

EU supports South Africa to boost job creation, small business development and improved governance with €62 million

Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven **Mimica** is visiting South Africa, where he is meeting the Minister of Finance, Mr Nhlanhla Nene, and the Minister for Small Business Development, Ms Lindiwe Zulu.

On the occasion, Commissioner **Mimica** said: *“Ten years after the establishment of a strategic partnership with South Africa, the European Union remains very much engaged with the country as a crucial regional and global player. We are looking forward to enhancing our relations with President Ramaphosa and his administration. The fight against unemployment, poverty and inequality are at the heart of our common agenda and I am happy to launch two programmes, worth a total €62 million, in line with those priorities, during my visit. We look forward to continuing our joint work beyond 2020 with new and innovative approaches.”*

The new EU programme ‘Employment Promotion through small, micro and medium enterprises Support Programme for South Africa’, worth €52 million, will help to boost job creation in South Africa by supporting the country’s National Development Plan 2030, which foresees that 90% of new jobs in the country should come from small and emerging business by 2030. Implemented by the South African Department for Small Business Development, the new programme will help reduce the cost of doing business for small enterprises, improve business, production and marketing skills, increase access to funding by de-risking enterprise development lending and keeping the interest rate at reasonable levels.

The new Enhancing Legislature Oversight Programme of €10 million will strengthen democracy and good governance through effective execution of the core mandate of the National Parliament and the Provincial Legislatures to legislate, exercise oversight and ensure public participation.

Commissioner **Mimica**’s visit takes place a month after President Ramaphosa’s new Government was nominated. As well as meeting Ministers Nene and Zulu, Commissioner **Mimica** will also meet with EU Member States representatives and development stakeholders. He will visit an EU-funded project that develops unemployed mothers’ skills in retailing, as well as the historical site of Liliesleaf that played an important role in the life of Nelson Mandela whose centenary is celebrated this year.

Background

The EU is a longstanding partner of South Africa, and has long supported the

anti-apartheid cause. Governmental cooperation then started with the advent of democracy in 1994 and it rapidly intensified, leading to the establishment of a Strategic Partnership in 2007.

Currently, bilateral cooperation with South Africa (2014-2020) focuses on 3 focal sectors: employment creation, education, training and innovation, as well as building a capable and developmental State. The total EU allocation for this period is €268 million.

For More Information

[DEVCO – South Africa](#)

[EU Delegation to South Africa](#)

CALENDRIER du 09 avril au 15 avril 2018

(Susceptible de modifications en cours de semaine)

Déplacements et visites

Lundi 09 avril 2018

President Jean-Claude **Juncker** receives Mr François de Rugy, President of the French National Assembly.

Mr Frans **Timmermans** in Warsaw, Poland: meets Mr Mateusz Morawiecki, Prime Minister of Poland; Mr Jacek Czaputowicz, Minister for Foreign Affairs ; Ms Julia Przyłębska, President of the Constitutional Court; and Ms Małgorzata Gersdorf, First President of the Supreme Court.

Mr Andrus **Ansip** receives Mr Peter Eriksson, Minister for Housing and Digital Development Minister for digitalisation of Sweden.

Mr Valdis **Dombrovskis** in Paris, France (until 09/04): meets Mr François Villeroy de Galhau, Governor of the Bank of France; Mr Bruno Le Maire, Minister for the Economy and Finance; Mr Edouard Philippe, Prime Minister of France; Mr Jean Bizet, President of the Commission for European Affairs of the Senate and Mr Vincent Eblé, President of the Commission for Finances of the Senate; inaugurates the exhibition "*Le symbolisme dans les pays baltes*" at *Musée d'Orsay*.

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** receives the Board of the Finnish Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners (MTK).

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** receives Mr Masagos Zulkifli, Minister for the Environment

and Water Resources of Singapore.

Mr Neven **Mimica** in Zimbabwe: on official visit.

Mr Miguel **Arias Cañete** receives Mr Masagos Zulkifli, Minister for the Environment and Water Resources of Singapore.

Mr Miguel **Arias Cañete** receives Members of the Democrats 66 (D66) political party from the House of Representatives of The Netherlands.

Mr Miguel **Arias Cañete** receives Mr Borja Prado Eulate, Chairman of Endesa SA.

M. Pierre **Moscovici** participe à la conférence ["For a Fair, Modern & Efficient Corporate Taxation in Europe"](#) organisé par la fondation européenne d'études progressistes, à Bruxelles.

M. Pierre **Moscovici** reçoit M. François de Rugy, Président de l'Assemblée Nationale, et sa délégation.

M. Pierre **Moscovici** reçoit des élèves de l'Ecole Nationale d'Administration en stage.

Mr Phil **Hogan** delivers a keynote speech at an event of the Dublin City University (DCU) "Brexit Institute", in Brussels.

