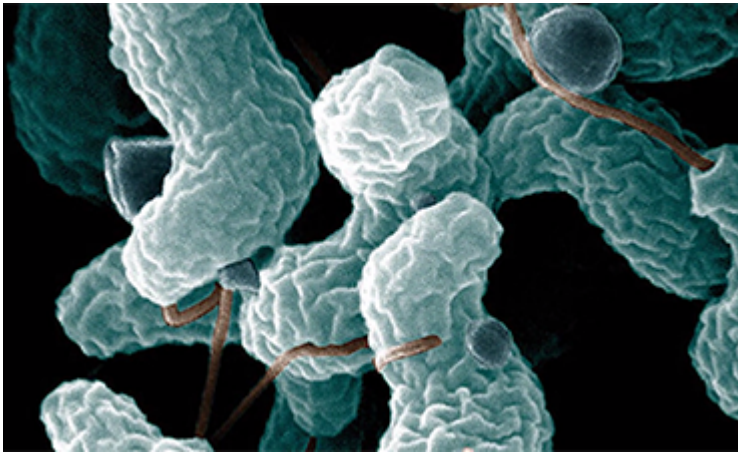


Zoonoses: antimicrobial resistance shows no signs of slowing down



Vytenis Andriukaitis, EU Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, said: “The report released today should ring–again–alarm bells. It shows that we are entering into a world where more and more common infections become difficult–or even sometimes impossible–to treat. However, ambitious national policies in some countries limiting antimicrobial use have led to a decrease of antimicrobial resistance. So before the alarm bells become a deafening siren, let’s make sure that we increasingly act all together, in every country and across the public health, animal health and environment sectors under the One Health approach umbrella.”

According to the report, which refers to 2017 data, resistance to fluoroquinolones (such as ciprofloxacin) is so high in *Campylobacter* bacteria in some countries that these antimicrobials no longer work for the treatment of severe campylobacteriosis cases.

Most countries reported that *Salmonella* in humans is increasingly resistant to fluoroquinolones. Multidrug resistance (resistance to three or more antimicrobials) is high in *Salmonella* found in humans (28.3%) and animals, particularly in *S. Typhimurium*.

In *Campylobacter*, high to extremely high proportions of bacteria were found to be resistant to ciprofloxacin and tetracyclines. However, combined resistance to critically important antimicrobials was very low to low in *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* from humans and animals and in indicator *E. coli* from animals.

Now is the time to turn the tide on antimicrobial resistance if we want to keep antibiotics working, Mike Catchpole, ECDC’s Chief Scientist, said. It’s particularly worrying when it comes to combined resistance: even low proportions mean that many thousands of patients across the EU have limited treatment options for severe infections.

Marta Hugas, EFSA's Chief Scientist, said: "We have seen that when Member States have implemented stringent policies, antimicrobial resistance has decreased in animals. Annual reporting by European and national agencies includes noteworthy examples. This should serve as an inspiration for other countries."

Rise of antibiotics requires One Health approach

The joint report, which presents the data collected from 28 EU Member States from humans, pigs and calves under one year of age, confirms the rise in antibiotic resistance already identified in previous years.

In June 2017, the European Commission adopted the EU One Health Action Plan against Antimicrobial Resistance, calling for effective action against this threat and recognising that it needs to be tackled in both human health, animal health and the environment. The prudent use of antimicrobials is essential to limiting the emergence and spread of antibiotic-resistant bacteria in humans and animals.

ESMA Chair Maijoor's keynote on crypto-assets

26 February 2019

Risk Analysis & Economics – Markets Infrastructure Investors

ESMA Chair Steven Maijoor delivered today a [keynote speech](#) at the FinTech Conference 2019 – FinTech and Regulation – in Brussels. The keynote dealt with crypto-assets: time to deliver.

Daily News 26 / 02 / 2019

Vers une Europe neutre pour le climat: l'UE investit plus de 10 milliards d'euros dans les technologies innovatrices et propres

