

EU-Republic of Korea Summit: building on a well-established partnership

Jean-Claude **Juncker**, President of the European Commission and Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, represented the European Union at the Summit. The Republic of Korea was represented by its President, Moon Jae-in. The EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission, Federica **Mogherini** and EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström also participated, alongside several Ministers from the Republic of Korea.

*"In 2011, the EU agreed its first Free Trade Agreement with an Asian country. That country was the Republic of Korea", said President Jean-Claude **Juncker**. "The beneficiaries of this agreement have been our citizens and our businesses, but if our trade relationship is to reach its full potential, we need to ensure that it is being implemented properly. At the same time, we must continue to dispel the notion that protectionism protects, continue to invest in multilateralism, and continue to increase our cooperation in sustainable development and the implementation of the Paris climate agreement. I am confident that in the years to come, our relations will be even more dynamic and our ties even stronger than now."*

Presidents **Juncker**, Tusk and Moon committed to further develop the EU-Republic of Korea Strategic Partnership, which is underpinned by three concrete pillars: an enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement; an ambitious Free Trade Agreement; and a Framework Participation Agreement for EU crisis management operations. The Summit provided an opportunity to explore further areas for cooperation within the Strategic Partnership.

Discussions focused on the situation on the Korean Peninsula, the broader situation in the world, and trade relations. The Summit also provided an opportunity for the initialling, by the European Commission and the Republic of Korea, of a Horizontal Aviation agreement and the signing of a Joint Statement committing to work closely together to fight against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing.

Jointly addressing global challenges

The EU and Korea are united by common values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. The Leaders reaffirmed their strong commitment to multilateralism and the international rules-based order, politically and economically, while also supporting global action on climate change and the environment. The EU and Korea will continue promoting free, fair and rules-based trade, modernising the WTO-based multilateral trading system, and maintaining international cooperation against protectionism.

The Leaders discussed a number of pressing issues on the global agenda, chief

among them prospects for achieving lasting peace and security on a **Korean Peninsula free of nuclear weapons** and finding a comprehensive solution through diplomacy, while fully implementing the relevant UNSC Resolutions. The EU supports the Republic of Korea's efforts and diplomatic initiatives, in particular the three inter-Korean Summits and the US-DPRK Summit, and the implementation of their outcomes. The EU sees the development of inter-Korean relations, the denuclearisation of, and the establishment of a peace regime on the Korean Peninsula as vital for peace and security not only in East Asia, but for the entire world. In this context, the EU stressed the requirement for the **Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)** to completely, verifiably and irreversibly dismantle all its nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, ballistic missiles and related programmes and facilities.

The EU and the Republic of Korea reiterated their commitment to maintaining close coordination on foreign and security issues. In the field of **crisis management**, the EU and the Republic of Korea will continue the good cooperation under the EU-Republic of Korea Framework Participation Agreement, through which the Republic of Korea has regularly contributed to the EU's naval counter-piracy operation off the coast of the Horn of Africa, EU NAVFOR Atalanta. Similarly, they discussed and agreed to cooperate more closely on implementing the 2030 Agenda for **Sustainable Development** and achieving its Sustainable Development Goals, and will bolster their bilateral policy dialogue on international development issues and promote joint cooperation in areas and third countries of mutual interest, notably in Asia and Africa.

Expanding the bilateral agenda to bring further benefits to citizens

The leaders recalled that the EU-Republic of Korea **Free Trade Agreement** has been an economic success that has increased wealth on both sides. The EU is Korea's 3rd largest trading partner and Korea the EU's 8th largest; annual trade in goods between the EU and Korea is now worth about €100 billion. With that in mind, the leaders exchanged views on how to ensure that our citizens and businesses can reap the full benefits of the agreement. The EU highlighted several important issues: for example, ensuring the full implementation of the long-standing, binding labour commitments under the Trade and Sustainable Development Chapter; opening the Korean market to EU beef from all EU Member States; and fully implementing commitments in the area of intellectual property rights, including protecting new Geographical Indications.