Mr Phil **Hogan** receives members of the board of the Finnish Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners (MTK).

Ms Violeta **Bulc** in London, the United Kingdom: takes part in [the 72nd session of the Marine Environment Protection Committee of the International Maritime Organisation.](#)

Ms Věra **Jourová** in Hradec Králové, the Czech Republic: delivers a speech at the [International ISSS 2018 conference](#) and Visegrad conference "Visegrad Four for Developing Information Society" on General Data Protection Regulation.

Ms Margrethe **Vestager** receives a delegation of Members of the Danish Parliament's Transport Committee.

Mardi 10 avril 2018

10-11/04 Informal meeting of environment ministers in Sofia, Bulgaria.

President Jean-Claude **Juncker** in Gransee, Germany: participates in a German Government meeting (Kabinettklausur).

Mr Frans **Timmermans** participates in the opening session of the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) Day 2018, at the European Economic and Social Committee, in Brussels.

Mr Andrus **Ansip** delivers the opening speech at the [Digital Day 2018](#) event, organised by the European Commission and the Bulgarian Presidency of the

Council of the EU, in Brussels.

Mr Andrus **Ansip** in London, the United Kingdom: opens the London Book Fair together with Mr Indrek Saar, Ministers of Culture of Estonia, Mr Dace Melbārde Ministers of Culture of Latvia and Ms Liana Ruokytė-Jonsson, Ministers of Culture of Lithuania; and delivers the Charles Clark Memorial Lecture.

Mr Maroš **Šefčovič** receives social partners from BusinessEurope, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), the European Centre of Employers and Enterprises (CEEP) and the European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (UEAPME) on the third mobility package.

Mr Valdis **Dombrovskis** receives CEOs and Chief Information Officers (CIOs) – members of the Investment Leaders Group to discuss European sustainable finance.

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** receives the Board of the Finnish Pension Alliance (TELA).

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** delivers a keynote speech at the [Euro 50 Group meeting](#), at the European Parliament, in Brussels.

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** receives Mr Jukka Mönkkönen, Rector of the University of Eastern Finland (UEF).

Ms Cecilia **Malmström** in Paris, France: attends a hearing of the Committee of Foreign Affairs and the Committee of Economic Affairs of the National Assembly of France.

Mr Karmenu **Vella** in Sofia, Bulgaria: attends the Informal meeting of ministers for the environment.

Mr Vytenis **Andriukaitis** in Vilnius, Lithuania: delivers a speech at the International Conference on “Food waste at home and ways to address it”.

Mr Dimitris **Avramopoulos** in Teheran, Iran: on official visit.

Mr Phil **Hogan** in Edinburgh, Scotland: delivers a speech at the 11th Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Rural Development Conference on Enhancing Rural Innovation; and meets Ms Karen Betts, Chief Executive of the Scotch Whisky Association.

Ms Violeta **Bulc** receives Mr Alexandre de Juniac, Director General and CEO of the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

Ms Elżbieta **Bieńkowska** receives Mr Eugen Orlando Teodorovici, Minister for Public Finance of Romania.

Ms Elżbieta **Bieńkowska** delivers a speech at Internal Market Information System 10th Anniversary Event, in Brussels.

Ms Margrethe **Vestager** receives representatives of the Danish Industry Confederation.

Mr Carlos **Moedas** takes part in the signature ceremony of the Partnership on Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA) agreement with Morocco.

Mr Julian **King** in Paris, France: meets Mr Édouard Philippe, Prime Minister of France; Mr Bernard Cazeneuve, Former Prime Minister of France; Mr Bernard Emié, Director-General of External Security (DGSE); Mr Patrick Strzoda, Head of the French President's Cabinet; and Mr Laurent Hottiaux, Adviser for Internal Affairs and Security at the President's Cabinet; and participates in a hearing in front of the Law Committee and the European Affairs Committee of the National Assembly.

Mercredi 11 avril 2018

College meeting

Informal meeting of environment ministers in Sofia, Bulgaria.

Mr Valdis **Dombrovskis** receives Mr Lloyd C. Blankfein, Chairman and CEO of Goldman Sachs Group.

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** receives representatives of the FacilityLive.

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** receives a delegation of the [CDA Business Club](#).

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** receives Mr Casper von Koskull, President and CEO of Nordea Bank.

Mr Günther H. **Oettinger** in Lech, Austria (until 12/04): participates in [Europa Forum](#).

Mr Neven **Mimica** holds a keynote speech at the high-level event "[All on board – Closing the digital gap for women and girls in developing countries](#)", organised by the European Commission, the European Parliament and UN Women, in Brussels.

Mr Miguel **Arias Cañete** in Sofia, Bulgaria: attends the Informal meeting of environment ministers.