La Commission européenne annonce aujourd'hui un programme d'investissement de plus de 10 milliards d'euros pour les technologies à faibles émissions de carbone et ce dans plusieurs secteurs, afin de renforcer leur compétitivité mondiale. Une action climatique innovante présente de nombreux avantages pour la santé et la prospérité des Européens, avec un impact immédiat et tangible

sur la vie des citoyens – de la création d’emplois verts et implantés localement à la croissance, en passant par des maisons économes en énergie et avec une facture énergétique réduite, un air pur, des systèmes de transports publics efficaces dans les villes et des approvisionnements sécurisés en énergie et autres ressources. Le commissaire chargé de l’action pour le climat et de l’énergie, Miguel **Arias Cañete**, a déclaré: « *Moins de trois mois après l’adoption de notre vision stratégique pour une Europe neutre pour le climat à l’horizon 2050, nous mettons l’argent à disposition. Notre objectif est de continuer à construire une économie qui réponde aux objectifs de l’accord de Paris, à la fois moderne, compétitive et socialement équitable pour tous les Européens. Pour ce faire, nous aurons besoin de déployer des technologies innovatrices et propres à l’échelle industrielle. C’est pourquoi nous investissons dans la mise sur le marché de technologies hautement innovantes dans les industries à forte intensité énergétique, dans le captage, le stockage et l’utilisation du carbone, dans le secteur des énergies renouvelables et dans le stockage de l’énergie. Nous apportons aujourd’hui notre soutien au déploiement rapide des solutions technologiques dans tous les États membres et nous accélérons notre transition vers une société moderne et neutre pour le climat en Europe.* » Un [communiqué de presse](#) et un [MEMO](#) sont disponibles en ligne. (Pour plus d’informations: Anna-Kaisa Itkonen – Tel.: +32 229 56186; Lynn Rietdorf – Tel.: +32 229 74959)

Humanitarian aid: EU announces over €161.5 million for Yemen crisis

As millions of people continue to suffer in Yemen, the European Commission has announced its intention to provide €161.5 million in humanitarian aid for 2019. This brings total Commission support for Yemen since the beginning of the crisis in 2015 to €710 million. Announcing the EU’s contribution today in Geneva, at the [International Conference on the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen](#), Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management, Christos **Stylianides** said: “Yemen is facing the world’s worst humanitarian crisis. Four in five people are in need of assistance. With millions now threatened by famine, all must be done to deliver emergency support on the ground. [...] Our new funding will allow partners to provide more food, nutrition, health services, shelter, sanitation, as well as education and protection programmes. Yet a political solution remains the only way forward.” The EU has played a leading international role in mobilising support for the Yemen crisis. In 2018, EU humanitarian support reached over 14 million people in Yemen, helping the most vulnerable like women and children caught up in the conflict. The EU has repeatedly urged all parties to the conflict to respect International Humanitarian Law and prioritise the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure. Read the full press release [here](#). (For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz De Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)

The Juncker Plan supports pharmaceutical innovation in Austria and a technology transfer fund in Germany

The Investment Plan for Europe – the “Juncker Plan” – is backing two agreements today. In Austria, the European Fund for Strategic Investments

(EFSD), at the heart of the Juncker Plan, is supporting a €15 million European Investment Bank (EIB) loan to pharmaceutical company Marinomed Biotech. The financing will help Marinomed develop new therapies against allergies and respiratory and eye diseases. In Germany, the EIB group launched a €60 million Technology Transfer Fund with German research organisation Fraunhofer, with the support of the Juncker Plan. This Technology Transfer Fund aims to commercialise the research produced in Fraunhofer's 72 institutes across Germany, helping researchers bring the product of their work to the market, building stronger links between German research and industry and helping high-tech start-ups grow. Press releases are available [here](#). As of February 2019, the Juncker Plan mobilised €380 billion of additional investments, including €4.4 billion in Austria and €35.2 billion in Germany. (For more information: Annika Breidhardt – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)

Sustainable finance: Commission welcomes agreement on a new generation of low-carbon benchmarks

The Commission welcomes the agreement reached by the European Parliament and Member States on a new generation of low-carbon benchmarks needed to help boost investment in sustainable projects and assets. The European Parliament and Council still have to formally approve the rules. This agreement creates two new categories of low-carbon benchmarks: a climate-transition benchmark and a specialised benchmark which brings investment portfolios in line with the [Paris Agreement](#) goal to limit the global temperature increase to 1.5° above pre-industrial levels. First [proposed by the Commission in May 2018](#), the rules agreed today support the goals of the Capital Market Union (CMU) to connect finance with needs of the economy and the [EU's agenda for sustainable development](#). Valdis **Dombrovskis**, Vice-President responsible for the Euro and Social Dialogue, also in charge of Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union, said: "With this agreement, investors will benefit from two reliable benchmarks to pursue their ambitious climate strategies. This is a milestone of the Commission action plan on financing sustainable growth, participating in reorienting capital flows towards sustainable investment". Jyrki **Katainen**, Vice-President responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, said: "I welcome the agreement which demonstrates that our Sustainable Finance agenda and goals to build a stronger Capital Market Union can work hand in hand. The EU is sticking to its ambitions to make Europe a more attractive place for investors by setting high disclosure standards and paving the way for long-term sustainable investment policies." Benchmarks have an important impact on investment flows. Many investors rely on them for the creation of investment products, for the measurement of performance of investment products and for asset allocation strategies. A press release is [online](#). (For more information: Annika Breidhardt – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Letizia Lupini – Tel.: +32 229 51958)