The Summit also provided an opportunity for the European Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Karmenu **Vella**, and Kim Young-Choon, Minister for Oceans and Fisheries of the Republic of Korea [to sign a joint statement](#) committing to work closely together to fight against **Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing**. The Republic of Korea is the fourth country with whom the EU signs such a joint statement as part of its efforts to tackle the most serious threats to sustainable fishing and to marine biodiversity in the world's oceans, with devastating environmental and socio-economic consequences. The new partnership, in line with the objectives of the [EU's Ocean Governance strategy](#), will help exchange information about suspected Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated activities, enhance

traceability of fishery products and promote sustainable fishing through education and training.

Excellent progress has been made in the area of transport, where this week the European Commission and the Republic of Korea initialled a **Horizontal Aviation Agreement** on certain aspects of air services. The agreement will restore legal certainty to all 22 bilateral air services agreements that the Republic of Korea has with EU Member States by bringing these into conformity with EU law. The number of passengers travelling directly between the Republic of Korea and the EU has grown on average 10.1% over the past five years, totalling 3.4 million passengers in 2017. Currently, direct passenger flights are operated between 10 EU Member States and the Republic of Korea. The Horizontal Aviation Agreement reflects this growth in the EU-Republic of Korea aviation market and should serve as a catalyst for increased flows. More information is available [online](#).

Leaders also stressed their commitment to implementing the **Paris climate agreement**. To [translate this political commitment into concrete projects](#), the EU has set up a platform to exchange best practice on climate action and support the implementation of the Korean Government's Emissions Trading System (ETS) to reach the goals of the Paris Agreement. The EU's Partnership Instrument also financially supports exchanges of cultural practitioners and artists from both the EU and Korea, economic cooperation between companies, as well as the promotion of research and teaching on EU-related issues in Korea, adding to the overall breadth of the relationship.

Further Information

[EU-Republic of Korea Summit website](#)

[EU-Republic of Korea relations factsheet](#)

[Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Korea website](#)

[Support to the EU-Republic of Korea Strategic Partnership under the Partnership Instrument](#)

EESC gives European Parliament, Commission and Council fresh input for improving economic governance in the EU



At its October plenary session, the EESC adopted a package of three opinions

on EU economic governance, providing European decision-makers with new input for the ongoing discussions on deepening Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and the next European Semester exercise.

In its opinions on EMU the Committee endorses the European Commission's proposals to establish a Reform Support Programme (RSP) and a European Investment Stabilisation Function (EISF) for the new multiannual EU budget (2021-2027). The RSP and the EISF are designed to support structural reforms and public investment in the Member States. The idea to anchor them in the EU budget is, in the EESC's view, a welcome step towards improving economic integration and governance at EU level.

In its [opinion on the RSP](#), the EESC recommends **monitoring the social impact** of structural reforms carried out with the support of the new instrument and **extending the programme** to projects of pan-European importance.

In the Committee's view, the success of the RSP will depend on **fine-tuning** a number of issues that remain open: *"The definition of structural reforms, the procedures for their evaluation and therefore the conditions for disbursement of funds must be further clarified"*, said the rapporteur for the EESC opinion, **Petr Zahradník**. Moreover, the EESC feels that a programme that provides **retrospective payment** will not give Member States enough of an incentive to carry out major structural reforms on a voluntary basis.

Synergies between the programmes in the EU budget 2021-2027 and **cooperation amongst Member States** could make funding from the RSP more efficient, says the EESC. In this connection, it calls for the development of a practical manual for beneficiaries and for the creation of a cooperation platform for matters relating to the form and nature of structural reforms.

The [EESC opinion on the EISF](#) notes that the financial crisis revealed the Member States' difficulties in maintaining stability in public investment when faced with an economic downturn. This had spill-over effects in other Member States. The proposed EISF would therefore be a useful supporting tool. It aims to make national fiscal policies more resilient to asymmetric shocks, helping to stabilise public investment and support economic recovery. Nevertheless, the **EESC is concerned about the size of the facility**, which might be insufficient in the event of shocks affecting two or more Member States.