Mr Karmenu **Vella** receives Mr Masagos Zulkifli, Minister for the Environment and Water Resources of Singapore.

Mr Vytenis **Andriukaitis** participates in a meeting of the Steering Group on Promotion and Prevention, in Brussels.

Mr Vytenis **Andriukaitis** receives Ms Sorina Pintea, Minister for Health of Romania.

M. Pierre **Moscovici** à Paris, France (until 13/04): participe à une conférence-débat autour du thème « Union européenne : comment rebondir face aux nouveaux défis ? », organisée par l'association des anciens élèves de l'Institut d'Etudes Politique de Paris.

Mr Christos **Stylianides** receives Ms Marina Shacola, Co-founder and President of Sophia Foundation for Children and Mr Savvas Christodoulou, Consultant and Coordinator of activities at the Sophia Foundation for Children.

Ms Věra **Jourová** receives Ms Kati Marton, Board Member of the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ).

Mr Tibor **Navracsics** receives Mr Peter Olesen and Mr Dirk Jan van den Berg, outgoing and incoming Chairmen of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology's (EIT) Governing Board.

Mr Tibor **Navracsics** receives students from Antall József Knowledge Centre and the Hungarian Fulbright Association.

Ms Corina **Crețu** in Luxembourg: meets members of the Board of the European Investment Bank (EIB).

Ms Margrethe **Vestager** receives Mr Jacob Funk Kirkegaard, Senior Fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

Ms Margrethe **Vestager** in Copenhagen, Denmark: delivers a keynote speech on regulation and new technology for a group of business leaders' representatives (VL53 group).

Mr Carlos **Moedas** in Lisbon, Portugal: delivers a keynote speech at the [Portugal Smart Cities Summit](#).

Jeudi 12 avril 2018

General Affairs Council on cohesion

President Jean-Claude **Juncker** receives Mr Sooronbay Jeenbekov, President of Kyrgyzstan.

President Jean-Claude **Juncker** receives Mr Peter Pellegrini, Prime Minister of Slovakia.

Ms Federica **Mogherini** receives Sheikh Rached Ghannouchi, Leader of Tunisia's Ennahdha political party.

Ms Federica **Mogherini** receives Mr Sooronbay Jeenbekov, President of Kyrgyzstan.

Ms Federica **Mogherini** meets Mr Didier Reynders, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of Belgium.

Mr Maroš **Šefčovič** in Lech, Austria (until 13/04): participates in [Europa Forum](#), and delivers a speech in the session on 'Working together to stimulate growth and jobs'.

Mr Valdis **Dombrovskis** receives Mr Andrea Enria, Chairperson of the European Banking Authority (EBA).

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** in Ljubljana, Slovenia: participates in a joint session of the Parliamentary Committee on EU Affairs and the Parliamentary Committee on Economy; meets Mr Borut Pahor, President of Slovenia; meets Ms Mateja Vraničar Erman, Minister for Finance of Slovenia; and participates in a Citizens' dialogue at the Faculty of Business and Management Sciences Novo Mesto.

Mr Günther H. **Oettinger** in Lech, Austria: opens the Europa Forum ; and moderates the discussion panel "The EU's priorities for the next decade".

Mr Johannes **Hahn** participates at the World Economic Forum, Young Global Leaders event, at the European Parliament, in Brussels.

Ms Cecilia **Malmström** in Copenhagen, Denmark: meets representatives of the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions (LO), the Danish Confederation of Professional Associations (Akademikerne), and the Confederation of Professionals in Denmark (FTF); delivers a speech at the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) Forum; meets Ms Susanne Hyldelund, State Secretary for Trade of Denmark; participates in a roundtable hosted by the Confederation of Danish Industry (DI) and the Danish Agriculture and Food Council (L&F).

Ms Cecilia **Malmström** in Lund, Sweden (until 13/04): delivers a lecture on "The Future of Global Free Trade", at the Lund University Association of Foreign Affairs.

Mr Neven **Mimica** in Zagreb, Croatia (until 13/04): on official visit.

Mr Miguel **Arias Cañete** delivers a keynote speech on "International geopolitical uncertainties: brakes or accelerators for the EU energy transition?" at the 4th EU Energy Summit: "Which European Energy Policy for which ambitions?", in Brussels.

Mr Miguel **Arias Cañete** receives Mr Marco Alverà, President of GasNaturally and CEO of Snam.

Mr Miguel **Arias Cañete** receives Mr Klaus Schäfer, CEO of Uniper and President of Eurogas.

Mr Karmenu **Vella** delivers a keynote speech at the 4th EU Energy Summit: "Which European Energy Policy for which ambitions?", in Brussels.

Mr Vytenis **Andriukaitis** receives representatives of the European Social Insurance Platform (ESIP).