African Swine Fever: eradication in Czechia confirmed

Less than two years after it has been hit by African swine fever (ASF), and

following massive efforts to eradicate the disease, Czechia received today the support of the Member States to lift all the restrictions in the country. Following the discovery of the disease in a wild boar in June 2017, in the district of Zlín, the Commission had deployed its EU Veterinary Emergency team of experts and started working very closely with the national and regional authorities to adopt veterinary measures to control the disease. This type of targeted measures has also been implemented in recent months in Belgium, the latest Member State concerned by the disease. Since no more cases of African swine fever had been identified in Czechia as of April 2018, the Commission proposed today to the Member States to lift all the restrictions. This proposal has been endorsed by a vote in a Standing Committee. Vytenis **Andriukaitis**, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, welcomed this vote, stressing that *"the example of Czechia demonstrates that, when the tools and strategies developed in the EU are properly applied, the disease can be controlled and even eradicated. It shows that our policies are effective and there is no place for unjustified trade restrictions. This is a small reward, yet we cannot afford to relax our efforts since the fight against African swine fever is still ongoing"*. The Commission will formally adopt the Decision in the coming weeks. (For more information: Anca Paduraru – Tel.: +32 229 91269; Aikaterini Apostola – Tel.: +32 229 87624)

New ACP-EU Partnership: EU and Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific Leaders intensify the regional talks in Samoa

In the context of the ongoing negotiations to modernise relations between the EU and 79 countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP), chief negotiators met with Pacific leaders today. The talks' aim was to lay the ground for the creation of a EU-Pacific pillar, within the future agreement. The negotiators focused on the specific needs and priorities to address together in the decades to come. In Apia, Samoa, the EU's Chief Negotiator, Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven **Mimica**, said: *"Today's exchanges are a concrete example of how our future bilateral relations EU-Pacific, EU-Africa, EU-Caribbean, will grow deeper and stronger under the next ACP-EU agreement. We need to find new ways to fight climate change, and to protect our people and our planet. We also aim to foster blue growth in a sustainable way, and address cross border challenges together, such as human development and security issues."* The full [press release](#) and a [MEMO](#) are available online. (For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz De Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Christina Wunder – Tel.: +32 229 92256)

Spotlight Initiative: EU and UN fight against domestic violence in the Pacific region

The European Union and the United Nations are announcing today a €50 million investment to tackle domestic violence in the Pacific region, as part of the [EU-UN Spotlight Initiative](#). The €50 million contribution will fund new programmes to support concrete measures to end domestic and gender-based violence. It will do so by supporting preventive measures, and by providing protection and quality services to victims. Such measures will be accompanied by broader efforts to ensure women's economic empowerment and their

participation in all aspects of society. Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven **Mimica** stressed: *"Two out of three women in the Pacific region suffer from domestic and gender-based violence. But it is not an exclusively "Pacific" problem – it is a global problem. We must all join forces with partner governments and civil society. With an additional €50 million investment we are building on and expanding existing efforts to help end violence against women and girls in the region."* Today's Spotlight Initiative high-level event for the Pacific marks the beginning of a consultative process between governments, regional bodies, civil society and development partners to design a programme that seeks to end domestic violence in the region. The full [press release](#) and a [MEMO](#) are available online. (For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz De Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Christina Wunder – Tel.: +32 229 92256)

Commission's report on water quality and flood risk management – improvements are there, but more needs to be done

The Commission published today its assessment of how Member States have implemented EU water legislation, highlighting successes and shortcomings. The six-yearly implementation report evaluates both Member States' River Basin Management Plans and Flood Risk Management Plans for the period 2015 to 2021. Karmenu **Vella**, Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, said: *"EU water law is a considerable success, but there is still much to do. Most of Europe's 130 000 water bodies are falling short of the high standards we need. I am calling on Member States to step up their efforts and ensure we deliver the quality that citizens need and nature requires, as soon as possible."* Today's findings show that although in a number of Member States the right policy measures were taken and a number of financial investments made, in many, river basins improvements in water quality will still take some time. The path towards full compliance with the objectives of EU water legislation before the final 2027 deadline is thus still challenging. On the issue of flood management, the report confirms that all Member States have fundamentally embraced the concept of flood risk management, although the quality of the results varies. Achieving the key objective of reducing the potential adverse consequences from significant flooding will require greater efforts from Member States in subsequent cycles. More information is available [here](#). The report and Annex to it with recommendations to Member States are available [here](#). (For more information: Daniel Rosario – Tel.: +32 229 56185; Daniela Stoycheva – Tel.: +32 229 53664)