The Committee also believes that having unemployment as the sole **criterion for the activation of support** may reduce the timeliness and effectiveness of the tool. The EESC rapporteur, **Philip von Brockdorff**, said in this regard: *"Other complementary criteria, like the change in exports of goods and services or the change in the level of inventories, can indicate an impending large shock even earlier than the unemployment indicator. Considering these criteria will allow us to trigger support at an initial stage before large shocks happen."*

In addition, it is important to develop the instrument further and look into how a **union-wide insurance mechanism** that acts as an automatic stabiliser amidst macroeconomic shocks could operate. *"Such a tool would be more*

*effective than the proposed EISF, which represents something of an interim solution”, added the EESC co-rapporteur, **Michael Smyth**.*

The third opinion of the EESC’s economic governance package is about the [euro area economic policy 2018](#). Based on previous opinions on the issue, it calls for a **positive aggregate fiscal stance** by the euro area. This is justified both by external factors such as the foreseeable effects of trade protectionism and global geopolitical risks, and by internal factors such as the end of ECB’s expansionary monetary policy, the alarming investment deficit which leads to low productivity growth and the existence of excessive current account surpluses in major states. Greater investment spending in surplus countries would be an economic policy necessity – for the countries themselves, for the euro area and for the EU as a whole.

Finally, the opinion, drawn up by rapporteur **Javier Doz Orrit**, emphasises with regard to the issue of **wage growth** that wages must be determined by the social partners and that the European Semester must strengthen collective bargaining. Creating **favourable environments for business investment and innovation** should be a priority for economic policy, as should be **reducing job insecurity, poverty and inequality**.

The three economic governance opinions which were adopted at the EESC’s October plenary session will now be forwarded to the decision-makers – European Parliament, Council and Commission – in a bid to present the consensual views of organised civil society and thus facilitate the on-going political debate in this field. The Commission is expected to come up with the next draft recommendation on the euro area economic policy in November, while the strategic issues of EMU deepening have been featuring high on the agendas of the latest Eurogroup and Euro Summit meetings. **For more information on the related EESC activities please click [here](#).**

[European Council conclusions, 18 October 2018](#)

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ASEM Summit: Meeting of 54 leaders from Asia and Europe gets under way in Brussels

The 12th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Summit kicks off this evening in Brussels, with Commission President Jean-Claude **Juncker** and Council President Donald Tusk representing the European Union. They will be joined by EU High Representative/Vice-President Federica **Mogherini** and Commission Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen** for a Summit of 51 countries from across Europe and Asia, in addition to the ASEAN Secretary General. Over two days and under the title “Global Partners for Global Challenges”, leaders will discuss how Europe and Asia can develop their partnership across the three pillars of ASEM: political; economic and financial; and social and cultural. President **Juncker** will address leaders tomorrow morning on the topic of reinforcing the multilateral system: advancing the ASEM partnership on global issues. One month after the Commission and the High Representative presented their [proposal to strengthen connectivity between Europe and Asia](#), and a few days after EU Foreign Ministers [adopted conclusions on the topic](#), ASEM leaders will look at ways of [enhancing sustainable connectivity](#) between the two regions, which together account for 55% of global trade, 60% of the world’s population, 65% of global GDP, and 75% of global tourism. Other topics for discussion include trade and investment, sustainable development and climate, and security challenges such as terrorism, non-proliferation, cyber security and irregular migration. A number of bilateral agreements are set to be signed in the margins of the ASEM Summit, including free trade, investment protection and partnership and cooperation agreements with Singapore, and an agreement on forest law enforcement, governance and trade with Vietnam. A press conference, including the participation of President **Juncker**, is foreseen for 15:30 on Friday and will be live on [EbS](#). More information on the ASEM Summit is available on the [website](#), in a [factsheet](#) and a [brochure](#); more information on the trade and investment agreements with Singapore is available [online](#). The ASEM Summit will be followed by the [9th EU-Republic of Korea Summit](#) and an EU-ASEAN Leaders’ Meeting ([factsheet](#)). *(For more information: Mina Andreeva – Tel.: +32 229 91382; Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Adam Kaznowski – Tel: +32 229 89359)*

EU and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation join forces to support health services in Africa