Mr Vytenis **Andriukaitis** receives Ms Cui Li, Vice Minister for National Health and Family Planning Commission of China.

Mr Vytenis **Andriukaitis** participates in the 5th meeting of the World Congress for Freedom of scientific research, at the European Parliament, in Brussels.

Mr Dimitris **Avramopoulos** in Greece: on official visit.

Ms Marianne **Thyssen** in the Netherlands: meets Ms Tamara van Ark, State Secretary for Social Affairs and Employment of the Netherlands; Mr Wouter Koolmees, Minister for Social Affairs and Employment; and Mr Menno Snel, State Secretary for Finance of the Netherlands.

Mr Christos **Stylianides** in Sofia, Bulgaria: meets Mr Boyko Borissov, Prime Minister of Bulgaria.

Ms Elżbieta **Bieńkowska** participates in “Prague, the Capital of European Satellite Navigation” event, in Brussels.

Ms Věra **Jourová** meets Ms Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta.

Ms Věra **Jourová** delivers a speech at the second edition of the [Lost in Migration Conference](#), in Brussels.

Ms Věra **Jourová** receives Ms Tena Šimonović Einwalter, Chair of European Network of Equality Bodies (Equinet).

Ms Věra **Jourová** receives Mr Wook Hur, Vice-Chairman of the Korean Communication Commission.

Mr Tibor **Navracsics** in Ljubljana, Slovenia: participates in the ['Creative Forum Ljubljana '](#) conference; and delivers a closing speech at the European Festivals Association (EFA) Arts Festivals Summit.

Ms Corina **Crețu** meets Mr Camille Gira, Secretary of State for Sustainable Development and Infrastructure of Luxembourg.

Ms Margrethe **Vestager** in Washington D.C., the United States (until 13/04): attends the 66th Annual ABA Section of Antitrust Law spring meeting; and participates in the “Enforcers Roundtable” panel.

Mr Carlos **Moedas** in The Netherlands: in The Hague: delivers a keynote speech at the conference commemorating the Fifteenth Anniversary of the “Prince Claus Chair in Development and Equity” in the presence of Her Majesty Queen Máxima, honorary patron of the Prince Claus Chair foundation, and Her Royal Highness Princess Beatrix; in Delft: visits Delft University; and meets Ms Ingrid van Engelshoven, Minister for Education and Science of the Netherlands.

Mr Julian **King** receives Mr Ben Cade, Founder and CEO of Trustonic.

Mr Julian **King** in Croatia: meets Ms Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, President of Croatia; Mr Davor Božinović, Minister for the Interior of Croatia; and members of the European Affairs and the Domestic Policy and National Security Committees at the Parliament.

Vendredi 13 avril 2018

Federica **Mogherini** receives Mr Winston Peters, Minister for Foreign Affairs of New Zealand.

Mr Maroš Šefčovič and Mr Johannes Hahn in Lech, Austria: participate in [Europa Forum](#).

Mr Valdis Dombrovskis in Berlin, Germany: meets Mr Olaf Scholz, Minister for Finance of Germany; and Mr Peter Altmaier, Minister for Economic Affairs and Energy.

Mr Jyrki Katainen in Zagreb, Croatia: meets Ms Kolinda Grabar Kitarović, President of Croatia; delivers a keynote speech and participates in a conference on the EFSI, participates in a [Citizens' dialogue on Jobs and Growth in Tomorrow's Europe](#). He also participates in a working lunch with Mr Andrej Plenković, Prime Minister of Croatia; with Mr Zdravko Marić, Minister for Finance of Croatia; Ms Gabrijela Žalac, Minister for Regional Development and EU funds, and Mr Damir Krstičević, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence. Mr Katainen also attends a meeting at the Parliament chaired by Mr Daniel Mondekar, Chair of the European Affairs Committee.

Ms Cecilia Malmström in Copenhagen, Denmark: delivers a speech on trade at the ALDE Party Expert Forum.

Mr Neven Mimica in Zagreb, Croatia: on official visit.

Mr Vytenis Andriukaitis in Forchheim, Germany: visits the Siemens Healthineers headquarters and production sites of CT scanners.

Ms Marianne Thyssen receives Mr Daniël Termont, President of Eurocities and Mayor of Ghent (Belgium).

M. Pierre Moscovici à Paris, France: rencontre M. Enrique Martinez, Directeur général du Groupe FNAC Darty; et participe à la conférence de simulation multilingue du Parlement des futurs citoyens.

Mr Christos Stylianides in Geneva, Switzerland: participates and co-chairs the [Pledging conference on the Democratic Republic of Congo](#).

Mr Phil Hogan and Ms Violeta Bulc in Bled, Slovenia: participate in a [Citizens' dialogue on "EU action for Smart Villages"](#).