Commission launches pilot projects to reinforce EU's cybersecurity capacity

The European Commission is investing more than €63.5 million in four pilot projects to lay the ground work for building a [European network of centres of cybersecurity expertise](#) which will help to reinforce research and coordination of cybersecurity in the EU. The four pilots, [CONCORDIA](#), [ECHO](#), [SPARTA](#) and [CyberSec4Europe](#) are tasked to contribute to a common European Cybersecurity Research & Innovation Roadmap beyond 2020 and a European cybersecurity strategy for industry. Mariya **Gabriel**, Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society, said: *"We are counting on CONCORDIA, ECHO, SPARTA and CyberSec4Europe to assist us in pooling Europe's cybersecurity expertise and*

preparing the European cybersecurity landscape in order to efficiently implement our vision for a more secure digital Europe. These projects will assist EU in defining, testing and establishing the governance model of a European Cybersecurity Competence Network of cybersecurity centres of excellence.” The pilot projects were announced in [September 2017](#) together with a wide-ranging set of measures to equip Europe with the right tools to deal with cyber-attacks and to build strong cybersecurity in the EU. In 2018 the Commission organised a dedicated call under Horizon 2020 to select the pilots, which involve more than 160 partners, including large companies, SMEs, universities and cybersecurity research institutes from 26 EU Member States. More information on the four pilot projects is available [online](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083 – Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: +32 229 56184)

Eurostat: les chiffres 2017 de l’emploi et du PIB par habitant, région par région

En 2017, neuf régions de l’Union Européenne (UE) sur dix, soit 253 des régions de l’UE, ont vu leur taux d’emploi augmenter. Le nombre de personnes occupées a diminué dans 26 autres régions et est resté stable dans 2 autres. La croissance de l’emploi a fortement varié d’une région à l’autre de l’UE et au sein des pays et dans l’ensemble de l’UE, l’emploi a augmenté de 1,6% en 2017. Quant au produit intérieur brut (PIB) régional par habitant, trois quarts de la population de l’UE habitent dans des régions avec un PIB par habitant au-dessus de 75% de la moyenne de l’UE. Exprimé en standards de pouvoir d’achat, le PIB régional par habitant allait, en 2017, de 31% de la moyenne de l’Union européenne (UE) dans la région bulgare Nord-Ouest à 626% de la moyenne dans la région Londres intérieure – Ouest au Royaume-Uni. Plus d’informations dans deux communiqués de presse sur les chiffres de l’emploi et le PIB par habitant en 2017 sont disponibles en ligne [ici](#) et [ici](#). (For more information: Christian Spahr – Tel.: +32 2 295 00 55; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

High Representative/Vice-President Mogherini participates in the 7th World Congress against Death Penalty

Tomorrow, High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini will address the opening ceremony of the [7th World Congress against Death Penalty](#), co-hosted by the European Union and Belgium. The event will last four days (26 February – 1 March) in the European Parliament, in Brussels. The Congress takes place every three years, bringing together many public and private actors involved in the cause of death penalty abolition. The event will be an opportunity to [reiterate](#) the EU’s strong opposition to capital punishment in all circumstances and for all cases. This year’s edition will especially reach out to private sector actors and explore new paths for collaboration towards the abolition of the death penalty. 1,500 participants from all over the world are expected to attend the four-day event. More information on the Congress is available [online](#). The opening session will be livestreamed, follow it on [EbS](#). (For more information: Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Xavier Cifre Quatresols – Tel.: +32 229 73582)

EU's civil society consultative body votes in favour of EU-supported decent minimum income for all EU citizens in need



On 20 February, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) adopted the opinion "[For a European Framework directive on a Minimum Income](#)" in which it asked the European Commission to introduce a binding EU framework establishing an adequate minimum income across Europe, tailored to the standard of living in each Member State.

According to the EESC, a binding EU framework in the form of a directive is needed to effectively address the serious and persistent problem of poverty in Europe and to restore the Union's credibility, since the EU commitments seeking to reduce the number of EU citizens at risk of poverty by 20 million have failed by and large.