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation will contribute €54 million to EU efforts

to strengthen diagnostic health services in Sub-Saharan Africa under the EU's [External Investment Plan](#) (EIP). This cooperation will help to mobilise private investment in laboratory facilities providing timely, cost-effective and accurate diagnostic services for diseases such as tuberculosis, HIV, and malaria, as well as support maternal and child healthcare. Under this collaboration between the EU and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, poorer people in low-income African countries will have better access to higher quality testing and, therefore, better chances of proper treatment. The articulation of this programme followed the [announcement](#) of President **Juncker** and Bill **Gates** earlier in the year on the Gates Foundation's intention to contribute to the EIP. Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven **Mimica**, said: *"Together with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, we are showcasing the EU's engagement in Africa. Through the Gates Foundation's contribution of €54 million to our External Investment Plan, we will unlock private investment in a sector where additional investments in state-of-the-art testing facilities are urgently needed in order to meet the health needs of ample sectors of the population. This also shows that our approach under the 'Africa – Europe Alliance' works and is attractive to other stakeholders."* The full [press release](#) is available online. (For more information: Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Christina Wunder – Tel.: +32 229 92256)

Pays-Bas: un meilleur accès au Port de Rotterdam et moins d'embouteillage dans la région grâce au Plan Juncker

La Banque européenne d'investissement (BEI) a signé un prêt de 330 millions d'euros, bénéficiant du soutien du Fonds européen pour les investissements stratégiques (EFSI) du [Plan Juncker](#), pour la construction et l'entretien sur 20 ans de la "connexion Blankenburg", une section routière reliant les autoroutes A15 et A20 aux Pays-Bas. Cette nouvelle connexion permettra un meilleur accès au port de Rotterdam, l'un des principaux ports européens. Tout en facilitant le transport de biens vers ce pôle d'activité majeur, ce projet contribuera aussi à améliorer la qualité de vie des habitants de la région, en désengorgeant le trafic aux abords du port ainsi que sur les autoroutes alentours menant à la capitale, Amsterdam, et en direction de la Belgique. La Commissaire au Transport, Violeta **Bulc**, a déclaré: *«Ce prêt rendu possible par le Plan d'Investissement pour l'Europe aidera à décongestionner le trafic autour du port de Rotterdam, pour le bénéfice des habitants. Tout ce que nous faisons dans le domaine des transports, c'est à propos des gens, et pour les gens. Enfin, cet investissement rejoint une réserve déjà impressionnante de projets de transport; à ce jour, le Fonds européen pour les investissements stratégiques a apporté son soutien à 68 projets de transport, ce qui va mobiliser 27,6 milliards d'euros.»*. En Octobre, le Plan Juncker a déjà mobilisé plus de 344 milliards d'euros d'investissement supplémentaires à travers l'Europe, dont 8,3 milliards d'euros aux Pays-Bas. (Un communiqué de presse complet est en ligne [ici](#). Pour plus d'informations: Christian Spahr – Tél.: +32 229 50055; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)

Marché unique numérique : un répertoire des films européens pour en faciliter l'accès en ligne

A l'occasion du Marché international du film classique à Lyon, la Commissaire Mariya **Gabriel**, chargée de l'économie et de la société numériques, présentera aujourd'hui le prototype d'un répertoire des films européens, une action phare de la [stratégie Digital4Culture](#) qui s'inscrit également dans le cadre de [l'Année européenne 2018 du patrimoine culturel](#). Lancé avec l'aide de l'Observatoire européen de l'audiovisuel, le nouveau répertoire permettra aux professionnels, autorités publiques et citoyens d'accéder à des informations sur les films européens et leur disponibilité en ligne dans les services de vidéo à la demande (VOD) dans tous les pays de l'UE. La commissaire **Gabriel** a déclaré : *"Il nous appartient d'agir pour que les œuvres européennes rencontrent l'audience qu'elles méritent. La transformation numérique a un potentiel déterminant pour renforcer les effets positifs de la culture, tant au plan économique que sociétal. C'est là l'objectif du Répertoire des films européens, et plus largement l'enjeu de notre stratégie #Digital4Culture: tirer avantage de cette connexion fructueuse entre technologies numériques et culture."* Tibor **Navracsics**, commissaire chargé de l'éducation, de la culture, de la jeunesse et du sport, a ajouté : *"Le patrimoine culturel de l'Europe ne comprend pas seulement des monuments, la littérature, la peinture ou diverses traditions, il inclut aussi l'extraordinaire richesse de notre patrimoine cinématographique. Je me félicite de cette initiative prise dans le cadre de l'Année européenne du patrimoine culturel qui permettra de faciliter l'accès aux films européens, d'hier et d'aujourd'hui, au plus grand nombre".* Le lancement de la version bêta est prévu pour le printemps 2019 avant celui de la version définitive à la fin de l'année prochaine. Plus d'information est disponible dans ce [communiqué de presse](#) et dans cette [fiche d'information](#) (Pour plus d'information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: +32 229 56184)