Ms Margrethe Vestager in Washington D.C., the United States: attends the 66th Annual ABA Section of Antitrust Law spring meeting; and participates in the "Enforcers Roundtable" panel.

Samedi 14 avril 2018

Mr Carlos Moedas delivers a keynote speech at the Inauguration Ceremony of Prof Rodrigo Martins as the new President of the European Academy of Sciences (EurASc) at the Fondation Universitaire, in Brussels.

Mr Carlos Moedas receives Mr Jürgen Rüttgers, Chair of the High-Level Strategy Group on Industrial Technologies of the European Commission and former Federal Minister for Science and Research of Germany.

Dimanche 15 avril 2018

Prévisions du mois d'avril:

16/04/2018 Foreign Affairs Council

16-17/04/2018 Agriculture and Fisheries Council

17/04/2018 General Affairs Council

17/04/2018 General Affairs Council (Art. 50)

17-18/04/2018 Informal meeting of employment, social policy and health ministers on social policy in Sofia, Bulgaria

19/04/2018 Informal meeting of energy ministers in Sofia, Bulgaria

19/04/2018 Justice and Home Affairs Council

23/04/2018 Informal meeting of employment, social policy and health ministers on health in Sofia, Bulgaria

27/04/2018 Eurogroup

27-28/04/2018 Informal meeting of economic and financial affairs ministers in Sofia, Bulgaria

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Daily News 06 / 04 / 2018

European Research Council invests €653 million in ground-breaking research

€653 million of EU funding will go to 269 senior researchers across Europe, giving them a chance to realise innovative ideas and produce results that will have a major impact on science, society and the economy. Carlos Moedas European Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, said: "This grant

scheme has supported outstanding and established research leaders since 2007. It is a great example of how EU funding can help expand the frontiers of scientific knowledge, providing the resources necessary to continue ground-breaking, high-risk projects, and ensure Europe's global competitiveness." Advanced researchers will explore among many other topics innovative heart regeneration treatments, the aggressiveness of different bacteria and the effects of air pollution on the development of babies. The grants of up to €2.5 million per project are selected by the [European Research Council](#) (ERC) and financed through [Horizon 2020](#), the EU Research and Innovation programme. More information including project examples and statistics is available in a [news item](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Victoria von Hammerstein – Tel.: +32 229 55040; Maud Noyon – Tel. +32 229-80379)

The EU aims to generate €1.5 billion investments in Lebanon over 3 years

Today the European Union has announced a package of up to €150 million to support the revitalisation of the Lebanese economy as part of its longstanding commitment to the economic development of [Lebanon](#). This support could generate up to €1.5 billion loans for Lebanon until 2020, on condition that the country's financial institutions identify and propose projects that are bankable and adopt relevant reforms. This package includes up to €50 million in grants funding that could be mobilised in each of the coming three years (2018-2020) to provide technical assistance and ensure a sufficient level of concessionality of loans. High Representative/Vice-President Federica [Mogherini](#) said: "*The European Union has always been on the side of Lebanon and the Lebanese people. A strong and resilient Lebanon is in our collective interest, in the interest of the entire region. [...] With this new package, the European Union reconfirms its support to the Lebanese economy, [...] and encourages the Government to pursue the path of structural reforms it has started to undertake.*" Commissioner for Enlargement Negotiations and Neighbourhood policy Johannes [Hahn](#) added: "*The EU contribution is a signal of our support for the Government of Lebanon, whose tasks include now taking forward a road map of structural reforms to boost economic development in the country for the benefit of all. We will support and accompany this effort through the [External Investment Plan](#).*" The full press release is available [here](#). (For more information: Maja Kocijančič – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Alceo Smerilli – Tel.: +32 229 64887; Lauranne Devillé – Tel.: +32 229 80833)

EU supports South Africa with €62 million

Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development Neven [Mimica](#) is visiting South Africa, where he is meeting the Minister of Finance, Mr Nhlanhla Nene, and the Minister for Small Business Development, Ms Lindiwe Zulu. The new EU programme "Employment Promotion through small, micro and medium enterprises Support Programme for South Africa" worth €52 million will help to boost job creation in South Africa, while the new Enhancing Legislature Oversight Programme of €10 million will strengthen democracy and good governance. On the occasion, Commissioner [Mimica](#) said: "*Ten years after the establishment of a strategic partnership with South Africa, the European Union remains very much engaged with the country as a crucial regional and global player. We are looking forward to enhancing our relations with*

President Ramaphosa and his administration. The fight against unemployment, poverty and inequality are at the heart of our common agenda and I am happy to launch two programmes, worth a total €62 million, in line with those priorities, during my visit. We look forward to continuing our joint work beyond 2020 with new and innovative approaches.” The [press release](#) is available online. (For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz de Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)