The current tool to counter poverty is the open method of coordination (OMC), which has not lived up to expectations. It has failed to ensure an adequate minimum income in all EU countries, with the result that inequalities have continued to widen within and between Member States, presenting a major problem for the EU's credibility, the EESC said in the opinion.

Drafted by former EESC president, [Georges Dassis](#), member of the EESC Workers' Group, this own-initiative opinion was adopted at the EESC's February plenary session by 158 votes in favour, 81 against and 12 abstentions.

Mr Dassis said that a binding legal instrument for a decent minimum income was a solidarity-based measure in line with the **European Pillar of Social Rights** and other legal texts, the aim of which was to secure a life in dignity for all EU citizens and to fight against inequalities and social exclusion. It was also a test for the EU which needed to show "it was there for all its citizens", otherwise the reason for its very existence could be called into question.

"The issue of a minimum income is highly political. This is a decision to be made at EU level, and the Commission cannot hide behind the principle of subsidiarity – misused in this case – to decide that it cannot do anything about such an important problem that affects dignity and human rights", **Mr Dassis** maintained.

A lack of initiative from the Commission would therefore be unacceptable, and would make the EU project impossible for citizens to understand and support.

Using a binding EU instrument is imperative to obtain minimum income schemes that are decent. For them to be “decent” they must be adequate, accessible and in line with the average cost of living in each Member State.

“It is important for the Union to do something concrete for people who have nothing. If you are now indifferent to their misery, tomorrow might be too late”, **Mr Dassis** warned.

The opinion, however, met with dissent from another Group within the EESC, representing Europe’s employers, which tabled a counter opinion. Notably, the Employers’ Group opposed the proposed use of a EU directive or binding instrument for the establishment of decent or adequate minimum income schemes in Member States, arguing that the subsidiarity principle should continue to apply. The Group also disputed there was a legal basis for this in the EU treaties and legal texts.

“Tackling minimum income at the national level is not only appropriate but also more efficient as minimum income systems will be tailored to fit the specific characteristics of each Member State,” stressed **Jacek Krawczyk**, President of the Employers’ Group.

Its counter opinion was rejected by 142 members and supported by 92, while 8 abstained.

MORE ON MINIMUM INCOME

A minimum income is a social welfare measure guaranteeing that all citizens have a sufficient income to live a life in dignity. By means of a directive, the EU could support and guide the development of decent minimum income schemes in the Member States. Although binding upon each Member State with regard to the result to be achieved, a directive still gives them leeway as to the choice of form and method of implementation.

The binding instrument would be based on a common methodology for framing “reference budgets” (i.e. baskets of products and services – healthcare and personal care, housing, clothing, mobility, education, leisure, social relations, culture, etc. tailored to the standard of living in every Member State) so that the unemployed and the working-poor are given the best chance to integrate into the labour market and society.

This tool is particularly important to tackle child poverty in the EU. It is unacceptable that in one of the world’s wealthiest regions, every fourth child is still at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

Decent minimum income schemes do not benefit solely those in need, but also the economy, in as much as they enable people to consume and as they support SMEs. Minimum income schemes represent only a small percentage of social expenditure, and yet provide a significant return on investment.

Countries with such schemes are more able to absorb the negative impacts of the crisis and to reduce the inequalities that undermine social cohesion.

BACKGROUND

In 2013 the EESC already adopted [an opinion](#) on this subject in which it asked the Commission to examine funding possibilities for a European minimum

income, with a focus on the possibility of setting up an appropriate European fund to finance it. In its feedback to that request, the Commission considered this to be premature. Six years down the line, and now that the future of the European project is at stake, the EESC believes it is worth repeating it.

The latest Eurostat figures show that 22.5% of the EU population are at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Although this represents a decrease of 1 percentage point below the 2016 level, it still means that 112.9 million Europeans are poor, of whom 26 million are children.

Long-term unemployment rose to 3.4% in 2017 and the number of working poor in the EU rose to 9.5% in 2016 from 8.3% in 2010.