First Croatian Erasmus+ Master Loan agreement signed

The European Investment Fund and Privredna banka Zagreb have today signed the first Erasmus+ Master Loan guarantee agreement in Croatia. It will provide loans at favourable conditions to students from Croatia studying for their Master's degrees in one of the other 32 Erasmus+ programme countries. Worth €600,000, it is backed by the [Erasmus+ Master Loan Guarantee Scheme](#). 40 Master's students are expected to benefit. Tibor **Navracsics**, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, said: *"I very much welcome this new agreement with Privredna Banka Zagreb. Erasmus+ loan guarantee agreements are key to make studying abroad the norm for all European students, no matter what their country of origin or financial situation at home is."* The Erasmus+ Master Degree Loan Guarantee Scheme has been running since June 2015, with banks and higher education institutions in six countries now participating. More than 3,000 students can complete a Master's degree abroad thanks to Erasmus+ guarantees worth €8.5 million. Further information is available in today's [press release](#) by the European Investment Fund and Privredna banka Zagreb. More information on the Erasmus+ programme can be found [here](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: +32 229 56184)

Commission disburses aid to Greece, Poland, Lithuania and Bulgaria following natural disasters

Four Member States hit by natural disasters in 2017 – Greece, Poland, Lithuania and Bulgaria – will shortly receive a total amount of €34 million of aid from the [EU Solidarity Fund](#) (EUSF), following approval of the [Commission's proposal](#) by Parliament and Council. Commissioner for Regional policy Corina Cretu said: *"We had promised not to leave our Member States alone. We promised that we would help them bounce back. Today we are concretely delivering on our promises. Within a few weeks, EU assistance will reach these countries and help cover the costs of the damages caused by natural disasters in Bulgaria, Greece, Lithuania and Poland."* The amount of €34 million is divided as follows: €2.5 million for the Greek island of Kos after the July 2017 earthquake, €12.2 million for Poland after the August 2017 storms and rainfalls, almost €17 million for Lithuania following the 2017 rainfall and floods and €2.2 million for Bulgaria after the storms and floods of October 2017. Money from the EU Solidarity Fund will be used to support reconstruction efforts and cover some of the costs of emergency services, temporary accommodation, clean-up operations and the protection of cultural heritage, to relieve the financial burden borne by national authorities in the wake of natural disasters. Since the EUSF was set up in 2002, after more than 80 disasters – including floods, forest fires, earthquakes, storms and drought – [24 countries have received EUSF aid](#) totaling more than €5 billion for emergency and recovery operations. (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615, Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)

Commission invests €124 million in innovative projects

The Commission is today supporting 38 projects to develop new ideas for radically innovative future technologies. The projects will receive near €3 million each for collaborative and inter-disciplinary research into topics ranging from quantum computing, removing space objects from orbit to fighting brain viruses. They have been selected under the [European Innovation Council \(EIC\)](#) pilot phase, which targets fast-moving, high-risk innovative products, services or business models with strong potential to create new markets. Carlos Moedas, Commissioner for Science, Research and Innovation, said: *"Through the European Innovation Council (EIC), we support future and emerging breakthrough technologies, which are key to unlocking many of the secrets to a better future and society. We are investing in innovative ideas and the individuals behind them to create new markets of the future."* The projects selected today will receive funding under the [Future and Emerging Technologies](#) strand of the €2.7 billion EIC Pilot, which runs between 2018-2020 under the [Horizon 2020](#) EU Research and Innovation Programme. To date, the EIC pilot has already supported 1599 projects with €967.22 million in funding. As announced in the [Renewed Agenda for Research and Innovation](#), the Commission has also proposed to follow up on this pilot phase by establishing a full-scale European Innovation Council that will offer a one-stop shop for high potential and breakthrough technologies, as well as for innovative companies with potential for scaling up. A news item with more details about today's announcement is available [here](#). (For more information: Lucia Caudet – Tel.: +32 229 56182, Mirna Talko – Tel.: +32 229 87278)