State aid: Commission approves €44 million Italian scheme to support economic recovery in regions affected by earthquakes in 2016 and 2017

The European Commission has found a €43.9 million Italian aid scheme to support investments in regions affected by earthquakes in 2016 and 2017 to be in line with EU State aid rules. The aid will contribute to the economic recovery of central Italy without unduly distorting competition in the Single Market. In 2016 and 2017, four major earthquakes hit central Italy, affecting around 600,000 people in an 8,000 km² area. Today, the region is still being affected by abnormal seismic activity, leading to a progressive desertification of the affected areas. This is unlikely to be addressed by compensation measures alone. The Italian aid scheme approved today aims at complementing such measures, to mitigate the economic and social damages in the areas which have been affected by i) a significant drop of GDP, ii) a substantial loss of employment, iii) a reduction of economic activity by more than 50%, and iv) a significant decline in companies' turnover compared to pre-earthquakes levels. This concerns 140 municipalities in the Italian regions of Lazio, Umbria, Marche and Abruzzo. Commissioner Margrethe Vestager, in charge of competition policy, said: “*The people and economy of Central Italy are still recovering from the dramatic effects of several earthquakes over the past years. The Italian authorities want to support this recovery with a measure contributing to the economic recovery of these areas. We found this measure to be well targeted to support affected businesses and the people living in these regions.*” A full [press release](#) is available in [IT](#), [EN](#), [FR](#), [DE](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889)

State aid: Commission approves Portuguese tonnage tax and seafarer scheme

The European Commission has approved under EU State aid rules a Portuguese tonnage tax scheme which, together with a scheme to support seafarers, will encourage ship registration in Europe and contribute to the competitiveness of maritime transport while preserving employment in the sector and promoting high environmental standards. Under the newly introduced Portuguese tonnage tax scheme, maritime transport companies will pay taxes on the basis of the net tonnage (i.e. the size of the shipping fleet) operated in maritime transport activities rather than on the basis of their taxable profits. The tonnage tax scheme requires that if a shipping company wants to benefit from the scheme, a significant part of its fleet must fly the flag of a European Economic Area state. Moreover, the newly introduced Portuguese seafarer scheme exempts seafarers employed on vessels that are eligible under the tonnage tax scheme from paying personal income tax. It also allows them to

pay reduced rates of contribution for social insurance. The Commission assessed the measures under EU State aid rules, in particular its [Guidelines on State aid to maritime transport](#). Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: “*The Portuguese measures that we approved today will help the EU shipping industry to remain competitive on the global market, while protecting know-how and jobs in the maritime transport sector.*” A full press release is available in [PT](#), [EN](#), [FR](#), [DE](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889)

Aides d'État: la Commission approuve la compensation accordée par la France à La Poste pour sa mission de présence territoriale

La Commission européenne a conclu qu'un abattement fiscal accordé à La Poste pour la période 2018-2022 pour assurer le maintien d'une forte densité de présence postale en France est conforme aux règles de l'UE en matière d'aides d'Etat. Mme Margrethe **Vestager**, commissaire pour la politique de concurrence, a déclaré: «*Un accès aisé aux services postaux est très important pour tous les citoyens européens. La décision prise aujourd'hui autorise à La Poste à bénéficier de compensations lui permettant de continuer à remplir son rôle économique et social essentiel et à exercer son importante mission de service public, sans fausser de manière indue la concurrence.*» La mission de présence territoriale de La Poste vise à garantir une forte densité de la présence postale, au-delà des contraintes imposées par l'obligation de service universel, notamment dans les régions rurales. Pour le financement de cette mission de présence territoriale, le contrat d'entreprise entre l'Etat français et La Poste pour la période 2018-2022 prévoit que La Poste bénéficiera d'un abattement de fiscalité locale d'environ 900 millions d'euros au maximum sur l'ensemble de la période. L'analyse de la Commission a montré, que la compensation prévue n'excérait pas ce qui est nécessaire pour couvrir le coût net de cette mission de service public. Sur cette base, la Commission a conclu que la mesure est conforme aux règles de l'UE relatives aux aides d'État. Vous pouvez trouver le communiqué de presse en [FR](#), [EN](#), [DE](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of a joint venture by General Electric and Rosneft

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over a joint venture based in Russia by General Electric Company (“GE”) of the US and Rosneft Oil Company, through its subsidiary Sibintek LLC, both of Russia. The joint venture will focus on the development, implementation, marketing, licensing and/or operation of industrial Internet of Things (IoT) applications based on the Predix Platform offered by GE. GE is a global, diversified manufacturing, technology and services company active in a variety of sectors including, among others, oil & gas manufacturing, technology, services and digital solutions. Rosneft is active in the exploration, development, production and sale of crude oil and natural gas and the refining and marketing of petroleum products and petrochemicals. Sibintek provides information technology (IT) solutions to