Daily News 25 / 02 / 2019

Juncker Plan: better access to finance for small businesses in the Baltic countries

The Investment Plan for Europe, or [Juncker Plan](#), is backing a €10 million guarantee agreement signed between the European Investment Bank and the financing company Capitalia, active in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. This guarantee agreement is supported by the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the heart of the Juncker Plan, and by the Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) programme. Thanks to this agreement, small businesses in need of resources in the Baltic countries will be able to receive financing of up to €25 000. Marianne **Thyssen**, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, said: *"Giving small entrepreneurs the means to put their talent to work with better access to finance is one of our key priorities. This is how we will build a fairer and a more inclusive European Union."* A press release is available [here](#). As of February 2019, the Juncker Plan already mobilised €380 billion of additional investments, including €1.3 billion in Estonia, €966 million in Latvia and €1.6 billion in Lithuania. (For more information: Annika Breidhardt – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)

EU boosts cooperation with Pacific region on future EU-ACP partnership, climate actions and fighting gender-based violence

Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development Neven **Mimica** is on an official visit to the Pacific Islands and Australia. The aim of the visit is to reconfirm the EU's commitment to the region and to strengthen dialogue, as well as to launch substantial development cooperation. He will meet with, amongst others, Fiji's Minister for Industry, Trade and Tourism Ms. Premila Kumar, the Minister for Industry, Trade and Tourism Ms. Premila Kumar and the Prime Minister of Tuvalu, Hon. At this occasion, Commissioner **Mimica** stressed: *"The EU's commitment to and partnership with the Pacific region is*

*strong. We are natural partners in the tackling of global challenges such as climate change, and we continue to work together. This is not least underlined by the EU's green investments in the Pacific region and across the globe". Commissioner **Mimica** is expected to sign a number of initiatives in the areas of water and sanitation, malnutrition, renewable energy, sustainable waste management, rural entrepreneurship and adaptation efforts to the effects of climate change. The Commissioner will furthermore visit EU funded projects, notably the Fuluasou Hyrdoelectric Plant, which aims to reduce carbon emissions. After this, Commissioner **Mimica** will continue his trip for an official visit to Australia. (For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz De Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Christina Wunder – Tel.: +32 229 92256)*

EU monitoring mission evaluates progress on human rights and labour rights in Myanmar

A high-level mission of the European Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) returned last week (18-22 February 2019) to Myanmar as part of a broader engagement under the EU's Everything But Arms (EBA) trade preferences scheme. Myanmar benefits significantly from its duty-free, quota-free access to the EU market under the EBA trade preferences scheme. To continue benefiting from the scheme Myanmar must uphold and respect the fundamental principles enshrined in the relevant 15 fundamental United Nations and International Labour Organisation conventions. A previous monitoring mission [visited Myanmar in October](#) 2018 following deeply worrying reports as regards human rights violations and concerns about labour rights. The EU mission focused on several issues such as accountability for crimes under international law; cooperation with United Nations special procedures and mandates; unrestricted humanitarian access to conflict-affected communities; situation of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and conditions for safe, voluntary, dignified and sustainable return of refugees; discrimination, hate speech, media freedom and labour rights. The EU delegation held constructive discussions with the government of Myanmar in Nay Pyi Taw, met with the Chief Minister and State Government of Rakhine, and the Speaker of the Rakhine State Assembly, visited a Rohingya IDP camp and met with local Rakhine and Hindu communities. The mission also provided an opportunity for discussions with representatives of United Nations agencies and humanitarian organisations present in Myanmar. The European Commission and the European External Action Service will now analyse the findings from the mission. The EU will continue to engage with Myanmar and looks forward to seeing sustained and concrete progress in all areas of concern in the near future. A full [press release](#) is available online. (For more information: Daniel Rosario – Tel.: +32 229 56185; Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Kinga Malinowska – Tel.: +32 229 51383; Adam Kaznowski – Tel.: +32 229 89359)

Consumer Policy: New Commission award for product safety leaders

The European Commission is launching today, a new Product Safety Award for businesses that are industry leaders in making sure their products and services are safer for consumers. Věra **Jourová**, Commissioner for Justice,

Consumers and Gender Equality, said: "We want to encourage more companies to make product safety a priority and to keep all consumers safe, especially our children. There are still too many dangerous products recalled or causing harm. The Product Safety Award is a chance for companies to be rewarded for going the extra mile to keep their customers safe." This year, companies can apply under the categories of online sales and childcare products. The applications from companies based in one of the 31 European Economic Area countries (the 28 EU Member States plus Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein) can be made until 7 April 2019. Commissioner **Jourová** will hand in the awards to the winners at a ceremony in Brussels in September. More information can be found on the Product Safety Award [website](#). (For more information: Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Mélanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659)