EU and the Republic of Korea join forces in fight against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing

Today, the EU and the Republic of Korea have pledged to work closely together to fight against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing with a joint statement signed by European Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Karmenu **Vella**, and Mr Kim Young-Choon, Minister for Oceans and Fisheries of the Republic of Korea. The signing took place on the eve of a bilateral [EU-Republic of Korea Summit](#). Commissioner **Vella** said:

"Putting an end to illegal fishing is one of the main objectives of the EU's international ocean governance agenda. By joining forces with the Republic of Korea, a world player in fisheries, we send a clear message to those breaking international law that there is no place for such products on our markets and we will continue to fight illegal fishing until we have fully eradicated it."

The new partnership, in line with the objectives of the [EU's Ocean Governance strategy](#), will help exchange information about suspected IUU-activities, enhance traceability of fishery products and promote sustainable fishing through education and training. Globally, IUU fishing is estimated to deprive coastal communities and honest fishermen of up to 20 billion euros of seafood and seafood products per year. A [press release](#) is available online. (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: + 32 229 56172; Daniela Stoycheva – Tel.: +32 229 53664)

Competition: EU and China further dialogue on competition policy at 17th Competition Week in Beijing

In the current international climate, there is a strong need for dialogue with our international partners to promote cooperation and find solutions for the challenges of globalisation. In this context officials and experts from the EU and China met in Beijing from 15 to 18 October to advance cooperation and exchange practical experiences on competition policy. The 17th EU-China Competition Week marked the beginning of a dialogue between the European Commission and China's newly established State Administration for Market Regulation (SAMR). Participants discussed a wide range of topics, in particular State aid rules and fair competition review. This follows the [Memorandum of Understanding](#) that the EU and China signed on 1 June 2017 to start a dialogue on State aid control. The EU-China Competition Week is part of the [Competition Cooperation project](#), a 5-year EU-funded programme offering technical cooperation to competition authorities in Asia. It builds on a longstanding practice of competition dialogue between the EU and anti-monopoly enforcement agencies in China. The objective is to exchange experiences and strengthen convergence in competition policy, to the benefit of citizens and businesses in both in the EU and in Asia. More information about the European Commission's bilateral dialogue with China in the field of competition policy is available on the Commission's [website](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

State aid: Commission decides to withdraw Court action against Ireland for failure to recover illegal aid to Apple

Following the confirmation by Ireland that the full recovery of the illegal State aid granted to Apple has been finalised, the Commission has today decided to withdraw its Court action against Ireland. On [30 August 2016](#), the Commission adopted a State aid decision finding that Ireland had granted undue tax benefits of up to €13 billion to Apple. The Commission concluded that these tax benefits were illegal under EU State aid rules as they allowed Apple to pay substantially less tax on profits recorded in Ireland than other companies subject to same national taxation laws and ordered Ireland to recover the amount of taxes that should have been paid by Apple. The deadline for Ireland to implement the Commission's decision and recover the illegal State aid was 3 January 2017. In view of the delay in recovery, on [4 October 2017](#) the Commission referred Ireland to the European Court of Justice for failure to recover the illegal State aid granted to Apple. On 6 September 2018, Ireland completed the recovery of the aid. A total of €14.3 billion including interest was repaid by Apple into an escrow fund pending the final judgments of the EU courts in the actions for annulment of the Commission decision brought by Ireland (Case [T-778/16](#)) and Apple (Case [T-892/16](#)). Taking into account that the payment into the escrow fund of the illegal aid removed the distortion of competition caused by that aid, the Commission has today decided to withdraw the Court action. *(For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344)*