Rosneft and other customers in Russia. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because the joint venture has negligible actual and foreseen activities within the European Economic Area. 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.8820](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889)

Eurostat: Le taux d'épargne des ménages en hausse à 12,2% dans la zone euro

Au quatrième trimestre 2017, le taux d'épargne des ménages a été de 12,2% dans la zone euro, contre 12,0% au troisième trimestre 2017. Le taux d'investissement des ménages a quant à lui été de 8,8% au quatrième trimestre 2017 dans la zone euro, stable par rapport au trimestre précédent. Ces informations, qui proviennent de la première diffusion de données, corrigées des variations saisonnières, sur les comptes européens trimestriels des secteurs, sont publiées par Eurostat, l'office statistique de l'Union européenne, et la Banque centrale européenne (BCE). Un communiqué de presse est disponible [ici](#). (For more information: Christian Spahr – Tel.: +32 229 50055; Annikky Lamp – Tel.: +32 229 56151)

Eurostat: Le taux d'investissement des entreprises en hausse à 22,8% dans la zone euro

Au quatrième trimestre 2017, le taux d'investissement des entreprises s'est établi à 22,8% dans la zone euro, contre 22,5% au trimestre précédent. La part des profits des entreprises s'est quant à elle située à 41,1% au quatrième trimestre 2017 dans la zone euro, contre 41,3% au troisième trimestre 2017. Ces informations, qui proviennent de la première diffusion de données, corrigées des variations saisonnières, sur les comptes européens trimestriels des secteurs, sont publiées par Eurostat, l'office statistique de l'Union européenne, et la Banque centrale européenne (BCE). Un communiqué de presse est disponible [ici](#). (For more information: Christian Spahr – Tel.: +32 229 50055; Annikky Lamp – Tel.: +32 229 56151)

STATEMENTS

International Roma Day: Joint Statement

Ahead of International Roma Day, taking place every year on 8 April, First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** and Commissioners Marianne **Thyssen**, Věra **Jourová**, Corina **Cretu** and Johannes **Hahn** stated: *"Respect for fundamental rights, including equal treatment, is one of the cornerstones of the European Union. Yet, one of the largest minorities in the EU and in its neighbourhood – the Roma community – still does not fully benefit from these rights. Not only do Roma communities suffer prejudice, discrimination and marginalisation, very often they do not even have access to basic provisions such as clean water, sanitation and food. 80% of Roma are at risk of poverty. Such a situation hits Roma first, but it is also a stain on our democratic communities. [...] Roma have been living in Europe for more than 700 years. Roma history and culture form an indispensable part of our diverse European*

heritage. Roma communities deserve to be treated equally and to enjoy their full rights as Europeans. At the end of the day, the way we include our most vulnerable minorities is an essential test of our European democracy." The full statement is available [here](#). (For more information: Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Sara Soumillion – Tel.: + 32 229 67094; Alceo Smerilli – Tel.: +32 229 64887)

'Universal Healthcare for all': Statement by Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Vytenis Andriukaitis ahead of World Health Day 2018

"Access to healthcare for all is one of the major achievements of post-Second World War Europe bringing to reality the idea that all human beings, rich or poor, should benefit from quality medical care without worry that their illness would bankrupt their family. As we celebrate World Health Day, we should feel a great deal of satisfaction for the progress made on our continent in protecting EU citizens' health and in raising the overall life expectancy. As a cardiac surgeon, and having treated many patients, I have seen how important [Universal Healthcare](#) is, especially for the most vulnerable. I have also met many inspiring healthcare professionals, scientists, researchers and social workers who make Universal Healthcare a reality on everyday basis – it strikes pride in my heart to be part of this wonderful union. [...] Making sure that every single person in the EU has access to healthcare should be the priority for all national authorities. Although the success of making healthcare available to all ultimately rests with the Member States who are responsible for defining and organising their health policy, services and budget, the Commission will continue to offer guidance in order to decrease the health gaps among EU countries. Together we will be able to make sure that we are doing our utmost so that universal healthcare is delivered to all, here in the EU and around the world." Read the full statement [here](#). (For more information: Anca Paduraru – Tel.: +32 229 91269; Aikaterini Apostola – Tel.: +32 229 87624)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Vice-President Valdis Dombrovskis in Italy to discuss the future of the Economic and Monetary Union

Valdis **Dombrovskis**, Vice-President for the Euro and Social Dialogue, also in charge of Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union, is in Italy today and tomorrow. He will attend the European House Ambrosetti Finance Workshop "[The Outlook for the Economy and Finance](#)" in Cernobbio, where he will give a speech on European Banking and Capital Markets Union. The Vice-President will visit the Milan stock exchange and have a high level working lunch with bank, finance and economic representatives organised by the Italian Institute for International Political Studies. (For more information: Vanessa Mock – Tel.: +32 229 56194; Annikky Lamp – Tel.: +32 229 56151; Letizia Lupini – Tel.: +32 229 51958)