MEDIA programme: One Oscar and several Césars for EU supported films

During the 91st Academy Awards, also known as the Oscars, held on Sunday 24 February, EU funded films were once again nominated across various categories, and in the end it was [British actress Olivia Colman who won the Oscar for the best actress in *The Favourite*](#). *The Favourite*, an Irish-UK-US coproduction by Yorgos Lanthimos, received € 50,000 of EU funding for its development, via the [Creative Europe MEDIA programme](#). Also during the weekend, some EU-supported films stood out during the 44th edition of the French César Awards, held on Friday 22 February. In particular, *Jusqu'à la garde* by Xavier Legrand was one of the big winners of the night receiving up to five awards, including the César for the best film. The other two EU-supported films awarded at the French ceremony were *Dilili in Paris* by Christophe Rossignon, which won best animated film, and *Sink or Swim* (Le Grand Bain) with Philippe Katerine as best supporting actor. The EU's MEDIA programme plays a crucial role in supporting Europe's audiovisual sector through the development, promotion and distribution of thousands of films as well as support to training programmes, film festivals, cinema networks and distribution platforms. To promote Europe's diversity of films, MEDIA has launched the [EU Film Contest](#), to reach the next generation of filmmakers and young people with an interest in films/TV. Participants can test until 19 March their European film knowledge for a chance to experience the behind the scenes of Cannes Film Festival and see European audiovisual industry at work. More information about how the EU supports cinema and the audiovisual sector is available in this [factsheet](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: +32 229 56184)

Aides d'État: la Commission autorise l'aide accordée à quatre fermes pilotes d'éoliennes flottantes en mer en France

La Commission a approuvé, en vertu des règles de l'UE relatives aux aides d'État, les projets d'aide en faveur de quatre fermes pilotes d'éoliennes flottantes pour la production d'électricité en France. Le projet « Groix Belle Île » sera situé dans l'océan Atlantique, tandis que les trois autres projets (« Golfe du Lion », « Eolmed » et « Provence Grand Large ») se situeront en Méditerranée. Chacune des quatre fermes pilotes d'éoliennes utilisera une combinaison particulière de turbine, de flotteur et de câbles. L'objectif de l'aide publique est de tester ces différentes solutions technologiques, l'objectif à long terme étant de tester cette technologie

avant de la déployer à plus grande échelle. Les fermes pilotes d'éoliennes bénéficieront à la fois d'une aide à l'investissement et d'une aide au fonctionnement. L'aide à l'investissement sera partiellement versée sous la forme d'avances remboursables. La Commission a apprécié les mesures au regard des règles de l'UE en matière d'aides d'État, en particulier sur la base de ses [lignes directrices concernant les aides d'État à la protection de l'environnement et à l'énergie](#). La Commission a constaté que : (i) les projets français favoriseront le développement d'un nouveau type d'énergie éolienne en mer et la croissance potentielle d'une technologie innovante dans le domaine des énergies renouvelables et (ii) le niveau des aides accordées aux quatre projets est proportionné et permettra d'éviter une surcompensation pour les bénéficiaires de l'aide publique, conformément aux exigences des lignes directrices. Sur cette base, la Commission a conclu que les quatre projets encourageraient l'utilisation d'électricité produite à partir de sources d'énergie renouvelables et aideraient la France à atteindre ses objectifs climatiques, sans fausser indûment la concurrence. La communiqué de presse est disponible en ligne en [FR](#), [EN](#), [DE](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Ricardo Cardoso – Tél.: +32 229 80100; Giulia Astuti – Tél.: +32 229 55344)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Arris by CommScope

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of ARRIS International plc ("ARRIS") by CommScope Holding Company ("CommScope"), both of the US. ARRIS provides entertainment, communications, and networking technology products for service providers to deliver media, voice and IP data services to their subscribers. CommScope is a global provider of infrastructure solutions for the core, access and edge layers of communications networks. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns given the companies' minimal combined market position resulting from the proposed transaction. 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.9226](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Concentrations: la Commission autorise l'acquisition de April par CVC

La Commission européenne a approuvé, en vertu du règlement européen sur les concentrations, l'acquisition de April S.A. («April»), basée en France, par CVC Capital Partners, SICAV – FIS S.A. («CVC»), basée au Luxembourg. April est un courtier en assurances et un assureur actif principalement en France. CVC fournit des conseils en investissement et gère des fonds d'investissement actifs dans différentes régions du monde. La Commission a conclu que l'opération envisagée ne soulèverait pas de problème de concurrence en raison de l'absence de chevauchement entre les activités des entreprises concernées. La transaction a été examinée dans le cadre de la procédure simplifiée de contrôle des concentrations. De plus amples informations sont disponibles sur le site internet [concurrence](#) de la Commission dans le [registre public](#) des affaires sous le numéro [M.9273](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Ricardo Cardoso – Tél.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tél.: +32 229 90526)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini to visit Lebanon

