged entity's track-record and installed-base of rolling stock.

- For **signalling solutions**, the proposed transaction would remove a very strong competitor from several mainline and urban signalling markets. After the proposed transaction, the merged entity would become the undisputed market leader, with around three times the market share of the closest competitor, and would be unlikely to face significant competitive pressure.

Furthermore, at this stage the Commission has found that the entry of new competitors into the EEA rolling stock or signalling solutions markets, including in particular of potential Chinese suppliers, appears unlikely to occur in the foreseeable future.

The Commission will now carry out an in-depth investigation into the effects of the transaction to determine whether its initial competition concerns are confirmed.

The transaction was notified to the Commission on 8 June 2018. The Commission now has 90 working days, until 21 November 2018, to take a decision. The opening of an in-depth investigation does not prejudge the outcome of the investigation.

Companies and products

Siemens, based in Germany, is active worldwide in several industrial areas with its mobility division offering a broad portfolio of rolling stock, rail automation and signalling solutions, rail electrification systems, road traffic technology, IT solutions, as well as other products and services concerning the transportation of people and goods by rail and road.

Alstom, based in France, is active worldwide in the rail transport industry, offering a wide range of transport solutions (from high-speed trains to metros, trams and e-buses), personalised services (maintenance and modernisation) as well as products dedicated to passengers and infrastructure, signalling solutions, rail electrification systems and digital mobility.

Merger control rules and procedures:

The transaction was notified to the Commission on 8 June 2018.

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 a total of 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 four ongoing Phase II merger investigations: the [proposed acquisition of Solvay's nylon business by BASF](#), the [proposed acquisition of Tele2 NL by T-Mobile NL](#), the [proposed acquisition of Shazam by Apple](#) and [the proposed merger of Praxair and Linde](#).

More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the [public case register](#) under the case number [M.8677](#).

Main topics and media events 16 – 29 July 2018

Overview of the main subjects to be discussed at meetings of the Council of the EU over the next two weeks.

Foreign Affairs Council, Monday 16 July 2018

Foreign ministers will discuss the Eastern Partnership, Libya and North Korea.

Agriculture and Fisheries Council, Monday 16 July 2018

The Council will be informed about the Austrian presidency work programme and will have an exchange of views on the post 2020 CAP reform.

EU-CELAC ministerial meeting, Monday 16 and Tuesday 17 July 2018

Ministers of foreign affairs from the EU and from the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) will meet on 16-17 July in Brussels. **“Building bridges and strengthening our partnership to face global challenges”** is the theme of the meeting. At the end of the meeting, EU and CELAC ministers are expected to adopt a declaration.

General Affairs Council (Art. 50), Friday 20 July 2018

EU27 ministers will take stock of the state of play of Brexit negotiations.

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