[Calendar](#)

The Commissioners' weekly activities

Upcoming events of the European Commission (ex-Top News) http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STATEMENT-18-2868_en.htm

The EU aims to generate €1.5 billion investments in Lebanon over 3 years

This support could generate up to €1.5 billion loans for Lebanon until 2020, on condition that the country's financial institutions identify and propose projects that are bankable and adopt relevant reforms. This package includes up to €50 million in grants funding that could be mobilised in each of the coming three years (2018-2020) to provide technical assistance and ensure a sufficient level of concessionality of loans.

High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission Federica **Mogherini** said: "*The European Union has always been on the side of Lebanon and the Lebanese people. A strong and resilient Lebanon is in our collective interest, in the interest of the entire region. Lebanon is a mirror of the whole Middle East, of its diversity, complexity and beauty. With this new package, the European Union reconfirms its support to the Lebanese economy, for the benefit of the Lebanese people, and encourages the Government of Lebanon to pursue the path of structural reforms it has started to undertake.*"

Commissioner for Enlargement Negotiations and Neighbourhood policy Johannes **Hahn** added: "The EU contribution is a signal of our support for the Government of Lebanon, whose tasks include now taking forward a road map of structural reforms to boost economic development in the country for the benefit of all. We will support and accompany this effort. Through the External Investment Plan, the EU is ready to extend up to €150 million in grants that could be used to generate up to €1.5 billion of concessional lending for investment in Lebanon over the next three years provided relevant projects are put forward and the necessary reforms are adopted".

The package was announced today at the CEDRE conference in Paris, an international donor meeting in support of Lebanon's economy. This will be made available in the framework of the [European External Investment Plan](#) (EIP), a comprehensive and ambitious EU plan which encourages investment in our partner countries for the promotion of inclusive growth, job creation and sustainable development.

Background

Bilateral Support

To date, the EU has allocated more than €1.3 billion in assistance to Lebanon since 2011, both for bilateral assistance (€268 million) and in response to

the Syria crisis (€1.069 billion). Additional funds will be available in the bilateral assistance envelope for promoting growth and job creation as well as improving local governance and socio-economic development.

In November 2016, the European Union and Lebanon adopted [Partnership Priorities](#) for the period 2016-2020, which set up a renewed framework for political engagement and enhanced cooperation. The Partnership Priorities include security and countering terrorism, governance and the rule of law, fostering growth and job opportunities, and migration and mobility. They were agreed in the context of the [revised European Neighbourhood Policy](#) and the [EU's Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy](#).

External Investment Plan

The External Investment Plan for Lebanon was [launched in Beirut](#) last 6 February.

The EU's [External Investment Plan](#) is an innovative and ambitious EU plan that encourages investment in the EU's partner countries in Africa and the EU Neighbourhood region. It promotes inclusive growth, job creation and sustainable development and so tackle some of the root causes of irregular migration. The External Investment Plan is adapted to the specific needs of partner countries and builds on the very successful model used within the EU, where the 'Juncker Plan' has already triggered more than €240 billion of investment.

The EIP encourages private investors to contribute to sustainable development in countries outside of Europe, it integrates into more traditional forms of assistance such as grants, a new generation of financial instruments— namely guarantees, risk sharing instruments, as well as the blending of grants and loans. It also includes a guarantee mechanism in order to crowd in private investments, where viable business proposals meet social needs, and where limited public funds can attract private money.

Overall, about €44 billion are expected to be mobilised under the EIP from 2017 until 2020 for Africa and EU's neighbourhood.

More info:

[EU cooperation with Lebanon](#)

[Updated factsheet EU-Lebanon](#)

[European Union in Lebanon](#)

News story: Appointment of Edward Timpson CBE as new CAFCASS Chair

Edward Timpson CBE has been appointed as the Chair of the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) from 9 April 2018 to 8 April 2021

Edward was MP for Crewe and Nantwich between 2008 and 2017. Before entering Parliament Edward spent 10 years working as a Family Law Barrister specialising in children's cases. Growing up, his family fostered 90 children over 30 years and he has 2 adopted brothers.

He was Minister of State for Children and Families from May 2015 to July 2016 and Minister of State for Vulnerable Children and Families at the Department for Education from July 2016 to June 2017.

CAFCASS was created under the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000. The body safeguards and promotes the welfare of children involved in family court proceedings

This appointment has been conducted in accordance with the Commissioner for Public Appointments' Governance Code on Public Appointments.