High Representative/Vice-President Federica **Mogherini** travels to Lebanon today and tomorrow. It will be the first visit of the High Representative/Vice-President since a new Government was formed on 31 January 2019 and her fourth visit during her mandate. She will meet with President of the Republic Michel Aoun, Prime Minister Saad Hariri, Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri, and Minister of Foreign Affairs Gebran Bassil. She will also officially open the new premises of the EU Delegation to Lebanon in the presence of Prime Minister Hariri. The visit underlines the EU's strong commitment to Lebanon's stability and a partnership based on common values and shared interests. Following the first [EU-LAS Summit in Egypt](#) and two weeks ahead of the [Brussels III Conference on "Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region"](#) in March, the visit comes at a crucial time. The High Representative/Vice-President will express the EU's willingness to accompany Lebanon in implementing the reform agenda presented at the CEDRE Conference in Paris. Photos and videos of the visit will be available on [EbS](#). *(For more information: Maja Kocijančič – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Matteo Arisci – Tel: +32 229 80833)*

Commissioner Stylianides in Vienna, Austria

Today, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides** is in Vienna to meet the Austrian Interior Minister, Herbert Kickl. The meeting is an opportunity to discuss rescEU and the strengthened [EU Civil Protection Mechanism](#) to better respond to natural disasters like forest fires, floods, earthquakes and other crises by creating additional reserve of response capacities. The Austrian Presidency last semester ensured the proposal advanced during negotiations with the Parliament and EU Member States, and rescEU is expected to enter into force end of March. After the meeting, the Commissioner will visit the ["EU SAVES LIVES"](#) virtual reality exhibition that is currently in Vienna and open to visitors until 2 March. Visitors can learn how the EU helps to coordinate emergency response to natural disasters and other crises in Europe and worldwide. *(For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz de Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)*

Commissioner Crețu on official visit to Romania

Today, Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina **Crețu** is in Făgăraș, Romania. This morning she met the Presidents of the County Councils of Brașov and Sibiu, at the Făgăraș Fortress. The Commissioner also met with the mayors of the county of Făgăraș. The visit of Commissioner **Crețu** focuses on the state of play of EU-funded projects in the counties of Brașov and Sibiu as well as on the future of the Cohesion policy. Commissioner **Crețu** said: *"Regional and urban policy addresses the needs of all citizens and aims to foster a*

balanced territorial development. Sibiu and Brasov counties have received over €800 million of EU funds – including in the city of Făgăraș – which have contributed to improve the quality of the Romanian citizens' lives. The EU has supported investments for modernising urban transport, developing health infrastructure, energy efficiency, supporting the business environment and, last but not least, improving water and sanitation infrastructure. EU funds will continue to support the development of this region.” (For more information: Christian Spahr – Tel.: +32 2 295 00 55; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)

Security Union: Commissioners Avramopoulos and King to attend conference on cities' cooperation against radicalisation

Tomorrow, Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris **Avramopoulos** and Commissioner for the Security Union Julian **King** will open a conference in Brussels on “[EU Cities against Radicalisation](#)”, organised jointly by the European Commission and the European Committee of the Regions. The conference will bring together mayors, European and national policymakers, cities' networks and organisations involved in countering and preventing radicalisation. The participants will discuss the challenge of violent radicalisation leading to extremism at the local level, with a focus on sharing innovative and effective responses to radicalisation and on exploring how cities can cooperate with each other in this area. The conference will also showcase the support that is available from national governments and the EU to empower cities to develop initiatives against radicalisation. The Commissioners' opening remarks will be livestreamed on [EbS](#). (For more information: Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456; Kasia Kolanko – Tel.: +32 229 63444)

Le commissaire Moscovici en visite à Luxembourg ce mardi

Pierre **Moscovici**, commissaire en charge des affaires économiques et financières, de la fiscalité et des douanes, sera à Luxembourg le mardi 26 février. Il commencera par une visite au Parlement luxembourgeois, où il participera à un échange de vues avec les membres de la Commission des Finances et du Budget. En fin de matinée, il se rendra à l'Abbaye de Neumünster où il rencontrera Nicolas Schmit, ancien ministre du Travail, de l'Emploi et de l'Économie sociale et solidaire. Puis, le Commissaire interviendra lors de la conférence faisant suite au rapport « [Sustainable equality](#) ». Il participera ensuite à un déjeuner de travail avec Pierre Gramegna, ministre des Finances de Luxembourg. (Pour plus d'informations: Annika Breidthardt – Tél.: +32 229 58615; Patrick McCullough – Tél.: +32 229 87183; Enda McNamara – Tél.: +32 229 64976)

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