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of sole control of NEP by Carlyle

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of sole control of NEP Group, Inc. ("NEP") by the Carlyle Group LP ("Carlyle"), both of the US. NEP provides outsourced broadcast engineering and production solutions to production companies and broadcasters around the world. Carlyle is a global alternative asset manager, investing globally. The Commission found that, since Carlyle already has joint control over NEP prior to the transaction, the acquisition of sole control over NEP would not bring a significant change in the market. The Commission also concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because there is no overlap 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.9107](#). *(For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Thyssen delivers speech at a conference on addressing inequalities [updated on 18/10/2018 at 17:15]

Tomorrow, 19 October, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne **Thyssen**, will deliver a keynote speech, kicking off a seminar on addressing inequalities organised by the European Commission and taking place in Brussels. The seminar will bring together renowned academics,

members of the advisory committees of both the Employment and Social Affairs and the Economic and Financial Affairs Council formations and international economic institutions. The seminar will contribute to the ongoing work at EU-level on policies that address inequalities, such as the Commission's Recommendation on Access to Social Protection, in the framework of [the European Pillar of Social Rights](#), the New Skills Agenda for Europe and the Commission proposals on fair taxation. Concrete output of the discussions could be followed up in the context of next meeting of EU Ministers of Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs (EPSCO). Commissioner **Thyssen**'s speech will be published [here](#). (For more information: Christian Wigand– Tel.: +32 229 62253; Sara Soumillion – Tel.: + 32 229 67094)

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

EU and the Republic of Korea join forces in fight against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing

Today, the EU and the Republic of Korea have pledged to work closely together to fight against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing with a joint statement signed by European Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Karmenu **Vella**, and Mr Kim Young-Choon, Minister for Oceans and Fisheries of the Republic of Korea. The signing took place on the eve of a bilateral [EU-Republic of Korea Summit](#).

Commissioner **Vella** said: *"Putting an end to illegal fishing is one of the main objectives of the EU's international ocean governance agenda. By joining forces with the Republic of Korea, a world player in fisheries, we send a clear message to those breaking international law that there is no place for such products on our markets and we will continue to fight illegal fishing until we have fully eradicated it."*

With the new partnership, in line with the objectives of the [EU's Ocean Governance strategy](#), the EU and the Republic of Korea will:

- exchange information about suspected IUU-activities
- enhance global traceability of fishery products threatened by Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing, through a risk-based, electronic catch documentation and certification system
- join forces in supporting developing states in the fight against IUU fishing and the promotion of sustainable fishing through education and training
- strengthen cooperation in international fora, including regional fisheries management organisations.

The Republic of Korea and the European Union have been working closely together on IUU fishing for several years already. The Republic of Korea is the fourth country with whom the EU signs a joint statement on IUU fishing, following the USA, Japan and Canada. Together, these five economies imported almost 90 billion euros worth of fish and fisheries products in 2017.

Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing constitutes one of the most serious threats to sustainable fishing and to marine biodiversity in the world's oceans, with devastating environmental and socio-economic consequences. These consequences are particularly challenging for coastal communities in developing countries, who rely on fisheries for food and employment. Globally, IUU fishing is estimated to deprive coastal communities and honest fishermen of up to 20 billion euros of seafood and seafood products per year.

Background

The EU is internationally recognised for its leadership in the fight against IUU fishing. Under EU legislation, only fish that is legally caught can be sold on the EU market – the biggest market for fish and fisheries products in the world. Countries for which there is concern about IUU fishing receive a 'yellow card'. This starts a process of dialogue and support to find solutions and ensure that international law is fully applied. This can either lead to the repeal of the yellow card or it can turn into a 'red card', which would mean the banning of the products from the EU market.

In April 2015, the Commission lifted the yellow card adopted in 2013 to the Republic of Korea, recognising the country's efforts to bring its legal and administrative systems in line with the international standards. Since then, the Commission and the authorities of the Republic of Korea have continued their fruitful cooperation in a bilateral working group to address IUU fishing.